

ARGENTINA,

1943 — 1987

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*The National
Revolution and Resistance,
Revised and Enlarged Edition*

Donald C. Hodges



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In 1976 the Argentine military toppled Isabel Perón from political power, promising to reinstate stability. Instead, successive military dictatorships waged a "dirty war" against so-called subversives: thirty thousand people "disappeared" and another ten thousand were killed. After seven disastrous years of military sanctioned terrorism, the Argentine people established a democracy under Raúl Alfonsín—an experiment whose success is still uncertain.

In its first edition, this book largely examined the tactics, strategy, and ideology of the Peronist Movement and its Resistance. The revised edition expands the social and economic analysis of the political struggle since 1976. Hodges has added seven chapters to cover the recent Military Process, the development of the second Peronist resistance, the impact of the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the reinstatement of democracy. The concluding chapter examines the nature of Argentina's political culture in which partisan struggle, not sacrifice for civic interest, predominates.

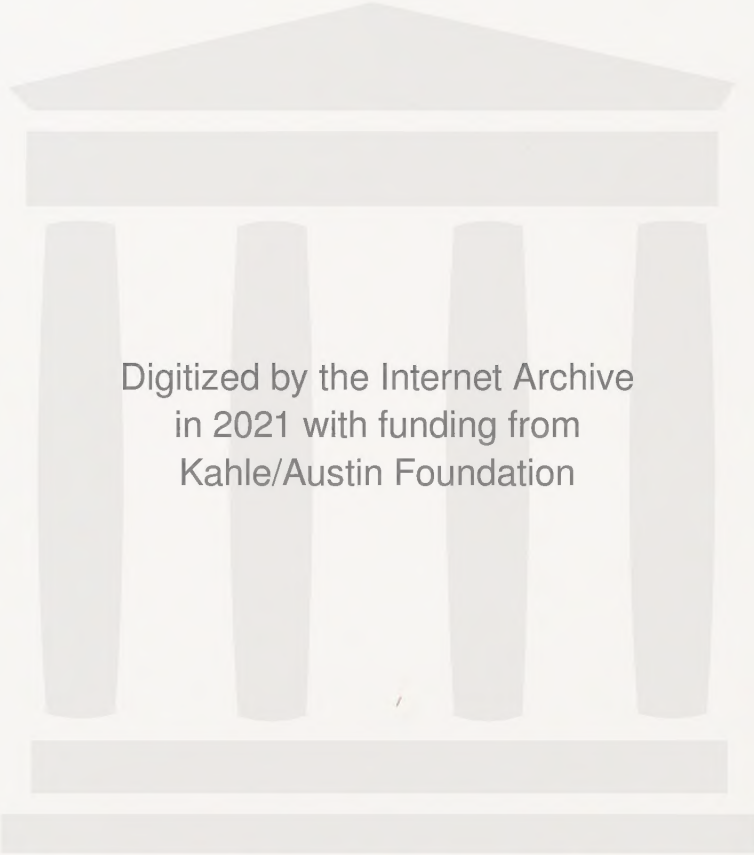
Hodges bases his conclusions on interviews with resistance leaders, revolutionary documents, and other primary sources. All who have an interest in understanding a complex nation and a perplexing region will find this lucidly written book helpful.

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Revised edition.

To
RAIMUNDO ONGARO
and the other heroes of the Resistance

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Preface to the Revised Edition

In a letter from his new place of exile as guest of the French trade unions, Raimundo Ongaro acknowledged receiving a copy of the first edition of this book, which was dedicated to him and to the other heroes of the resistance. His reply, dated January 8, 1977, and addressed from Courbevoie, a town outside Paris, inspired this second edition. His note of gratitude was touching.

You recall that when the *Cordobazo* ended we said: "The blood we shed will not be negotiated; the ideals we defended will not be betrayed; the struggle we initiated will not be interrupted." With that in the heart of those still capable of personal sacrifice and the love required to fight for liberation, we thank you for the dedication in your book whose pages vibrate with memories of the people and the revolutionary justice with which we honor our heroes and martyrs. Thank you, brother, for your loyal support of the world of equals.

Ongaro then sketched the strategy he believed would topple the military dictatorship. His words were prophetic:

As for the new resistance of the working class and revolutionary organizations, the news media cannot hide the data of work stoppages, sabotage, demonstrations, and damage to the capitalist economic structure as a method of bringing down the superstructure. No regime or government can last if one succeeds in annulling the simple reproduction of capital and its profitability for the owners of the means of production. This law we learned less from books than from experience.

In this second edition I have taken up the story of the resistance where my earlier study left off, approximately a decade ago. As noted in the original introduction, this is a study of Argentine politics since World War II and its relevance to the future of Latin America. More precisely, it is a study of the Peronist movement

in Argentina, with emphasis on the national revolution and the resistance to military dictatorships and pseudo-constitutional regimes from 1956 to 1973, and again from 1976 to 1983.

Three fundamental theses were explored in the first edition. First, a national revolution was launched in Argentina from 1943 to 1955, which succeeded in transferring political power from the big landowners to a bureaucratic or so-called new class but failed to restructure the economy and to curb the economic power of the landed oligarchy and the multinationals. Second, among the principal armed formations of the resistance between 1956 and 1973, the Montoneros and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) were the most successful in integrating a revolutionary vanguard with the politics of a mass movement, in part overcoming the dilemma of "arms without people" and "people without arms." Third, the model of resistance developed by these two organizations afforded a more viable strategy for popular-based revolutionary struggles during the 1970s than did the Guevarist PRT-ERP in Argentina and kindred movements in neighboring Bolivia, Chile, and Uruguay.

To these three theses this second edition adds two more. The model of resistance of the FAR-Montoneros was helpless in confronting the system of generalized and clandestine terrorism imposed by the Military Process from 1976 to 1983, which deprived the guerrillas of support. And this model has since been superseded by an Argentine equivalent of the strategy of the Nicaraguan Revolution, which effectively integrates the "movementism" of the Montoneros with the "classism" of the PRT-ERP.

The original text has been revised where needed and seven new chapters have been added. The Introduction to the first edition has been replaced by a chapter on the historical background of the Peronist phenomenon; the following eight chapters have been renumbered; and the substantially revised and expanded Epilogue on the fall of Isabel Perón has become Chapter Ten. Chapters Eleven and Twelve cover the trade union and armed resistances since 1976, while Chapter Thirteen examines the different attempts at a national revolution that have replaced Perón's original plans. Chapter Fourteen questions the expectation that Argentina's national revolution and resistance will usher in the kind of "socialist fatherland" revolutionaries want. The final chapter returns to the theme of the first chapter on the nature of Argentine politics and what makes Argentines different from other peoples. Here, as in

the preceding four chapters, special attention has been given to evaluating the prospects of the national revolution and pinpointing those factors that bear watching as we follow future developments in Argentina.

The research for this second edition included interviews with exiled Montoneros in Mexico City and Cuernavaca in January and February 1978, with Abraham Guillén and Raimundo Ongaro at their homes in Madrid in September 1978, and with exiled members of the PRT-ERP at Trotsky's former house in Coyoacán, Mexico, in February 1980. On returning to Argentina from January to May 1985, I resumed my friendship with Ongaro and my contacts with the PRT-ERP and Montoneros, and had the good fortune to interview Mario Eduardo Firmenich, the Montonero chieftain and public enemy number one during the Military Process. The most important interviews, without which this research could not have been completed, are cited in the bibliography.

Preface to the First Edition

In July 1974 three cardboard boxes of proscribed documents written by the Peronist and Guevarist left were smuggled out of Argentina on a Mexican presidential aircraft. Thanks to Dr. Leo Gabriel, the Austrian sociologist and coordinator of the Grupo Informe of Cuernavaca, these documents were later placed at my disposal. Among them were a complete set of *Militancia* and nearly complete sets of *El Descamisado* and *Nuevo Hombre*—journals banned by the Peronist government in April 1974. The Grupo Informe also had most of the back issues for the period July 1973 to July 1974 of *Estrella Roja* and *El Combatiente*, the principal publications of the outlawed People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and its political counterpart, the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT). It had tapes of discussions with Roberto Santucho and Mario Firmenich, the leaders respectively of the PRT-ERP and the Montoneros, as well as scores of taped speeches and interviews with the Peronist Youth, the Peronism of the Bases, the Peronist Urban Squatters' Movement and the combative trade unions of Córdoba. These materials were crucial to my research on the Peronist resistance and the developing struggle by the Peronist left against the new wave of repression launched by the rightist camarilla which had assumed control of the Peronist movement.

Originally my plan had been to return to Buenos Aires, where I had lived from 1929 to 1941 and revisited in 1971, for the purpose of gathering documents and interviewing Peronist leaders. But with Perón's death on July 1, 1974, the prospects of a civil war between the left and right wings of the Peronist movement and of renewed intervention by the armed forces along the lines of General Augusto Pinochet's coup in Chile emerged. By September these fears had been partly confirmed by news of the vendetta between the Argentine military and the ERP. At the same time, I received the shocking news of Professor Silvio Frondizi's assassination and of the scores of other political murders by the Argentine Anti-

Communist Alliance (AAA)—the equivalent of Brazil's infamous Death Squadron.

I expressed my forebodings in a letter to Abraham Guillén, the Spanish anarcho-Marxist and Civil War veteran, who was then teaching at the University of Buenos Aires. "You can come with tranquility," he wrote on October 30, 1974. "In Spain there is a refrain which says 'fear is free and each one takes what he wants, though it is hardly convenient to take all of it.' " Guillén's letter and the news that Isabel Perón (Juan Domingo's widow) had convened a multisectoral junta on October 8 for the purpose of combating political violence in Argentina, an effort supported by most of the leftist parties, was enough to induce me to reschedule my trip for November.

Within two days, however, the Chief of the Federal Police had been assassinated by the Montoneros. The government's response was to proclaim a state of siege on November 6 with all that it entailed—immediate arrests, police and army dragnets, and the suspension of habeas corpus. Several weeks later I was to hear from Guillén, in a letter dated November 29 and addressed from Lima, Peru: "I expect that you did not make the trip to Buenos Aires because of the foul political air in that city, which effectively obliged me to leave."

Accordingly, I postponed my trip until the state of siege might be raised. But in another letter dated January 16, 1975, Guillén was not encouraging: "I doubt that the state of siege will be lifted. At least, for the moment, that is impossible. On the contrary, I fear that the repressive methods used in Brazil will be applied to Argentina: detention without knowledge of where the detained are held—dead or alive. Thus I anticipate that your trip will be again postponed, and for a considerable time." By the end of May the state of siege was still in effect. I resolved to make the trip anyway.

If I did not leave immediately for Argentina it was because I had just made my first contact with the community of Argentine exiles in Mexico City. Ex-President Héctor Cámpora had made his home there as had the deposed governor of Córdoba, Ricardo Obregón. Through Adriana Puiggrós, a former dean at the University of Buenos Aires and the daughter of Peronist militant Rodolfo Puiggrós, I was put in touch with the Argentine journalists working on Mexico's daily newspaper *El Día*. I am also indebted to her for reading the first draft of my manuscript and for her comments concerning some of its finer points.

More important for my research were the Argentine “tourists,” members of the Peronist Youth (JP) and Montoneros, who were passing through Mexico as self-styled “visitors” or “commercial travelers.” They were more difficult to interview, but were also better informed about the current state of the resistance movement in which they were actively engaged. For reasons of security they used fictitious names; they were continually on the move or in the course of changing residence; they could not be reached by telephone.

They had good reason to take precautions. On June 18 they had collected sixty million dollars in ransom for the brothers Jorge and Juan Born. (That was a world record, the previous high having been the fourteen million dollars paid by Esso to Argentina’s People’s Revolutionary Army for the release of its executive, Victor Samuelson.) The Born brothers, co-directors of Bunge and Born, Argentina’s largest multinational corporation, had been kidnapped on September 19, 1974, shortly after the Montoneros had returned underground in opposition to the government of Isabel Perón. Agents and collaborators of the Argentine police were presumably combing Mexico City and the exile community for traces of the missing money.

Through the official Peronist exiles the “tourists” learned of my work, expressed an interest in it, read the first draft and made many useful notations on the margins. They contacted me; I had no way of contacting them. We would arrange to meet outside a bookshop or restaurant in downtown Mexico. I learned from experience that they would just as likely not show up. Occasionally, they would travel over the mountains to Cuernavaca to help in the editing of Leo Gabriel’s film on Argentina, put together from the film archives of both the Montoneros and the People’s Revolutionary Army. Their plan was to help edit the film, to show it abroad, and eventually to use it for clandestine showings in Argentina. Much of my information concerning the armed operations and internal structure of the Montoneros-JP came from interviews with militants of the organization in Mexico City and Cuernavaca.

Toward the end of the summer I was obliged to return to the States to a teaching position at Florida State University. However, I arranged for a leave during the Winter Quarter and again made plans to travel to Argentina. I had reason to be apprehensive about the trip. I had edited a book on the *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla* (1973) and authored another on *The Latin American*

Revolution (1974), both testifying to my connections with revolutionary groups operating in Argentina. I also had a police record in neighboring Uruguay, where I had been detained and questioned by military intelligence in June 1971 on charges of aiding and abetting the Tupamaros.

I made the trip between two military coups, arriving in Buenos Aires on January 12, 1976, exactly three weeks after the abortive coup of December 18–22, and leaving at the end of February, approximately three weeks prior to the successful coup of March 24. Prudence dictated that I investigate the right wing and center of the Peronist movement and keep shy of the contacts I had made in 1971. Accordingly, I concentrated on the politics and strategy, first, of the ultraverticalists in the president's so-called "entourage" and, second, of the principal labor bureaucrats in the Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the "62 Organizations." The Montoneros-JP, I discovered, had not fully appreciated the scope of the divergence between the Peronist labor bureaucracy and the "entourage," nor the importance of labor's participation and the extent of labor's stake in the Peronist government. The outright sabotage of government measures by employers' associations and the menacing role of the armed forces, likewise committed to halting the "advance of organized labor," indicated that the Peronist government was basically left of center and still predominantly populist in character.

Before returning to the States I stopped over in Lima at the invitation of Abraham Guillén, who had become an "international bureaucrat" and the top foreign expert on social property and workers' self-management to be employed by the Peruvian government. Guillén had himself fought as a militant during the resistance. Actually, he had thrown the first stone.

At the request of John William Cooke, later to become Perón's personal representative and chief of tactical operations from 1956 through 1959, Guillén had drawn up the first plan for massive Peronist resistance based on guerrilla warfare. Well-versed in military and guerrilla strategy because of his experience during the Spanish Civil War, he was also active in organizing the first Peronist rural guerrillas. As the military assessor of the so-called *Uturuncos* ("tiger men" in Quechua), operating along the borders of Santiago del Estero and Tucumán in December 1959, he planned the first successful assault on police headquarters in the provincial

town of Frias where the guerrillas seized arms and munitions. Imprisoned during the first three months of 1961 on suspicion of having been involved in this action, he shortly afterwards left for Cuba where from April through December he instructed Peronist militants in urban guerrilla strategy and tactics. Guillén had warned me against being too accepting of the Montoneros-JP. But I needed to know his specific criticisms of their politics and strategy, and I visited him in Lima for that purpose.

On my arrival Guillén took me to see Raimundo Ongaro, once secretary-general of the outlawed Graphic Workers Union and former head of the combative "CGT of the Argentines." Ongaro's apartment had become a Mecca for labor militants from Argentina, who had traveled to Peru to consult with him on labor matters. A charismatic figure, a kind of Che Guevara of organized labor, Ongaro was as much sought after for his keen political intelligence as for the lasting friendship and loyalty he instilled in his followers. No longer able to exercise his rhetorical gifts directly on the rank and file, he practiced on his visitors.

He was then up to his neck in correspondence with leaders of the resistance and with military officials intent on a Peruvian-style, or populist, military coup. Ongaro had established links with the Movement of the Armed Forces (MFA), a nationalist lodge of young army officers supported by their peers in the air force and navy. The MFA was committed to a program of nationalizing the economic infrastructure and establishing a state monopoly over foreign commerce. It was openly anti-imperialist. While critical of the labor bureaucrats in control of the CGT and "62 Organizations," it was sympathetic to labor leaders democratically elected and responsive to the rank and file. Ongaro was such a leader, and he filled a lacuna in my research. Even more than the Peronist armed formations, he argued, the combative trade unions had played the decisive role in pressuring the military to abdicate. I was also surprised to learn that the 1969 "Cordobazo" (a mass uprising in the industrial city of Córdoba) had not been spontaneous, as was generally believed, but the result of careful planning months in advance of the historical occasion that made it possible.

Through Ongaro I made contact with other Argentine exiles. If Mexico City had become the foreign headquarters for militants of the Montoneros and Peronist Youth, Lima had come to harbor

militants of the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) and Peronism of the Bases (PB). A large two-story house had been rented in a Lima suburb where a dozen or so cadres were temporarily cooling their heels.

Beginning in October 1974, the FAP's survivors shifted from armed operations to semilegal actions directly linked to the workers' struggles inside the factories. Consequently, the FAP cadres in Lima had little to fear from international agents on the scent of new bank "expropriations." The FAP's old leadership, decimated by repression and torn by internal splits, had given way to a new one under the Villaflores cousins. One was in charge of armed operations; a second with the political direction of the movement; a third, with labor matters. I interviewed the last. To him I owe an understanding of the linkage between the FAP and PB, and of the FAP's newly assigned importance to anonymity in the armed struggle. Yet I wondered whether the FAP's virtual disappearance from the political scene was a consequence of its new strategy of maintaining a low profile or of the combined effect of military repression and the loss of its principal cadres to the ERP and Montoneros. In any case, the FAP-PB had been superseded by the Montoneros-JP in the struggle for survival within the Peronist left. Perhaps that explained why the cadres I interviewed in Lima were so consistently pessimistic and morose.

The Hour of the Peoples

More than any other country in Latin America, Argentina is today a battleground of ideas in response to intellectual currents emanating from Europe between the two world wars. Even after victory over the Axis, a political struggle ensued in Argentina into the 1950s between the forces of liberal democracy and the various fascist currents supporting then-Colonel Juan Domingo Perón. More recently, the country became the scene of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary vanguards in which the struggle against international communist subversion dominated national politics.

In this cauldron of ideologies, the polarization between the political left and right led to increasingly violent confrontations. During the so-called Military Era (1930–1983), only one constitutionally elected president was permitted to complete his term of office—President Perón during his first administration from 1946 to 1952. This was the context of the subsequent armed resistance during which Argentina's urban guerrillas came to international attention between 1970 and 1973 and reached their peak under the government of Isabel Perón. Right-wing violence also mushroomed with the launching of the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (Triple A) in 1973 and its successors among the so-called task forces of the armed services that “disappeared” some 30,000 citizens from 1976 to 1978. Argentina became engulfed in a political vendetta and incipient civil war that was to become a symbol for the rest of the continent. While prominent establishment figures in Mexico and other Latin American countries worried about their own imminent “Argentinization,” Argentines lamented what they called the pro-

cess of growing “Beirutization”—a fear that Argentina was about to become another Lebanon.

Argentina’s geographical position would seem to isolate it from the mainstream of world politics, but this is true only geographically. The pulsating capital and port city of Buenos Aires has been unusually receptive to political influences from abroad. Several key international occurrences during the first half of the twentieth century contributed to shape Argentine domestic politics during the second half. Principal among them were the Russian Revolution of October 1917, the fascist response beginning with Mussolini’s March on Rome in October 1922, the Spanish repercussions in the Civil War of 1936–39, and the effective division of the world between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. with the defeat of the fascist powers in World War II. As the hub of Argentine political life since the war, the Peronist Movement must be understood against the background of these world-shaking events. Perón was fond of repeating that Argentina does not exist in the stratosphere. On the contrary, the key international events we are about to consider had some of their most dramatic follow-ups inside Argentina.

Because of its tremendous wealth and power, the United States had a protective shield against the social ferment that spread from Europe during the interwar period. Argentina did not. There the menace of communist subversion, the growing influence of fascism, the impact of the Spanish Civil War, and the subsequent role of the United States in Latin America made a deep and lasting impression.

The twentieth century, Perón believed, inaugurated a new epoch in world history sparked by the Russian Revolution. In a speech to the Military College (August 7, 1945), he highlighted the role of the “new historic cycle” signified by that outstanding event. It was, he said, a cycle of mammoth social struggles during which the masses made their debut on the stage of history. This was not a passing reference but would become the central theme of his voluminous writings. His manual, *Revolutionary Doctrine*, gives it a prominent place in chapter one. In Eugenio P. Rom’s biography, *That Is How Perón Talked*, Perón describes the Russian Revolution as the antechamber to the twenty-first century in which the entire world will become socialist. The Peronist national revolution, conventionally dated from October 17, 1945, is part and parcel of this new revolutionary epoch.

During the turbulent 1960s, Perón characterized the new epoch as the “Hour of the Peoples.” To his principal biographer Enrique Pavón Pereyra, in chapter five of *Perón As He Is*, he recalled that it had been almost twenty years since he had announced the advent of this new epoch in Argentina. With the two world wars and the revolutions of communism, fascism, and national socialism, Perón noted, the first half of this century had paved the way for the “Hour of the Peoples” to become reality. By this he meant, first, the replacement of liberal democracy by a so-called “people’s democracy” that would end the rule of the bourgeoisie and, second, the overcoming of imperialism through national liberation and popular resistance movements throughout the Third World. As the legitimate successor to the Peronist national revolution during its initial phase from 1945 to 1955, the Peronist resistance of 1956–73, followed by the return of Peronism to power and the renewed resistance of 1976–83, may be considered as further phases of the same fundamental revolution.

Argentine politics since World War I were profoundly affected by the Bolshevik Revolution. Within days of the Bolshevik victory, it had struck a responsive chord in the Argentine working class. José Peter, the communist general secretary of the Labor Federation of the Meat Industry (FOIC), testified to its effect on the meatpackers. In the section entitled “1917” of his *Proletarian Chronicles*, Peter recalled that the prelude to the great frigorific strikes of December 1917 in Buenos Aires province was the huge demonstration through the principal streets of Zárate in support of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet people. A few pages later, discussing “The End of the Glorious Struggles of 1917,” he again refers to the contagious Russian experience. Although the meatpackers’ strike in 1917 responded to their situation and immediate problems, it also constituted an episode within the revolutionary avalanche that tumbled upon the world as a consequence of the October Revolution.

The machine-gunning of defenseless strikers by the hired guards of Swift’s La Plata branch on December 6, 1917, and January 3, 1918, resulted in some fifty dead, according to Peter’s account. This “massacre,” as he calls it, was the prelude to the subsequent massacre of metallurgical workers during their strike a year later. As Peter recalls in a later section of his *Chronicles*, “The Development and Lessons of the 1932 Strike,” the workers of the Vasena

Metallurgical Workshops massacred in 1919 had taken to the streets inspired by their striking brothers of the frigorifics.

Known as the "Tragic Week," the January 1919 massacre took the lives of some 1,000 workers, according to Communist Party sources, with the number of wounded estimated at around 4,000. When a strike by the metal workers resulted in the death of a policeman, the police organized a retaliatory ambush in which five demonstrators were killed. In protest, the workers of Buenos Aires then declared a general strike. From January 9 to 16 the city was paralyzed, while workers attacked and looted public buildings. The army finally intervened after vigilante groups had claimed the lives of hundreds of victims, many of them Russian Jews who were falsely accused of being communists and of conspiring to set up a local "soviet." Known as the *porteñazo*, or popular uprising in the port city of Buenos Aires, the rebellion was described in the press as a frustrated proletarian revolution that, had it not been quelled by armed force, would have led the country into civil war. It is noteworthy that a young lieutenant, Juan Domingo Perón, commanded one of the platoons that fired upon workers who had occupied the Vasena Workshops.

The "Tragic Week" in the nation's capital had as its sequel the founding of the Argentine Communist Party in 1920 and the general strike in Patagonia in 1921–22. During the "Patagonian Tragedy," as it is called, the army again intervened to machine-gun some 1,500 rebellious workers after compelling them to dig their own graves. Once again, Swift played a conspicuous role in catalyzing this event. As Osvaldo Bayer comments in volume two of his *Avengers of Tragic Patagonia*, if there was any place in Patagonia that needed a movement to repair social grievances, it was the Swift frigorific in Rio Gallegos, capital of the southernmost province of Santa Cruz. There the workers' condition, approximating that of indentured servants, was the underlying cause of the frigorific strike of March 1921. Although settled peacefully on the employers' terms, it was the forerunner of the general strike by rural workers who took up arms in self-defense.

Led by anarchists under the spell of the Russian Revolution, the general strike was launched at the end of October 1921. Within a week it had paralyzed the southern part of the province. The strike began peacefully, but the workers soon armed themselves against police repression and the army's intervention. They occupied ha-

ciendas, while the strikers established the rudiments of a workers' government or "soviet" in the major cities and countryside. This second red scare was not settled like the earlier one by substantial concessions from the government as mediator. It ended in the greatest massacre in Argentine history.

Argentine workers would long remember it, as would the army after the commander of this first "dirty war" against subversion was assassinated in revenge. Memories of rebel Patagonia in 1921–22 added to those of the *porteñazo* in 1919 help to explain the military's repeated violations of the constitution in an effort to protect the country from communist revolution. As Perón recalled in a brief memoir published in *Panorama* (14 April 1970), the Military Era that began with the coup of September 1930 was prepared by the "Tragic Week" of 1919.

The subsequent coup of June 1943, which gave rise to the Peronist phenomenon, also responded to these earlier events. As Alain Rouquié notes at the end of volume one of his *Military Power and Political Society in Argentina*, the colonels of 1943 were firmly convinced that the 1919 *porteñazo* and the rebellion in Patagonia were the responsibility of an incompetent government. That is to put it mildly.

The principal lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution were summarized in Perón's 1945 speech to the Military College. After acknowledging that the Russian Revolution was an accomplished fact, he urged his audience to accept it. Just as the French Revolution toppled the aristocracy, so the Russian Revolution signaled the end of government by the bourgeoisie. Government by the masses began in Russia and would spread from there to the rest of the earth. The lesson to be learned from it was that there is no turning back; if a government did not make a peaceful revolution, the people would make a violent one. To resist the masses in history was to swim against the current, Perón admonished, adding that it doesn't take long to drown. To keep one's head above water, it is necessary to adapt the country to the world's evolution by bringing justice to the people. That is the only remedy, he concluded, which in suppressing the cause of social unrest also gets rid of the effect.

The cause, Perón pointed out, is that some people have more than they need while others don't have enough. Consequently, there is no other solution than taking from the rich and giving to

the poor. He acknowledged that this solution would not be welcomed by those who hope to keep what they have. But those gentlemen are their own worst enemies, since in refusing to give up thirty percent of their wealth they will be forced to surrender all they have—and their ears as well.

Perón was saying that to avoid a communist outcome, one must accept the new role of the masses in history. In the long run a strategy of confrontation and repression will not work. Hence the better part of wisdom is to take up the interests of workers in an effort to moderate their demands. As Perón was fond of saying, if you are not strong enough to kill your enemy by force, kill him with an embrace! In other words, communism is best resisted by a strategy of absorption.

The clearest statement of this strategy of embrace and absorb is in a July 1969 letter to Dr. Antonio Caparrós, included in volume one of Perón's *Correspondence*. In matters of methodology, he acknowledged, his movement had assimilated the best of Marxism. But it had maintained its distance from communists who hypocritically preach what they don't practice. In this respect, Perón added, it is better to do what communists say, not what they do!

Paradoxically, Perón agreed that every revolutionary worth his salt is in one way or another a Marxist. At issue is the type of Marxist—namely one who accommodates himself to the existential commitment of workers to Peronism. That is why Perón agreed with Caparrós that Marxism does not contradict the Peronist Movement. Rather than rejecting Marxism, he believed, Peronists should incorporate and adapt it to their special purposes. Even communists were acceptable to Perón, provided they gave lip service to Justicialist ideology and carried out Peronist directives. His main objection to the Communist Party was its record of hostility and opposition to the Peronist Movement, which had made “communism” a word of reproach among Argentine workers.

Perón had a model for his strategy of absorption in the practice of the Roman Catholic Church. That is how potential heresies had been neutralized during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. In chapter thirty-five of *The Montoneros: Armed Arrogance*, Pablo Giussani notes that this strategy was also adopted by Pope Leo XIII in response to the French Revolution. Since Perón had repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Leo XIII and to the Pope's

encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ("On the Social Question"), Giussani was correct in attributing this strategy to Perón.

Unlike the generals responsible for the misnamed "Argentine Revolution" (1966–73) and the recent Military Process (1976–83), Perón did not turn to the United States and its NATO allies as a dike against subversion. Because he considered them to be the cause of communism, they too had to be resisted. With the communists he agreed that demoliberalism was the political icing on the cake of an aggressive capitalist imperialism. To side with Swift against the Argentine workers, for example, was to fuel the engine of communism instead of sidetracking it. Effective support for Occidental Christian values was not to be found in the West, precisely because the plutocracies had become the principal breeding ground of subversion. As Giussani comments in the same chapter, within this perspective it would have been absurd for Perón to defend himself from Moscow in an alliance with the liberal democracies, visualized as the historical antechamber of bolshevism.

On September 6, 1930, the aging President of Argentina, Radical Party leader Hipólito Yrigoyen, was toppled by a military coup in which Perón played an active role. A personal account of preparing and carrying out the military conspiracy is given in the opening essay of his *Three Military Revolutions*. In a secret meeting of officers chaired by General José Félix Uriburu some two months before the coup, the retired general outlined its objectives. First, it would be a purely military uprising divorced from the machinations of politicians. Second, the ensuing government would be a military one without civilian participation. Third, the coup would be directed not only against those in power, but also against the electoral laws and form of government favoring the rule of quantity over quality. Accordingly, Uriburu called for a revision of the 1853 constitution that would make possible a "collectivist" or corporative state, the details of which he did not give at the time.

From the beginning Perón had profound reservations concerning the feasibility of such a project. A military movement without both civilian and mass support, he believed, had little chance of success in view of the divisions within the armed forces. Even if initially successful, it could not endure. Since public opinion rejected the prospect of a military dictatorship, any movement that contemplated one would be in serious trouble from the start. The same reasoning applied to the constitution and efforts to establish a new

form of government without popular participation. Only a miracle could save the revolution. Yet that miracle was forthcoming when the workers did not defend the government, while other sectors poured into the streets in a human avalanche that discouraged loyal troops from firing on the crowds. The participation of the masses, Perón concluded, made the difference between an easy victory and one that would have recklessly destroyed both human lives and property.

Scholars are generally agreed concerning the intellectual sources of Uriburu's project. His close associates and principal advisers had been leading opponents of Yrigoyen's labor policies. Among them were former leaders of the Patriotic League of 1919–22, who had played a distinguished role in combating subversion during the *porteñazo* and Patagonian rebellion. Influenced by the doctrines of Charles Maurras, the founder of Action Française, they shared his early views concerning the key role of the Catholic Church in the reordering of society, his distrust of liberal democracy, and his exaltation of a natural aristocracy aloof from the crude and credulous masses. Maurras' elitism appealed to them as did the new Italian corporative state and the Vatican's accommodation to it in the Lateran accords of 1929. However, from Perón's first-hand account of General Uriburu's political views, it appears that Maurras' elitism prevailed over Mussolini's fascist approach.

Another source of Uriburu's inspiration was the Spanish dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–30). Like the Spanish dictator, Uriburu was a provincial member of the oligarchy, a professional soldier, and strongly influenced by the Church. He subscribed to Primo de Rivera's clericalist doctrine of *hispanidad*, propounding the spiritual union of all Hispano-American nations under the leadership of Spain and promising to raise the Hispano-American race to new peaks of grandeur. Like Primo de Rivera, he attempted to impose a form of fascism from above that would restore authority, hierarchy, and discipline. But the influence of Maurras was so pervasive among his civilian backers that Uriburu refused to shore up his regime by enlisting labor support. That was mainly where he departed from his Spanish predecessor.

The ostensible purpose of all three dictators—Mussolini, Primo de Rivera, and Uriburu—was to save their respective countries from the communist menace unleashed by an irresponsible democracy. Perón would ultimately benefit from their mistakes.

Of all of Europe's prewar political leaders, Mussolini seemed to him the epitome of greatness. Perón spent nearly two years, from February 1939 to December 1940, as military attaché to the Argentine embassy in Rome. That experience would leave a deep and lasting impression, which contributed to shaping his future political career.

Frank Owen begins his political biography *Perón: His Rise and Fall* with the following words attributed to the Argentine colonel: "Mussolini was the greatest man of our century, but he committed certain disastrous errors. I, who have the advantages of his precedent before me, shall follow in his footsteps, but also avoid his mistakes." In his book *Argentina*, Arthur P. Whitaker offers a similar but abridged version of Perón's alleged statement praising Mussolini. But neither he nor Owen cite its source. Not until twenty years later did Giussani acknowledge the origin of Perón's remarks in his conversations with exiled Italian fascists, who had sought asylum in Argentina during the second half of 1945.

Raised within the Italian community in Buenos Aires, Giussani recalled the picture of Mussolini in place of Christ over his bedstead and the daily ritual of saluting "Il Duce" before going to bed at night and after getting up each morning. He also remembered how Perón had cordially received the fascist refugees and had engaged them in conversation. One of Perón's remarks that afterwards circulated among the pro-fascist elements of the Italian community was, "I intend to do everything Mussolini did minus his mistakes."

What were those mistakes? In chapter thirty-three Giussani recalls that the fascist leaders who sought asylum in 1945—at least those he had the opportunity to know and listen to—were exponents of a political doctrine at variance with the familiar one based on prewar contacts with Mussolini's Italy. After being betrayed by the king and by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, who surrendered the country to the Anglo-Saxon invaders, Mussolini had escaped from prison to found in northern Italy his so-called Socialist Republic of Saló. Representing a return to the socialist origins of Italian fascism, his new doctrine acknowledged the error of courting the support of privileged sectors among the Italian nobility and capitalist oligarchy. That, and the abandonment of the movement's socialist objectives, according to Giussani, were the principal mistakes Perón was not about to repeat.

But these were not the only ones. Whitaker points to two others,

in chapter six of his book. Mussolini's alliance with a superior and domineering power dragged Italy into a disastrous war against the British Empire ultimately backed up by the United States. And his policy of subordinating trade unions to the state discouraged workers' initiatives, so that they seized the first opportunity to hasten his downfall. Even his belated "socialist" republic was not enough to save him.

What had initially recommended Perón to fascist elements in Buenos Aires, according to Giussani, was the information circulated concerning Perón's addresses to closed circles of the Argentine army. In chapter thirty-four of *The Montoneros*, he recalls that in those talks, delivered after Perón's return from Italy, two key expressions appeared that would eventually shape Peronist doctrine: "Third Position" and "National Socialism."

A quarter-century later in taped interviews with the Argentine historian Félix Luna, Perón still spoke in glowing terms of Mussolini's fascism. In Luna's *The Year 1945*, Perón is reported as saying that the Italian experiment was the first national socialism to appear in the world. Its methods may have been defective, but what seemed to Perón to be more important was that, in a world divided into two opposing systems, Italy refused to take sides. As a "third in discord," Italian fascism chose a third position between Soviet socialism and Yankee capitalism. For Perón, the Italian experiment had admittedly great historical significance.

The Spanish Civil War was another major source of Argentina's social ferment and another memorable event in Perón's life. Overnight it exacerbated divisions between the country's Anglophile defenders of liberal democracy and those sympathetic to Italian fascism and the Spanish Falange. In *The Origins of Argentine Nationalism 1927-1937*, Federico Ibarguren recalled that the Civil War inspired nationalist currents in Argentina. His chapter "The Great Spanish 'National Uprising'" describes the war as religious as well as military, a reaffirmation of the Catholic faith challenged by republican anticlericalism and by the godless forces of the left. Thus when General Francisco Franco described his struggle as a crusade against communism, it elicited immediate support in Argentina.

In a later chapter, "From Oswald Spengler to Ernesto Palacio," Ibarguren comments on the political tensions in Argentina that, in response to the Civil War, reached a breaking point between the

exponents of Protestant demoliberal individualism and the new totalitarianism defended by Catholic Italy and Spain. Nationalist fanaticism was abetted by events in Germany and Italy. These two young, strong, antiliberal, and rabidly anticommunist nations positioned themselves to challenge the hitherto untouchable "Phoenician Empire of the Windsors" on the other side of the English channel.

In 1936 Argentina was still an economic dependency of Great Britain, referred to as a "model colony" by British parliamentarians. Thus there were ample reasons for Argentine nationalists to wish for a victory of Franco and his German and Italian allies over the Spanish Republic, the ally of Great Britain. As Federico's father Carlos Ibarguren notes in *The History I Have Lived*, the Civil War obliged Italy and Germany to intervene on the side of General Franco because of the support given by Great Britain, along with France and Russia, to the Red Republican government. To Argentine nationalists, pitted against liberal democrats in their own country, this prelude to World War II signified their own internal struggles writ large. It was a contest, according to Carlos Ibarguren, between the great capitalist, imperialist democracies and the two upcoming revolutionary, antibourgeois, and antidemocratic powers to the benefit of Soviet Russia watching from the sidelines. At issue was the creation of a new social order in Europe by the "have not" nations in opposition to the demoliberal "haves," intent on preserving their immense colonial possessions in Asia and Africa. In short, the Spanish Civil War had the potential to launch a worldwide struggle against British imperialism that might ultimately benefit Argentina.

Perón accepted this interpretation of the significance of the Civil War, but not without qualms about its cost in human lives. Spain taught him to avoid civil war at any price, including his abdication in 1955 when reliable sectors of the armed forces were ready to defend his government against a military rebellion. A pyrrhic victory was not what he wanted, he explained to his biographer Pavón Pereyra in chapter ten of *Perón As He Is*. In 1941 he passed through Madrid, a city still recovering from the Spanish holocaust; there he received a memorable lesson. He refused to build a new society at a cost of a million dead. Even with the risk of a communist victory, he added, civil war is not justified. These remarks are

testimony to his Christian humanism. Because of them, the accusation of fascism loses even the semblance of plausibility.

The lesson of the Spanish Civil War was incorporated into the founding document of Perón's secret military lodge, which sparked the nationalist military coup of June 1943. Written by Perón, that document specifically warned against the imminence of an Argentine repetition of the Spanish events. The country was being pressured simultaneously by two different enemies: from outside by the United States urging it to declare war against the Axis, and from within by communist subversion of the popular-front type. The threatened victory of Argentina's popular front of communists, socialists, and radicals displaced from power, according to the document, could lead to a communist revolution like that in Spain.

Had it not been for divisions within the Spanish armed forces, Perón believed, General Franco's national revolution might have triumphed without bloodshed. When the popular-front government took over in January 1936, it took concrete steps to rid the army of officers suspected of disloyalty. In April all officers with a record of political activity hostile to the government were forced into retirement or transferred to Spain's overseas possessions. General Franco, the army's former chief of staff, was effectively banished to the Canary Islands. But in July, in response to the government's action removing officers of the Foreign Legion, several Moroccan regiments revolted. After Franco flew to Morocco to take charge, garrisons on the mainland also mutinied. But the uprising had the support of only two-thirds of the armed forces. To Perón and his military lodge, the practical lesson of the Spanish hecatomb was clear: cement the unity of the Argentine army.

The name of the lodge is significant: the "Work of Unification Group" (GOU), informally known as the "Group of United Officers." As the founding document declares in its opening paragraph, the lodge's objective was to unify the army's officers both spiritually and materially. The army was urged to investigate the fundamental causes of social discontent in order to prepare for the resulting disorders and to avoid them in time. In effect, Franco's fatal mistake was to intervene militarily after, instead of before, the popular-front government became established.

Some two years later, on the occasion of his 1945 speech to the Military College, Perón would reiterate this crucial lesson. In raising the specter of civil war, he asked his audience to think of Spain

and the other countries menaced by communist revolution. Spain signified for Perón not only wanton destruction, but also a warning not to allow antagonism to develop between organized labor and the armed forces. That had been a major precipitant of the Spanish disaster. Perón's familiarity with Spanish history during the 1920s may have suggested a solution. General Primo de Rivera had shored up his military regime by enlisting labor support. As Shlomo Ben-Ami notes in the conclusion of *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain 1923–1930*, the Spanish dictator had anticipated the general outlines of Perón's strategy by implementing a military-labor alliance.

The Peronist alternative to a popular front is what Peronists today call a "national front." Deolindo F. Bittel, the Justicialist Party's candidate for Vice-President in October 1983, notes in chapter four of *What Is Peronism?*⁹ that the national front of 1945–46 succeeded in bringing together elements of both the political left and right. Three new parties supported Perón's candidacy in the February 1946 elections: the Labor Party on the left; the Civic Radical Union Renovating Junta in the center; and the so-called Independent List of nationalist and conservative civic groups on the right, including former elements of the Patriotic League and the notorious Catholic and anti-Semitic National Liberating Alliance (ALN).

Perón's nationalist coalition proved victorious over the popular front's Democratic Union. A second national front, the Justicialist Front of Liberation (FREJULI), was organized in 1972 in preparation for the presidential elections of March 1973. It too embraced the entire political spectrum. Whereas Perón's candidate for Vice-President in 1946 was the radical Hortensio Quijano, in 1973 this position fell to Solano Lima, head of the Popular Conservative Party (PCP). Thus the lessons of the Spanish Civil War were well learned.

World War II inaugurated another shift in the balance of power that made a deep impression on Perón. Although a major setback occurred for the "third in discord"—Italian fascism and German national socialism—the Soviet Union emerged from the fray with a virtual empire of its own. Throughout Eastern Europe and Asia, the new collectivist order made giant strides toward replacing the outworn plutocratic and demoliberal system. On August 7, 1945, in the speech already cited, Perón announced that the war had been won by neither the English nor the Americans, but by the Russians!

To be sure, the United States also emerged as a superpower that would shortly replace British interests in Argentina. Argentine nationalists came to view U.S. imperialism as a fundamental enemy, along with the internal menace of communism. "A plague on both your houses" was their response to the spectacle of the two superpowers contending for world supremacy. As Perón quipped in chapter eighteen of *Perón As He Is*, like other Third World countries, Argentina had no intention of becoming a pawn in the imperialist struggle.

In substance this was the same position adopted by nationalists during World War II. To risk Argentine lives in a war that promised victory for Anglo-Saxon imperialism and international communism, Perón believed, was definitely not in the interest of his country. As he spelled out his views in a talk given at the University of La Plata (June 10, 1944), for the smaller countries on the periphery of the major European powers it mattered little who emerged as victors. The repercussions of this speech were not long in coming. As Bittel recalls in chapter three of his book, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull interpreted it as a challenge to the United States. Thus in May 1945 a new U.S. ambassador arrived in Buenos Aires personally dedicated to ridding the government of fascist elements that included Colonel Perón.

In his recent biography of Perón, Joseph A. Page does not mince words concerning Ambassador Spruille Braden's blatant interference in Argentina's internal affairs. The ambassador's self-appointed mission, he says in chapter eleven, was not to negotiate with Perón but to destroy him. During three months of intense political activity, including numerous speeches of encouragement to the political opposition, Braden did his utmost to pressure the military government to resign. In view of the Allied demand for the unconditional surrender of the Axis, Braden believed that the Argentine government deserved a similar fate. Nor did his campaign against Perón cease when he was suddenly recalled by Washington to replace Nelson A. Rockefeller as Assistant Secretary of State. On February 11, 1946, only two weeks before the presidential elections, he released an incriminating 131-page memorandum exposing the "Nazi-Fascist" character of the military regime. Popularly known as the Blue Book, it was timed for its possible effect on the elections.

Perón's response came in his concluding campaign speech the

next day. The ex-ambassador, Perón noted, had made common cause with the oligarchy in an incongruous alliance with the Communist Party. Calling itself the Democratic Union was a popular front of communists, socialists, radicals, and conservatives opposed to what they stigmatized as Perón's "fascist" policies. Anyone who backed this unholy alliance against a new deal for Argentine workers, Perón insisted, would be delivering a vote to Braden. Hence the choice was reduced to "Braden or Perón!" The Democratic Union was the domestic equivalent of the alliance of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. during World War II. Consequently, a vote for Perón was a vote against U.S. imperialism and its Soviet ally. For a majority of voters, this actually became the key issue of the elections.

Years later Perón would recall that ideology was not an issue in 1941 when the U.S. and U.S.S.R. teamed up to fight Germany and Italy, or at the Yalta Conference in 1945 when they agreed to redistribute between themselves dominion over the rest of the world. Yalta led to the emergence of two great internationals, he reflected in *The Hour of the Peoples*—a "Communist International" headed by the Soviet Union and a "Capitalist International" led by the United States. Although superficially opposed, they are really in collusion because actions speak louder than words. Worse still, the ultimate beneficiary of the Yalta accords was not the United States but the Soviet Union. That is because the United States is a breeding ground of communism, Perón argued, capitalism being the cause and communism the effect.

For Argentina the redivision of the world at Yalta signified the replacement of British interests by American. While Eastern Europe and parts of Asia fell within the Soviet Union's sphere of interest, Latin America with Western Europe came within the orbit of the United States. As Perón noted in chapter four of *Perón As He Is*, the worst affliction of the Latin American peoples is not Soviet imperialism but rather economic, political, and cultural domination by the Yankee colossus. If North Americans do not modify their imperialist ambitions, he warned, within a few years Latin Americans will be multiplying by one hundred the drama of Cuba's confrontation with the United States.

The two great tendencies incorporated in this century's historical evolution, Perón explained in *The Hour of the Peoples*, are the suicidal responses of capitalism assailed from within by communist subversion, and of the imperialist powers assailed from without by

today's movements of national liberation. Argentina had become the battleground of both kinds of struggle. In the clutches of the local oligarchy, Argentina had been reduced to a satellite of Yankee imperialism supported by the armed forces in the role of guards. But solutions were at hand: domestically, the adoption of a Third Position between capitalism and communism; and internationally, the adoption of a Third Position between U.S. and Soviet imperialism.

We have seen that Peronism was a response to some of the most important political events of the twentieth century. The Bolshevik Revolution bequeathed the fundamental problem, the advent of the working class in history with its rising tide of labor unrest, political agitation, and communist subversion. Mussolini's March on Rome inaugurated a series of fascist regimes that proffered a solution in the form of national revolution, but whose zeal in striking at the roots of communism was responsible for racist, militarist, and totalitarian aberrations. The Spanish Civil War underscored the fatal consequences of a popular-front government confronted by a divided army and the polarization of society into left and right. And the victory of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in World War II meant a temporary setback for the Third Position, which would reappear in the form of nonalignment and national liberation movements opposed to both U.S. and Soviet imperialism.

Peronism assimilated the lessons of each of these fateful experiences. Four imperatives emerged to guide it: peaceful instead of violent revolution; national revolution as an alternative to both capitalism and communism; national unity as an antidote to civil war; and nonalignment and support for national liberation movements throughout the Third World.

Perón's national revolution may be traced to these combined lessons. The specter of a communist bloody revolution and of a popular-front government that might provoke a Spanish-style civil war led to his acceptance of a fascist-like solution to the class struggle. Reduced to its essentials, the national revolution would replace the strife of political parties based on class interests by a government above parties with an eye to the collective interest. It would establish an equilibrium among the principal classes dignified by the name of "social justice." Perón's Third Position between capitalism and communism would bring about this equilibrium. So would his efforts to bring together the extreme left and the extreme right within a single national movement. Rather than heralding a

socialist revolution, his national revolution would establish a middle ground between capitalism and communism—in the name of socialism but without its Marxist content. Thus its preferred name was Justicialism.

The national and social questions were inextricably linked, Perón maintained, so that the solution to one was simultaneously a solution to the other. In his view, national liberation and social revolution were not the lower and higher stages of a continuing revolutionary process. This is evident from a speech he gave on February 12, 1944, in which he identified the social significance of the national revolution with the “unity of the Argentine people” or “union of all Argentines”—a postulate he said embraced the entire social content of the revolution.

How did Perón propose to achieve that union? Perón spelled out the answer in the opening chapter of his *Revolutionary Doctrine*. First, by overcoming excessive individualism or the Hobbesian struggle of each against all. Second, by ridding society of political parties and their division into opposing factions. Once these and other odious differences have been laid aside it will be possible, he says, to reach a condition in which no one is excessively rich or poor. Only when such differences have been rooted out, he concludes, will the union of all Argentines become reality. Thus nationalism pushed to its limits is tantamount to the creation of a new social order, which he originally labeled Justicialism and subsequently equated with a native brand of socialism. There will be socialism—that was Perón’s message. But at issue was what kind and for whom. Certainly, a socialism based on the dictatorship of the proletariat was the last thing he had in mind.

The Argentine National Revolution

Fundamental to an understanding of contemporary Argentine politics is the self-styled national revolution of June 4, 1943, the military coup that, in an effort to maintain Argentine neutrality during World War II, overthrew Conservative President Ramón S. Castillo. Because of the pronounced Axis sympathies of the new military regime, its indefinite prolongation of the state of siege decreed in 1941, its dissolution of congress, and its legal ban on all political parties, it evoked extensive civilian opposition. The deposed Conservative Party joined the majoritarian Radical Party and the Socialist and Communist parties to denounce the "totalitarian" blight which had descended upon the country. In January 1944, the government finally broke off diplomatic relations with Germany and Japan. Nonetheless, Argentina was the only nation in the Western Hemisphere that did not declare war against the Axis powers until the outcome of World War II was already decided, and then only to avoid becoming isolated and the subject of recriminations by the United States.

The colonels, or "young Turks," who masterminded the coup not only launched an internal war against Marxist subversion, but also put an end to the political hegemony of the export-oriented landowning class and commercial bourgeoisie, which had dominated Argentine politics for almost a century. The hegemony of the oligarchy had been shaken from 1916 to 1930 when there was a brief interlude of rule by the Radical Party—a broad coalition

including the new industrial bourgeoisie and a petty bourgeois popular base. However, the overthrow of Radical President Hipólito Yrigoyen on September 6, 1930, in a military coup led by General José Uriburu, initiated the so-called "infamous decade" during which the political power of the oligarchy was again firmly secured.

The military coup of September 6 had two wings or factions: a nationalist wing led by General Uriburu, and a liberal wing led by General Agustín P. Justo. Uriburu sought to replace the old bourgeois political regime with a corporate state modeled on that of Italian fascism, whereas the moderate or liberal faction of the army opted for a restoration of the old order of government through fraudulent elections that would guarantee the continued rule of the oligarchy. The liberal faction won, and in 1932 the military dictatorship permitted new elections from which General Justo emerged the victor. During the "infamous decade" the landed oligarchy in control of the government signed the Roca-Runciman Treaty with England, guaranteeing the British market for its agricultural exports and the Argentine market for British manufactures. This pact contributed to stifling the incipient national bourgeoisie and to obstructing the development of the new industrial sector.

Unlike Uriburu's military coup, the one which deposed President Castillo in 1943 was directed at a Conservative rather than a Radical government. It was the work of a secret nationalist military lodge, the Group of United Officers (GOU), whose "Group Work of Unification" was dominated by young colonels under the leadership of Juan Domingo Perón. Some of them, like Perón himself, had participated in leading roles in Uriburu's own coup. In 1943, however, they were not restrained by a liberal faction of the army intent on calling new elections and restoring the oligarchy to political power.

Strongly influenced by Italian fascism and profoundly nationalist in orientation, the GOU was committed to the development of an Argentine native industry as the necessary basis of a strong professional army, and to a program of social reforms as a condition of national unification. The young colonels who proclaimed the army to be the savior of the nation were intent on ruling directly, on the premise that whatever benefited the armed forces would also benefit the country. Accordingly, the military coup transferred

political power from the old landowning and commercial bourgeoisie to a new bureaucracy headed by the military. The new military bureaucracy was not composed of agents of another class but was accountable mainly to itself. Although it depended for the industrialization of the country upon the nascent national bourgeoisie, the military excluded this class from political power. The industrial bourgeoisie received a boost from the new military government, but at the price of continued political dependence.

Although the coup was planned and initiated by the GOU, the latter chose to remain a secret organization and to dominate the new government from behind the scenes. Actually, the coup was headed by General Arturo Rawson, who was not a member of the lodge. Proclaimed president on June 4, 1943, he was compelled to resign three days later when his minister of war, General Pedro P. Ramírez, was chosen by the GOU to succeed him. He in turn was replaced as president on February 25, 1944, by his minister of war, General Edelmiro J. Farrell. Farrell promptly appointed Perón the new minister of war.

Throughout these changes at the helm, Perón concentrated increasing powers in his own hands. In October 1943 he had himself appointed to reorganize the National Department of Labor; in November he acquired ministerial rank in the new government as secretary of labor and security—a post he retained after his appointment as minister of war. In July 1944 he also occupied the vice-presidency, but his power resided in the military lodge he headed and in the unique coalition he had created between young nationalist military officers and the new labor leaders unaffiliated to the traditional parties and ideologies of the working class. The foundations of Peronism as a social and political movement were laid with the cementing of this alliance in February 1944, a union supported and represented by Perón in his two key roles as minister of war and secretary of labor.

This alliance was made possible by two quite different sets of circumstances. First, the snowballing of labor grievances, which the trade unions had endeavored to satisfy without success during the 1930s, encouraged a revival of labor militancy in the 1940s calling for drastic reforms by the government. This was a period characterized by rapid industrialization and capital accumulation combined with massive unemployment because of the depression and the internal migrations from the rural areas to the principal

industrial centers. Nonetheless, in the absence of state intervention, there was no redistribution of income. Second, a new generation originating within the majoritarian Radical Civic Union (UCR) had been disseminating a popular brand of Argentine nationalism which exerted a strong influence upon Perón and Peronist doctrine.

According to the standard academic interpretations of Peronist support from organized labor, that support derived mainly from a politically naïve stratum of industrial workers consisting primarily of rural immigrants to the new industrial centers of Córdoba, Rosario and the capital city of Buenos Aires. This new working class was upwardly mobile, unable to identify with the long traditions of struggle of a disciplined and independent working class, untouched by Marxist and socialist ideas and, correspondingly, an easy prey of nationalist demagoguery and massive manipulation by organized political elites. Although the main opposition to Peronism within organized labor came from the stratum of skilled and highly skilled workers of predominantly European extraction, recent studies show that the principal support for Peronism did not come from the new working class of unskilled and semiskilled workers from the interior. On the contrary, the principal support for Peronism also derived from the highly politicized sectors of the old working class.

In *Studies on the Origins of Peronism*, Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Portantiero further show that the internal division within the Argentine working class is less significant in accounting for Peronist support than the unity of organized labor both old and new. While the newer industrial unions had been directly encouraged by Perón in his capacity as secretary of labor, the older unions were also turning to him to redress the grievances accumulated over the so-called "infamous decade." The 1930s had been a period not only of military intervention, rigged elections, economic depression, Conservative Party rule, and the economic hegemony of the landowning oligarchy, but also of strong government repression. Argentine labor desperately needed the state to intervene in the economy, but on its side instead of the employers'. Perón and his group of young nationalist officers responded to this call in an effort to cull labor's support for their own project of breaking the political stranglehold of the oligarchy and building a strong economy independent of foreign influence.

Fundamental to Perón's approach to labor was not so much the

influence of European fascism as of the uniquely Argentine nationalism popularized by the Radical Orientation Force of the Argentine Youth (FORJA). Founded by Arturo Jauretche and other Radical Party youth leaders on June 29, 1935, the FORJA initiated an anti-imperialist campaign against British interests in Argentina and against their principal allies among the native landowning and meat-exporting oligarchy. In view of the rivalries and developing hostilities between the demoliberal plutocracies and the Axis powers, it called for Argentine neutrality during World War II, a war it continued to oppose as an interimperialist one even after the German armies launched their invasion of the Soviet Union. Since, for an Argentine nationalist, Great Britain was the number one enemy because of its heavy investments in Argentina and virtual domination of the Argentine economy, the FORJA resisted the efforts by the U.S. State Department to induce Argentina to enter the war on the side of the allies. On this score the FORJA had the support of the new generation of military officers who were later to throw their weight behind Perón.

The nationalism of the FORJA was predicated on a new so-called "revisionist" interpretation of Argentine history, according to which the liberal, Europeanizing, and "civilizing" influence of the port city of Buenos Aires was conceived as a major obstacle to Argentina's economic, political, and cultural independence from Europe. This was substantially the work of Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, whose analysis of the historic role of British imperial policy in the River Plate was basic to the FORJA's strategy. The FORJA also owed an intellectual debt to Manuel Ugarte. Expelled from the Socialist Party toward the commencement of World War I for his nationalist orientation, Ugarte favored the political unification of Latin America as the only effective defense against Anglo-Saxon imperialism. It is noteworthy that Jauretche, Scalabrini Ortiz, and Ugarte were all subsequently to serve under Perón during his first administration.

The FORJA labored diligently for a decade to disseminate through pamphlets, public speeches, and conferences its new nationalist perspective. Whatever the sources of Perón's own platform of political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice, they were anticipated by the FORJA, which as early as 1936 had summarized its proposals for national reconstruction under the three basic themes of "popular sovereignty, economic

emancipation, and social justice." Through an act of independence in 1939 the FORJA dissociated itself from the Radical Party and essentially became a process in search of a politician. When the FORJA was dissolved in December 1945, it was on the ground that Perón had become a more faithful expression of its principles than had the old Radical Party.

Although this new nationalist current lacked the theoretical depth of a Marxist-based conceptual analysis of Argentine historical and social reality, the Marxist left represented by the Socialist and Communist parties subscribed to a predominantly liberal and European-oriented interpretation of Argentina's recent past. Their respective strategies for the working class blatantly subordinated national interests either to the defense of West European social democracy or to Soviet foreign policy. Unlike the Communists, who softened their criticism of Yankee imperialism during the War, the FORJA was consistently anti-imperialist. Thus it was mainly the antinationalist role of the former leaders of Argentine labor that provided the occasion for a new crop to emerge with the support of nationalist elements within the armed forces.

The enigma of the first phase of the Argentine revolution, from June 4, 1943, to the self-dissolution of the military regime and Perón's oath of office as the newly elected president on June 4, 1946, hinged on whether there had been a revolution, as Perón claimed, or simply a continuation of the "infamous decade"—a mere change of command by which the military continued to represent the interests of the oligarchy. The established parties of the left accepted the second interpretation, which prompted them to join with the Radical and Conservative parties in the so-called Democratic Union to oppose Perón in the elections of February 1946. The Democratic Union was supported by the U.S. State Department, which in February published its notorious *Blue Book* denouncing the extent of Nazi influence in Argentina. Perón responded with the *Blue and White Book*, the colors of the Argentine flag, decrying U.S. intervention in his country's internal affairs. The issue of the election, he proclaimed to the nation, boiled down to a choice between the author of the *Blue Book*, former U.S. Ambassador Spruille Braden, and Perón. On this anti-imperialist platform, Perón won the election in the fairest and most honest contest ever held in Argentina, leading with roughly 1.5 million votes against the 1.2 million received by the opposition.

How did Perón accomplish this tour de force in defiance of all the established political parties? The answer lies in his use of the newly created secretaryship of labor and security to acquire mass support for the nationalist program launched by the military on June 4, 1943. In a speech on August 10, 1944, Perón affirmed the continuity between the redistributive and pro-union policies of his secretaryship of labor and the military coup of the year before: "The Revolution of 4 June has had two fundamental postulates which I traced with my own hand at 10 o'clock on the night of June 3rd: . . . *national unity* and . . . *social justice*. . . . This unity is to be understood, in the first place, in terms of social unity and trade union unity, which are the real foundations of the unity of the masses."

Perón succeeded in forging a political alliance with the bulk of organized labor—the old craft unions as well as the new industrial unions—through a combination of strategies that transformed the secretaryship of labor from a mere arbiter in labor-management disputes and passive intermediary between labor and government into the active champion of labor's interests on a national scale. There is little doubt that Perón stole the thunder of the traditional left and isolated it politically. After all, he had done more for organized labor during his two brief years as secretary of labor, from November 1943 to the mass mobilizations in his support in October 1945, than had the Socialist and syndicalist-oriented trade unions during the entire "infamous decade." Specifically, Perón was able to win the support of organized labor through two basic policies set in motion by the military government at his instigation. First, he developed a system of redistribution in favor of the working class, whose share of the national income during his first administration reached a record-breaking fifty percent; second, he strengthened and unified organized labor through the mass unionization of unorganized workers, the intervention of the Socialist and Communist dominated unions, the creation in certain instances of parallel unions, and the hierarchical restructuring of old unions under the authority of the secretaryship of labor.

Perón's redistribution policy was implemented through a series of legal decrees and regulations that he dictated from roughly the end of 1943 to the beginning of 1946. These included the decree concerning pensions, the establishment of labor courts, the Statute of the Peon, the regulations covering the apprenticeship of minors,

the regulations governing domestic service, the regulations concerning intangible wages, the decree concerning paid vacations and a separate New Year's bonus, the regulations against arbitrary job dismissal, the statutes on tenure in selected occupations, the decree freezing rents, and the sanctions against persons or corporations obstructing the work of the secretaryship of labor.

The secretaryship of labor also initiated important changes in the field of organized labor. New unions, such as Light and Energy, the Sugar Workers of Tucumán, and the Wine Workers of Mendoza were created, as were parallel unions in textiles, woodwork, construction, and metallurgy. The intervention of the railroad unions took place. And nationalist tendencies within the tramworkers, dockworkers, and commercial employees unions were encouraged. Perón also sought to woo and co-opt labor leaders from the traditional political parties, including labor lawyers and other experts in labor matters. Among these were the ex-socialist Ángel Borlenghi, head of the commercial employees union, and Juan Atilio Bramuglia, former legal counsel for the socialist unions. At the same time, Perón encouraged the emergence of new leadership for organized labor independent of the old political parties. These new men of labor organized the first British-type labor party in Argentina in October 1945 and chose Perón as their presidential candidate in the elections scheduled for February 1946.

Perón's political ascendancy was originally made possible by the fascist-influenced, right wing nationalist officers in the GOU. It was they who had imposed upon the nation in December 1943 compulsory religious education in the schools. Perón adopted some of their principles, such as a belief in the tutelary role of the army as custodian of the supreme values of the nation embodied in Hispanic cultural tradition. He took over some of their ideas; however, he distrusted most of their men.

They did not share his conviction that a strong state must rest upon a popular basis. Many of the nationalist officers who originally followed him drew back from his efforts to link the army with the masses. Backed by liberal elements in the military, they pressured President Edelmiro Farrell on October 9, 1945, into demanding Perón's resignation as secretary of labor, minister of war, and vice-president of the nation, and into convoking elections for 1946. Perón was detained and then imprisoned by the military, but mass rallies called by Eva Duarte in Plaza de Mayo on October 17

brought about his release. From that moment he began to rely mainly upon organized labor in his struggle to return to power. Unquestionably, the betrayal by nationalist military officers accounted for his loss of confidence in them, and for their replacement in positions of influence by representatives of organized labor after he became president in June 1946.

In organizing his first electoral coalition, Perón also relied heavily upon disaffected groups and leaders within the old Radical Civic Union (UCR), the Radical Party of Hipólito Yrigoyen which still exhibited traces of its populist origins. From the UCR-Renovating Junta he chose Hortensio Quijano to be his running mate. Thus Perón became the presidential candidate of a dissident Radical organization as well as of the newly founded and electorally decisive Labor Party. On Perón's orders these two organizations officially merged in June 1946 to constitute the Unified Party of the National Revolution (PURN). The merger was resisted by the leaders of the Labor Party, who hoped to maintain their independence of the government. A rump Labor Party survived the merger, but was legally banned in 1948. And by then the PURN had come to acquire the authoritarian, hierarchical, and bureaucratic structure of the present Peronist Party, including the name which was officially adopted in January 1947.

With Perón's assumption of the presidency a new phase in the development of the revolution began. It was characterized by the most extensive political reforms and economic and social legislation Argentina had ever seen. During his first term of office, from June 4, 1946, to June 4, 1952, Perón's revolution reached its apex: the military bureaucracy, fortified by its alliance with the new labor bureaucracy, consolidated its power over the state. This was achieved at the political expense of the landowning oligarchy and the commercial bourgeoisie whose economic—as well as political—power was being eroded by government policies aimed at industrializing the country, developing the internal market, and encouraging the national bourgeoisie. Although the national revolution also contributed to the rise of organized labor, the principal political beneficiary of the revolution was the bureaucratic class as represented by its military and trade union sectors, including a budding political bureaucracy within the newly created Peronist Party.

The legislative reforms initiated during this period were de-

signed to implement the Peronist program of political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice. A series of basic political reforms was launched which fortified and extended the control of the bureaucracy over the nation's affairs. Simultaneously, economic and social legislation was passed which strengthened the state and the bureaucracy with regard to the traditional social classes. An ambitious program of economic reforms contributed to enlarging the public sector to the detriment of the native and foreign capitalist sectors. At the same time, new social legislation helped to improve the conditions of the working class and to eliminate the grounds for social discontent. In effect, the Peronist pursuit of political sovereignty helped to break the political back of the export-oriented landowning and commercial interests tied to British imperialism. Its objective of economic independence contributed to boosting the economic interests of the national bourgeoisie through government subsidies to native industries. And its project of social justice led to a further redistribution of income in favor of the working class and to an increased participation of that class in political power.

Among the basic political reforms of Perón's first administration was a change in Argentina's foreign policy and the establishment in June 1946 of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. In the domestic field, legislation was passed in September 1947—on the initiative of Eva Duarte Perón—which gave women the vote. This action led to the foundation in July 1949 of the feminine branch of the Peronist Party with Eva Perón as president. This new branch of the party was designed to mobilize the support of Argentine women for Perón and was to constitute the third pillar of the new order, on a par with the men's branch of the party and the Peronist-dominated General Confederation of Labor (CGT). With approximately 2.5 million women voting in the presidential elections of November 1951, six women senators and twenty-four congresswomen were voted into office on the Peronist ticket—a performance unmatched during Perón's second administration.

On March 11, 1949, a new constitution based on major changes in the old one was promulgated. These included the incorporation of an historic charter on the "Rights of the Worker." The president was given the right to succeed himself in office without the lapse of an intervening term. These changes, along with the forced merger of the Labor Party and the UCR-Renovating Junta, contributed to

the consolidation of the Peronist movement and to Perón's landslide vote (almost double that of his opponents) in November 1951.

Earlier in 1948 the government had begun to intervene in the field of mass communications and by 1950 had developed an extensive chain of government-owned and operated newspapers and broadcasting networks. In January 1951 the oligarchy's principal opposition newspaper *La Prensa* was closed by the government, and then expropriated by a congressional act in April. Many such changes, including the dismissal of the Supreme Court justices in April 1947, following a Senate-initiated investigation of their role in obstructing the work of the secretaryship of labor, were designed to crush political opposition to the new regime. However, when one considers that the opposition was organized mainly by the old Radical and Conservative parties, it is evident that the semitotalitarian character of Perón's reforms had a revolutionary content. By strengthening the political power of the bureaucracy, he helped to consolidate the national revolution, while preventing a revival of the counterrevolutionary oligarchy and liberal bourgeoisie.

The economic reforms of Perón's first administration included the nationalization of key sectors of the economy, the creation of new industries, the restrictions on the repatriation of profits by foreign companies, the control of credit through the Central Bank, the liquidation of the foreign debt and corresponding dependence on Great Britain and the United States, the inauguration of Argentina's first five-year plan in January 1947, and the channeling of the economic surplus from agriculture into industry through government-imposed price controls and a state monopoly over the purchase of agricultural goods.

The historic "Act of Economic Independence," presented by Perón to the nation on July 9, 1947, was a major turning point. The British-owned railroads and port facilities and the U.S.-owned electric companies were nationalized. In January 1947 German investments had been confiscated on the pretext that they constituted enemy property. As a result of these expropriations and the regulation of the repatriation of profits, the general level of foreign investments dropped off markedly. Ironically, the United States became the principal foreign investor in Argentina not because of the influx of U.S. capital but by default because of the government's policy of nationalizing foreign enterprises, the bulk of which were

British-owned. This policy contributed not only to eliminating foreign control over the economic infrastructure, but also to reducing the financial services paid to foreign companies. All bank deposits and the foreign exchange market came under government jurisdiction, which gave the Central Bank a monopoly over the country's financial resources.

Among the new industries created were the merchant marine and air transport industries, which made Argentina almost self-sufficient in those areas. Priority was given to the development of the state-owned petroleum company YPF—"You Poor Fool!"—whose initials had long been a butt of ridicule for foreigners. The financing of new industries and the promotion of old ones was channeled through one of the principal economic agencies created by the regime, the Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Trade (IAPI), which funded the industrialization program of the first five-year plan. Through its monopoly over the export of cereals, which reached a high of more than ninety percent in 1949, the IAPI bought grains at low prices on the domestic market and sold them at high prices on the world market. It was then able to funnel the monetary surplus into industry.

The principal agencies of social reform during Perón's first term of office were the secretaryship of labor and security and Evita Perón's Foundation of Social Aid, both working in close cooperation with the labor bureaucracy of the CGT. Once installed in the presidency, Perón turned his attention increasingly to political and economic matters, leaving to Evita the principal initiative for social reforms. The secretaryship of labor came increasingly under her influence, as did the bureaucracy of the CGT which she packed with her friends and supporters. Not only were women's rights one of her favorite causes, but also the welfare of the dispossessed—the so-called *descamisados* or "shirtless ones." Evita became the propelling force behind the defense of the weak, and the principal figure in charge of the nation's welfare program.

The Foundation of Social Aid, established in June 1947, was far from being a charity in the traditional sense. Although it began with a capital of 10,000 pesos originally donated by Eva Perón with the help of voluntary contributions from private individuals and organizations, it quickly acquired a public character. Besides occasional subsidies by the government, it benefited from the transfer during one year of twenty percent of the revenues of the

National Lottery. It was also exempted, beginning in July 1949, from all taxes. At its August 1950 congress, the CGT voted to contribute to the Foundation an annual deduction of two days' wages from each of its several million members, amounting to roughly six million pesos annually. The Foundation also served a political purpose. In response to the military veto of Evita's candidacy as vice-president in August 1951, followed by the unsuccessful coup of General Luciano Benjamín Menéndez in September, the Foundation ordered the purchase of weapons and munitions for the purpose of organizing popular militias in defense of the government and the CGT.

In contrast to the charities dispensed by the fashionable and aristocratic Charitable Society, the Foundation initiated a comprehensive building program that included the construction of apartment complexes for workers, orphanages, homes for the aged, houses for transients, medical clinics, and schools. Of the 4,000 schools constructed between June 1943 and December 1950, for example, one fourth were erected by the Foundation. The Foundation distributed food and clothes to the needy and in 1951 opened a chain of twenty-four dispensaries in Buenos Aires, where articles of necessity might be bought at reduced prices. It also organized sports events for children, provided free playthings, and distributed refreshments worth millions during the traditional Christmas holidays. These and the many other services provided by the Foundation helped to foster Evita's popularity and to perpetuate her memory among the masses. As Perón noted in the "Twenty Truths of Justicialism" presented to the nation in his Plaza de Mayo address of October 17, 1950: "The two arms of Peronism are social justice and social aid. With them we give to the people an *abrazo* [embrace] of justice and of love."

The policy of giving priority to the interests of organized labor was another prominent feature of Perón's first administration. In 1948 real wages were almost forty percent higher than in 1943. The government raised fringe benefits, which amounted to another forty-percent increase. It increased the number of paid legal holidays, provided accident and health insurance for most workers, and initiated a new social security program. In 1943 only half a million workers had been eligible for social security; in 1946 the number had risen to more than one and a half million; and by 1952 it included as many as five million workers. The organization of

unorganized workers received a tremendous boost. There were some 200,000 organized workers in 1943; there were approximately 500,000 when Perón became president in 1946; and there were roughly three million by the end of his first term of office. The social composition of organized labor had also changed. At the beginning of 1946 it had consisted of the aristocracy of labor, mainly skilled workers, European immigrants, and their immediate descendants. By the end of 1951 it consisted mainly of unskilled workers from the interior who had migrated to the big cities, the untutored and so-called *cabecitas negras*, for whom Peronism represented the only philosophy of labor they had ever known.

Under Perón, for the first time in Argentine history workers occupied important government positions. Beginning in 1945, Juan A. Bramuglia, a former lawyer for the socialist railroad union, was appointed federal intervenor in the key province of Buenos Aires. During Perón's first government workers were also appointed to important cabinet positions, an index of labor's newly acquired political power. Bramuglia became minister of foreign affairs. Ángel Borlenghi, the head of the union of commercial employees, became minister of the interior. Ramón Cereijo became minister of finance. And José María Freire, a leader of the glassworkers union, served for a brief period as secretary of labor.

The president's own wife had been a labor organizer. Eva Duarte had taken a leading role in organizing the national union of radio employees and the mass demonstrations in Plaza de Mayo on October 17, 1945. Once Perón became president, Evita moved her office to the secretaryship of labor where she assumed de facto control over all government agencies concerned with labor matters, taking charge of all collective bargaining agreements, contracts, pensions, and disputes involving organized labor. Through her control of the secretariat of labor and her encouragement of labor leaders and individual workers to come to her directly with their problems, she built up a personal following in the labor movement that soon rivaled that of the president. She actively intervened in union elections and sought to pack the leadership of the CGT with those loyal to her. Because of a falling out with Evita, Aurelio Hernández, who had been selected by Perón in 1947 to replace the former Labor Party chief Luis Gay as secretary-general of the CGT, was replaced in 1948 by José Espejo. The new secretary-general, the head of the grocers union, had also served as

janitor of the apartment building where Evita and Juan Domingo once occupied adjacent suites.

So important was Evita's role as intermediary between the government and organized labor that after her death Perón took over personally the secretaryship of labor and the direction of the Evita Perón Foundation. As Evita explained the relationship of Perón and herself to the people in *The Reason of My Life*, when he became president she took his place in directly defending the interests of the workers. There could be no conflict of interest between labor and the government because "to divorce himself from the people, the head of the government would have to begin by divorcing his own wife."

Perón's second administration inaugurated on June 4, 1952, was followed shortly by Evita's death on July 26. Since nobody was capable of filling her shoes, the nation's system of social welfare failed to move forward without her. Evita's death boded a decline in the fortunes of organized labor. Under Perón's renewed direction, the secretaryship of labor failed to initiate any major social legislation. New leaders for the CGT were appointed in October including a new secretary-general, Eduardo Vuletich, but they did little to distinguish themselves. By 1952 the Peronist Party had developed a top-heavy bureaucracy dedicated to maintaining the new status quo. Once firmly entrenched in power, the political and trade union bureaucracies had no intention of rocking the boat through a showdown with the landed oligarchy and the commercial bourgeoisie, but sought instead to establish a *modus vivendi* with them.

With Evita's death, the national revolution came to a screeching halt not only in matters of social justice, but also in the economic and political fields. Industrial growth suffered a relapse beginning in 1951-52. Economically, the nation could no longer count on boosting its foreign trade in the wake of the worldwide beef and grain shortages following World War II. Droughts throughout the country led to a fall in grain production which, combined with the deterioration of the terms of trade, adversely affected Argentine exports. As a result, the trade surpluses that had provided the financial basis for Argentina's industrialization during Perón's first administration were gradually eroded.

Faced with a shortage of capital, congress approved a law in August 1953 favoring the investment of foreign capital in industry

and mining on terms beneficial to U.S. companies. The same month Perón began negotiations with U.S. oil interests for the purpose of developing Argentina's petroleum resources. In April 1955, a contract was signed by the government with the Argentine branch of Standard Oil of California. It was opposed by the militant sector of the Peronist movement led by John William Cooke. When the financial surpluses that had accrued to the IAPI during the late 1940s were displaced by deficits because of the fall in world market prices for cereal exports, the government began to issue new money. The immediate result was widespread inflation, the erosion of real wages, and the redistribution of income at the expense of the workers. When mounting labor discontent issued in demands for higher wages, the Peronist bureaucracy responded with an exhortation to the workers to produce more and to consume less. The result was a loss of confidence in both the party and the government.

Faced with a deteriorating economic situation, the government had only one recourse: to carry the revolution forward. To go forward, however, Perón would have had to rely on the masses, not on the entrenched members of the political and trade union bureaucracies. By 1952 the Peronist bureaucracy had become a closed corporation, hierarchically organized with all initiatives coming from above. In fact, nothing was done to overcome the crisis. In the search for new sources of capital, the government could have appropriated the entire parasitic rent from the ownership of land, thus putting an end to the cattle-raising and grain-producing oligarchy. The meat-packing industry and foreign monopolies might have been nationalized, thereby contributing additional revenues. Although the IAPI had a virtual monopoly over grain exports, it failed to gain control of wool exports nor did it ever acquire control over the import sector. The sugar-refining industries could have been nationalized, but were not. Although it had granted diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union, the government did not establish trade relations with the Soviet bloc. Furthermore, it neglected to develop heavy industry. Far more drastic measures were needed, especially in the areas of agrarian reform and government control of foreign commerce, than the Peronist bureaucracy and Perón himself were ever willing to take.

Perón's second administration lost the political support first of the national bourgeoisie, then of the church, and finally of the

military. The failure of the IAPI to provide sufficient funds to assure continued industrial expansion encouraged the national bourgeoisie to look to the United States for new sources of capital and technology. Since the U.S. had emerged from World War II as one of the largest exporters of grains and meat products, it chose to ally itself with Argentina's new industrial bourgeoisie rather than, as Great Britain had done, with the old landowning and commercial oligarchies. The national bourgeoisie had discovered a new ally in U.S. imperialism, whose runaway factories were on the lookout for cheap sources of labor and raw materials for local production and export. Thus, when a law was passed in 1953 permitting only limited private investments in the key automobile, petrochemical, and electrical appliance industries, the national bourgeoisie became dissatisfied with the government, broke off relations with the Peronist movement, and allied itself increasingly with foreign interests.

Perón's difficulties with the church began in 1954 and were brought to a head in December by a congressional act which, for the first time in Argentina, made divorce legal. Added to this insult to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, congress approved another act in May 1955 removing religious instruction from the schools. The church replied by inciting mass demonstrations against the government, to which Perón responded by expelling two Argentine prelates from the country. On June 16 Perón was excommunicated by the Vatican; the same day the navy launched an abortive coup. The confrontation was further escalated when the Peronist masses responded to the aerial bombardment of the Plaza de Mayo by burning and desecrating churches in the nation's capital. Although Perón retreated before the opposition, the die had been cast. Thus one of the explanations of his fall from power was his violation of religious tradition, which continued to be sacred among the army, and among nationalist military officers in particular.

Perón was overthrown by a coalition of nationalist and liberal armed forces factions in a military coup reminiscent of the one that overthrew the Radical President Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1930. Both coups were directed against a majoritarian populist party in power. Each began under nationalist auspices to be followed shortly by the ascendancy of the army's liberal wing and the calling of new, if narrowly restricted or fraudulent, elections. The self-styled "Liberator Revolution" of September 16, 1955, which dissolved

congress and sent Perón into exile, was originally led by the nationalist General Eduardo Lonardi. As provisional president, Lonardi adopted an economic program that was not basically different from Perón's, appointed a new pro-Peronist minister of labor, sought an accommodation with the CGT, and attempted to woo the moderate elements within the Peronist movement. Since his policy of "neither victors nor vanquished" was regarded by the army's liberal faction as too lenient, Lonardi was in turn overthrown by a coup led by General Pedro Aramburu on November 13, 1955.

The CGT called a general strike to protest the new government's labor policy. Aramburu then organized the most repressive campaign in the nation's history designed to stamp out, organizationally and politically, all traces of Peronist influence as well as resistance to the "liberal" dictatorship. The CGT was intervened by the government on November 15 and its leaders were arrested. By September 1957 it had formally dissolved into 62 Peronist unions and 32 independent ones. It was not restored to legality until the early 1960s. Aramburu decreed the Peronist Constitution of 1949 to be null and void, thus returning the country to the old political system and the liberal constitution of 1853. Elections were eventually called for February 1958. However, the Peronist Party had been proscribed, while a decree dated March 6, 1956, prohibited anyone from holding elective office who had held any position in the Peronist Party since June 1946.

Perón's fall is to be attributed to the disintegration of the populist alliance between organized labor and the military. Yet the military was not alone in its disaffection with Perón's second administration. Perón's new economic policy, which obliged him to curtail the social and economic gains won during his first administration, also contributed to alienating the workers. Following the presidential elections of November 1951, Perón sought to establish stricter measures of control over the inflationary spiral. In December he helped to establish the General Economic Confederation (CGE) to represent the new manufacturing industrialists, and asked them to cooperate with the CGT in stabilizing wages and prices—measures precursory to those of the Social Pact of June 1973. In effect, the anti-inflation campaign by the government put an end to any new wage demands by the trade union bureaucracy. This campaign reached a climax in March 1955, when the CGT and the CGE

jointly sponsored a National Congress of Productivity and Social Welfare with emphasis on labor-management cooperation in the so-called national interest.

Since Perón had effectively abandoned the workers in order to neutralize the growing political opposition of the bourgeoisie, compounded by increasing restlessness and dissatisfaction within the armed forces, the workers were hardly in a mood to lay down their lives in defense of the regime. Under pressure from the opposition and fearful of a repetition of the military coup of June 16, 1955, Perón asked the leading Peronist militants in the government and the trade unions to resign—the Minister of the Interior Ángel Borlenghi and the CGT's Secretary-General Eduardo Vuletich—and permitted the military to seize the CGT's arsenal of 5,000 rifles and revolvers. These setbacks to labor's influence and power were crowned on July 15 when Perón addressed the nation in a speech announcing the end of the revolution. All revolutions, he noted, have a beginning and an end: "The Peronist Revolution has ended; now begins a new constitutional stage without revolution. . . . I have ceased to be the leader of the National Revolution in order to become President of all the Argentines."

A month later, however, as the rumblings within the labor movement mounted, he reversed himself by announcing the end of the political truce. In mid-August the CGT, in a campaign aimed at reidentifying Perón with the lost Evita, launched a series of inflammatory editorials attacking all opposition to the government. On August 31 Perón addressed a crowd assembled in Plaza de Mayo in a renewed challenge to his enemies, following which the new secretary-general of the CGT, Hugo Di Pietro, offered to place the voluntary reserves of the workers at the disposition of the army—an offer the military rejected because it foreshadowed the emergence of a workers' militia. Perón's final desperate efforts to reestablish his popularity with the workers came too late, and in September they did not respond to Di Pietro's call to fight for Perón. Furthermore, Perón never gave the order to fight until he was safely out of the country. In any case, he had collaborated with the army in depriving them of weapons.

The difference between Perón's relations with organized labor and the military at the beginning and at the end of the Perón era (1943–55) is neatly summarized in Samuel Baily's *Labor, National-*

ism, and Politics in Argentina. During the crisis of October 1945, workers united to defend Perón and the national revolution, even though Perón had given no order to fight and they had no arms. At the same time, the military was divided over the question of support for Perón and unable to win civilian backing. Together these factors contributed to the victory of the workers on October 17. In September 1955, however, the military was united in opposition to Perón and had civilian support. This time the workers were divided, even though the majority of them identified with Peronism. Since Perón had given no order to fight and they were unarmed, these circumstances favored the victory of the military on September 16.

Although Perón had long sought a solution to Argentina's predicament of economic dependency, his account of the underlying causes of his fall in September 1955 showed virtually no understanding of the changed character of that dependency. In Perón's principal work on the antecedents and significance of the so-called Liberator Revolution, *Force is the Right of Beasts*, the coup was interpreted as a showdown between two classes: the productive class of manual, technical, and intellectual workers who allegedly consumed only what they produced; and the parasitic class consisting of the oligarchy, the clergy, and the professional politicians who lived off the surplus created by the productive class. Perón's intellectual apparatus was hardly capable of appreciating the subtle transformations undergone by the Argentine national bourgeoisie during his second administration, a national bourgeoisie figuring as "productive workers" in this obsolete schematism dating from the French Revolution of 1789 and the political philosophy of Saint-Simon. Thus the coup was explained in such loose and subjective terms as the "reaction" of the parasitic class and the "treason" by sectors of the armed forces "at the service of the bastard ambitions of obscure men, generally ignorant and unqualified," who had become mercenaries in the service of a corrupting capitalism and had sold their honor from a sordid desire for money. In effect, Perón explained his fall as the product of a simple conspiracy initiated by the oligarchy with the backing of the clergy and the minority political parties, a coup allegedly "directed, financed, and controlled by domestic and foreign capital."

Missing from this account was an explanation of why the various

coups against the Peronist government in September 1951, February 1952, and June 1955 failed, whereas that in September 1955 succeeded. In *The Fall of Perón from June to September 1955*, Julio Godio argues that the conditions for the success of the September 1955 coup included, on the one hand, the breakup of Perón's populist and majoritarian front and, on the other hand, the formation of a new political bloc capable of providing popular support for the conspiracy. What Perón had failed to realize was that by 1953 the national bourgeoisie had already ceased to benefit from his program of stimulating the internal market through labor reforms and higher wages for Argentine workers. Once the post-World War II and Korean War booms had run their course, the economy settled down into a condition of relative stagnation. In consequence, the former positive-sum game advantageous to both labor and capital deteriorated into a zero-sum game, in which for every winner there had to be a loser. Under those changed conditions there were only two remedies available to Argentina's growing and aspiring national bourgeoisie. First, a renewed impetus toward economic growth within the structure of Argentina's dependent-capitalist system required a new influx of capital goods and new sources of financing in the imperialist metropolises. Second, a policy of encouragement to foreign investments depended upon a cutback in the gains of organized labor. Since neither of these courses was acceptable to Perón, to the CGT, or to the Justicialist movement, the national bourgeoisie shifted within a few years from a posture of active support to one of outright hostility to the anti-imperialist and prolabor policies of the Peronist government.

The national bourgeoisie was not the only class to enter into a new political bloc with the oligarchy, the foreign bourgeoisie, and disaffected elements within the military. During his second administration Perón made the mistake of stepping up repression against the vanguard of the liberal opposition, against university students and the petty bourgeoisie, instead of against the main enemy consisting of the landed oligarchy and the big capitalists. Since the opposition Radical Civic Union was the principal spokesman for these groups, it too joined the anti-Peronist crusade pressing for Perón's resignation. The UCR's support of a military coup made the difference between the abortive coup of June 1955 and the successful attempt in September. It effectively neutralized the

professional wing of the military, while raising the hopes of the anti-Peronist or *golpista* sectors.

In this situation, Perón's only hope of saving his administration was to strengthen his last remaining base of popular support—the trade unions. His widely proclaimed "State of the Workers" depended upon workers' militias to defend it. Instead, Perón turned to the army, while seeking a negotiated settlement with the military and civilian opposition to his government. Fearful of the intensified campaign being waged against him and the Peronist movement, he sought to join rather than to confront his enemies. In the effort to serve as "President of all the Argentines," he even resigned his post as head of the Peronist Party. His so-called "pacification policy" between June and August 1955 effectively made him turn his back on organized labor. Thus when the final blow came in September, even his staunchest followers hesitated to defend the national revolution.

But was the self-styled national revolution really a revolution? If not, then the Conservative and Radical parties had strong reasons for supporting it. Despite the legal ban on their activities, their fundamental interests and those of the nationalist government should have coincided. In time they would have sought a *modus vivendi* with the new regime. But this never happened. If the so-called revolution was in fact one, then the minoritarian Socialist and Communist parties had little cause to resist it. In any case, one would have anticipated their eventual accommodation to Peronism. This never occurred.

The question of whether Argentina did or did not experience a national revolution under Perón's leadership is still hotly debated. For the most part, the controversy hinges on how the term "revolution" is used. In the Marxist tradition, the only kind of revolution that is usually worthy of the name is a social revolution, tantamount to the transfer of economic power from one social class to another, the transformation of property relations, or the foundation of a new economic order. In this sense there was no national revolution between 1943 and 1955. Within the non-Marxist tradition, the term is most often used for a violent and abrupt change in political or economic institutions independently of the question of its class significance. Since the transfer of political power from one class to another does not always occur either violently or abruptly, it falls short of being revolutionary even though it constitutes a

major structural change. Furthermore, this usage fails to discriminate between revolutions and counterrevolutions. At least the traditional Marxist use of the term errs by way of overprecision rather than looseness.

Actually, the customary Marxist usage is not the only one consistent with a Marxist conceptual framework. Just as a social revolution consists of the transfer of economic power, so a political revolution may be interpreted as the transfer of political power to a new class. The significance of this distinction is that social revolutions, at least in the twentieth century, tend to be prepared in advance through the seizure of political power by a given class, which then uses it as leverage to acquire the lion's share of the economic surplus. This is not to say that every political revolution is followed by a corresponding social revolution, but only that the former is usually a necessary condition of the latter. The Argentine national revolution did not issue in a corresponding social revolution, which in no way gainsays its character as a bureaucratic political revolution that effectively eliminated, between 1943 and 1955, bourgeois control of the state apparatus.

The answer to this question also hinges on how the term "bureaucracy" is used. If the bureaucracy is conceived not as a class rooted in the economic structure of society but as a stratum linked to the legal superstructure, then it is a mere agent of a class. Exceptional conditions may arise when it is able to exert its independence, but only when a dominant class is being successfully challenged by a new aspiring one. Even with this qualification the Marxist stereotype of the bureaucracy as a mere stratum is inadmissible: first, political administrators also perform economic functions; second, the managers of industrial, commercial, and financial enterprises also perform legal and administrative tasks corresponding to those of political bureaucrats; third, they, too, are momentarily capable of asserting their independence of Marx's principal classes; and fourth, they share in common the ownership of a separate factor of production alternatively identified with "expertise" or "organizational know-how." Marx's model of social classes needs to be updated to include the political and military bureaucracies. Since they fail to qualify either as exploited laborers or as owners of capital, while nonetheless appropriating a share of the economic surplus, they cannot be reduced to the status of either proletarians or bourgeois. Ergo, they constitute a separate class.

In this perspective the Argentine national revolution was not an isolated phenomenon nor is it the only example of its kind. In fact, the revolution of June 4, 1943, was followed in Bolivia by a similar revolution on December 20, 1943. It began with a military coup led by Major Gualberto Villarroel, the head of "Patriotic Cause" (RADEPA), a secret military lodge of young nationalist officers. Like Perón, Villarroel was devoted to the modernization of the army, which made him question the monopoly of power by a traditionalist landed oligarchy. The RADEPA's program of political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice was designed to overcome Bolivia's semicolonial status and dependency. Unlike the later revolution of 1952-64, which destroyed the landed oligarchy economically as well as politically, the revolution launched by Major Villarroel was a strictly political one. It mainly benefited a bureaucratic class led by military officers intent on ruling independently of the traditional class structure. Again, as in Argentina, the revolution ended on a sour note. On July 21, 1946, Villarroel was overthrown by a counterrevolutionary coup of "liberal" generals who not only restored the political rule of the oligarchy, but also allowed him to be unceremoniously hung from a lamppost in the public square opposite the presidential palace.

A more recent example of the Argentine model of bureaucratic political revolution is afforded by the Peruvian national revolution of October 3, 1968, led by another group of "young Turks" or so-called "Nasserist colonels"—named after the leader of the Egyptian national revolution of 1954. Actually, the terms "Nasserism" and "Peronism" are interchangeable when applied to the younger generation of left-wing officers in Latin America. Like the Peronist revolution of 1943-55, the Peruvian national revolution led to the transfer of political power from the landed oligarchy and commercial bourgeoisie to a military bureaucracy ruling in its own interests. Major political, economic, and social reforms were introduced beginning in 1968, including an agrarian reform and a new system of industrial communities based on profit sharing and labor participation in management, but without a corresponding social revolution. Like the Argentine military under Perón, the Peruvian military launched an ambitious program of nationalization of foreign enterprises designed to strengthen the public sector and to overcome the country's dependence on the multinational corporations and the world market. Although its original social

basis was the peasantry rather than the industrial proletariat, it later acquired labor backing by creating the government-controlled National System of Support for Social Mobilization (SINAMOS). Argentine influence was also evident in the new regime's commitment to a "Third Position," first formulated by Perón in the 1940s, which aligned Peru with the Third World in foreign policy and, domestically, with a so-called *via media* between capitalism and socialism. In practice, this was tantamount to the coexistence of a new bureaucratic political order and a modernized capitalist sector, in which the principal political beneficiary was the army and the principal economic beneficiary was the national bourgeoisie, but in which labor too made important gains.

Development of the Resistance

The Peronist resistance began in response to the campaign of repression launched by the liberal wing of the armed forces, which seized power through the coup-within-a-coup of November 13, 1955. In retaliation for the general strike called by the CGT to protest the regime's labor policies, all of the trade union, professional, and cultural organizations of the Peronist movement were intervened, confiscated, or destroyed by the military, which did not hesitate to use tanks for that purpose. With most of the CGT leaders in jail and deserted by the political leadership of the movement, Perón's only recourse was to turn to new leaders and to prepare the workers for a protracted struggle against the dictatorship. This called for reorganizing the movement from the bottom up. Thus, relying mainly on intermediate cadres and on the younger generation of trade unionists to bring forth new leaders, Perón actively promoted the militant elements within the movement.

Although the resistance began without him, it was formally launched in a secret directive by Perón in January 1956. This message to the top militants in the movement was smuggled into Argentina through the Commando of Peronist Exiles in Chile. It called not only for industrial sabotage of various kinds, but also for armed struggle against the dictatorship. Rather than reorganize the movement on the basis of old slogans and strategy, it demanded a social revolution in addition to a political one. Accordingly, it

rejected the reformist and gradualist tactics employed with only limited success during the decade 1946–55, and instead advocated carrying the revolution to its ultimate consequences (*Militancia*, 12 July 1973).

Perón's secret communiqué contained both general and specific guidelines on how to organize the resistance. Among its general directives was an exhortation to the Peronist rank and file to undertake actions independently of their former leaders, to recognize new leaders by their deeds, and to repudiate those who might have approached or established contact with representatives of the dictatorship. Specifically, the message directed the masculine and feminine branches of the party to turn the house of each member into a basic unit or cell under his or her direction for the purpose of building a new underground organization. It also contained directives to the trade union branch to replace old leaders with more militant ones, to organize strike committees, work stoppages, slowdowns and breakdowns aimed at demoralizing the regime. In these several ways the military dictatorship was conceived by Perón as a purifying agent destined to restore the movement's original revolutionary impetus.

In response to his letter, a clandestine National Command was created that brought together in a single organization and under a unified command all the underground Peronist groupings and organizations that had survived repression. In February 1956 it published its first "Manifesto," demanding the unconditional return of Perón. It called for a struggle of national liberation which was to be organized through Peronist bases or commandos in every factory and neighborhood—thus applying Perón's secret directives. Defining itself as the representative of the Peronist rank and file in opposition to the old leadership, which had effectively disappeared or betrayed the movement, the National Command became the principal coordinator and center of the Peronist resistance until roughly 1959.

The first concrete efforts at armed resistance were taken not by the National Command, however, but by General Juan José Valle and a group of Peronist officers who, having been imprisoned by the "liberal" dictatorship of General Aramburu, were released in March 1956. General Valle retired to a farm on the outskirts of the capital, where he and other officers organized the Movement of National Recovery. Initially, it included representatives of the

nationalist faction within the army, who had been displaced by the "liberals" in November. But these elements withdrew as soon as it became evident that the leaders were working for Perón's return. Contacts were also made with trade union leaders such as Andrés Framini, the last secretary-general of the intervened CGT, although organized labor was never considered to be more than an auxiliary force by the military officers loyal to Perón. The Movement of National Recovery attempted to overthrow Aramburu on June 9, 1956, but the coup was aborted before it was born. This first insurrectionary attempt with a military origin ended with the assassination of soldiers and civilians loyal to Perón and with the abrupt and arbitrary execution of General Valle and a score of Peronist officers at the hands of a firing squad. Thus ended the first stage of militant opposition and armed struggle, to be followed after a temporary lull or letdown in the resistance by a second upsurge in January 1959.

The complete failure of Valle's military putsch does not seem to have discouraged Perón, who had adopted a different strategy based on mass resistance. The National Command was assigned the task of sowing new seeds of discontent in the expectation of forcing the march of events. In a letter to Cooke from Caracas dated May 8, 1957, Perón favored the use of psychological warfare. He advocated reliance on clandestine radio transmitters, infiltration, provocation, and the perpetration of social disorders to prepare a new climate of hostilities. "Now is the time to make war against the dictatorship without quarter and without rest, from within and from without," he wrote in his first defense of the tactical methods of the guerrillas and of the strategic conception of an "integral war" later adopted by the Montoneros. "Peronists must be persuaded to combat in all parts and under all circumstances, with all means at their command, the dictatorship that is bound to fall not through the great battle it anticipates, but through millions of small encounters which its means are insufficient to prevent and where the enemy cannot concur to defend itself. . . ." (*Militancia*, 19 July 1973). When this climate of hostilities is in full vigor, he continued, the moment will have arrived to paralyze the economy and to launch guerrilla operations in as many places as possible and where the conditions are most favorable.

Thus Perón belatedly decided to adopt Cooke's plan of resistance based on guerrilla warfare, first formulated in response to the

abortive June 1955 uprising against Perón and the precursor of the September military coup. This plan, whose details were the work of Abraham Guillén, the Spanish anarcho-Marxist and Civil War veteran who worked as a journalist on Cooke's political magazine *De Frente*, relied mainly on the experiences of the Spanish resistance against General Franco. Proposed by Cooke for adoption by the Supreme Council of the Peronist Party between June and September 1955, the plan was vetoed by generals loyal to Perón on the ground that it would create a dual instead of a unified military command.

Following the temporary ebb in the resistance in the wake of General Valle's abortive putsch, a new wave occurred during the presidency of Arturo Frondizi and his Intransigent Radical Party—elected on a popular and anti-imperialist platform with the support of the Peronist movement. Prior to the elections of February 1958, Perón had entered into an agreement with Frondizi—the so-called “Perón-Frondizi Pact”—in which he traded approximately two million votes in return for a promise of legality for his movement, a general amnesty for imprisoned and exiled Peronist leaders, and a restoration of the CGT under Peronist leadership. After being inaugurated on May Day 1958, Frondizi granted a general amnesty but postponed the “normalization” of the CGT until 1961, and did not restore the Peronist Party to legality until early in 1962. Moreover, he betrayed the nationalist and anti-imperialist platform that had contributed to his election by signing contracts with eight foreign oil companies. This provoked a general wave of protest strikes, which contributed to a new upsurge in the resistance beginning in January 1959.

From Perón's standpoint the pact with Frondizi was only a temporary measure designed to strengthen the Peronist movement in preparation for a new phase of confrontation. That he continued to share Cooke's assessment of the Argentine situation and of the need to develop an insurrectionary strategy is evident from a letter to Cooke, dated September 16, 1958, from Ciudad Trujillo in the Dominican Republic: “In a private meeting the politicians are strong, but in the street power is in the hands of those who manipulate the masses, if only they know how to unite them in action. It is necessary to abandon all political action that is not directed toward agitating the masses, who constitute our strength.” The priority of an insurrectionary strategy, Perón continued, is

founded on the necessity of mobilizing the masses in demonstrations against the repressive legislation imposed by the military: "If we, bound by a strategy of small steps that are merely political, conform to the methods that favor the politicians, then we shall no longer be able to rely on the majority, but shall go on losing time and strength until we are dominated. If, on the other hand, we raise problems in the street through an agitation without precedent, choosing well the themes of that agitation, then we shall put in evidence our superiority. . . . We should not forget that this has been Peronist procedure since 1945 and that, in all circumstances, it has yielded excellent results" (*Militancia*, 11 October 1973).

At the same time, the Perón-Frondizi Pact was being given a different interpretation by the revived trade union bureaucracy in the "62 Organizations" loyal to Perón. In August 1957 the still intervened CGT had split into two principal blocs: the "62" Peronist controlled unions and the "32" liberal trade unions led by socialists, radicals, and "independents." For the Peronist trade unions the pact was mainly a device to recover control of the CGT, to restore the Peronist Party, and to run their own candidates for public office. Since this legally oriented branch of the movement was insisting on its independence from the National Command or clandestine branch, Perón was obliged to establish a Supreme Council with authority over both—in the interest of unified direction of the resistance. As head of the National Command and chief of operations, Cooke was selected by Perón to be one of the delegates of the Supreme Council and as a counterweight to the reformist line of the "62 Organizations."

Revolutionary Peronism had been initiated and nurtured by the National Command under conditions in which the legal possibilities of the movement for bargaining and maneuver were either narrowly restricted or nonexistent. Beginning with the Perón-Frondizi Pact, agreed upon through the intermediary of Cooke, the prospect of major concessions through negotiation contributed to a resurgence of the Peronist political and trade union bureaucracies. Although the favorable consequences of the pact included the release of trade union leaders, the sanction of a law of professional associations permitting the reorganization of each union under a national leadership, and an increase in wages of sixty percent, these were offset by the growth of a conciliatory wing in the movement

which began to challenge the clandestine leadership of the National Command.

The emerging conflict between the Peronist National Command and the "62 Organizations" was first publicized in January 1959, on the heels of the general strike supporting the workers' occupation of the nationalized meat-packing plant "Lisandro de la Torre." The National Command issued a declaration which publicly censured the vacillating role of the trade union bureaucracy. This declaration, dated January 30, 1959, characterized the strike as the most formidable demonstration in Argentine history of the repudiation of an unpopular government by the masses, and at the same time criticized the trade union bureaucracy for not having prepared the workers for such a confrontation (*Militancia*, 19 July 1973).

It was no ordinary strike. In response to President Frondizi's decision to denationalize the plant because of pressure on the government from the International Monetary Fund, the workers occupied it on January 15 as a sign of protest. Other work stoppages spontaneously followed along with the shutdown of small businesses in the suburbs of Mataderos, Villa Lugano, Villa Luro, and Liniers. On January 17, the police of Buenos Aires showed up in force outside the plant, supported by army cavalry and four Sherman tanks. After a violent struggle lasting several hours the workers defenses were overcome. They then took to the streets and began erecting barricades throughout the zone. For five consecutive days, from January 17 to January 21, the Peronist masses were able to hold an enormous sector of Buenos Aires. The violence and brutality of the police provoked a general wave of indignation throughout the country. The leadership of the "62 Organizations" responded by calling a general strike for January 18-19. Fearful of being replaced by militant cadres who were actively directing the struggle, the leadership, after this first timid response, changed the forty-eight-hour strike into one of indefinite duration.

The government's response to this direct challenge to its authority was to declare a state of siege and to put into execution the "Plan Conintes" (*CONmoción INterno del Estado*), first applied in the industrial cities of Berisso, La Plata, and Ensenada which were declared military zones. The most important trade unions were intervened, hundreds of strikers were arrested, and

more than half of the nine thousand workers at "Lisandro de la Torre" were fired. The coordinating board of the "62" had resisted the many efforts by the National Command to prepare for such an historic conjuncture, preferring to negotiate with the government rather than to collaborate with the Peronist underground, which for three years had been waging a campaign of subversion with Perón's support. Now, instead of mobilizing the workers in the streets and preparing to continue the struggle in clandestinity, the coordinating board let them remain quietly at home waiting for a solution from above. As a result of government intervention and military repression, the strike was left without a national leadership almost from the beginning. The Strike Committee ceased to exist, although the strike continued spontaneously and without organization from January 18 to January 21. Finally, the workers became demoralized, and the imprisoned leaders began calling them back to work to save their own hides—first one union, then another, but again without any plan or coordination.

The upshot of the *Porteñazo* (a mass insurrection in the port city of Buenos Aires) was a shot in the arm for the National Command. The coordinating board of the "62," which had become a symbol of compromise and capitulation, was dissolved. The general strike brought forth its own leaders from the rank and file and from intermediate cadres of the labor bureaucracy. These men began to push the "62" in a more militant direction and acknowledged the need for an underground apparatus, which could provide a disciplined and centralized command beyond the reach of the government. In its declaration dated January 30, the National Command called the Peronist militants to support these new leaders in their efforts to assume control of the movement.

Although the Argentine resistance emerged independently of the Cuban resistance, its left wing began to model itself as early as 1959–60 on the example of the July 26 Movement. Under the influence of Cooke, in exile in Havana, the first rural guerrilla movement was launched in December 1959 in the province of Tucumán in northwest Argentina, by a group called *Uturuncos*. Then, under Cooke's influence, guerrilla training camps with Cuban military instructors were set up for Peronist militants. Some of these camps were in Cuba, others in Argentina. Among the latter were those raided by the police in July 1961, at Coronel Pringles and Lomas de Zamora in the province of Buenos Aires.

Testifying to the influence of the Cuban resistance on the Argentine resistance were Cooke's November 1960 "Briefings on the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution." The resistance, Cooke noted, was a multiclass movement of heterogeneous and frequently opposing tendencies. It supported the interests of the national bourgeoisie by calling for the restoration of civil liberties, and it supported the interests of the workers and petty bourgeoisie with its program of national and social liberation. As in the Cuban resistance, the bourgeois, or right wing, followed a semilegal and reformist strategy based on negotiations with the dictatorship for the restoration of civil and political rights. In contrast, the left wing chose the path of armed resistance. Since the Cuban resistance had been successful owing to its choice of armed struggle, Cooke concluded that a similar strategy should be used in Argentina. Indeed, the only guarantee for Cooke that the resistance would culminate in a social revolution, over and above the restoration of bourgeois democracy, was the creation of a rebel army with popular support capable of defeating and replacing the professional army in the service of the oligarchy. On the model of Cuba, Cooke anticipated an eventual showdown between the left and right wings of the resistance. At the same time, he foresaw that the bourgeois wing of the movement would attempt to regain power through negotiations with sectors of the professional army—a strategy that could be effectively resisted only, as in Cuba, through a general strike in support of the revolutionary forces.

Early in 1962 the Peronist Party was restored to legality, which permitted it to run its own candidates in the March provincial and gubernatorial elections. Its landslide victory included the election of Andrés Framini as governor of Buenos Aires—a position second in importance only to the presidency. President Frondizi, under pressure from the military, annulled the elections, causing a third militant upsurge in the resistance. On March 29 Frondizi was removed from the presidency by a military coup. After the coup President of the Senate José María Guido was appointed interim president, until a new president might be inaugurated following the elections scheduled for July 1963.

In view of a renewed military decree making the Peronist Party illegal, Perón again looked for backing from other political parties. Arturo Illia, the candidate of the Popular Radical Civic Union (UCRP), a rival of Frondizi's Intransigent Radical Civic Union

(UCRI), sought Peronist support by promising to remove the ban. Unconvinced by Illia's blandishments, Perón supported the National and Popular Front (FNP) whose presidential candidate, Vicente Solano Lima, represented the Popular Conservative Party. Only after the Front was proscribed by the military did Perón order his followers to cast blank ballots. Illia won the election, but with only twenty-five percent of the vote. In effect, he was not the choice of the people since the Peronist Party had been proscribed. At least Frondizi had been elected with massive Peronist support.

Although the resistance failed to make headway politically, the revolutionary tendency nurtured by the National Command became increasingly influential in trade union circles. A new program adopted by the CGT in Huerta Grande, Córdoba, at a national conference in 1962 presided over by Amado Olmos, showed this clearly. Olmos, a close friend of Cooke and secretary-general of the Sanitary Workers Union, had become one of the most influential leaders of the "62 Organizations" on the heels of the 1959 general strike. Under his leadership the conference formally agreed to accept the following ten-point program: the nationalization of the banks and the establishment of a single centralized banking system; the imposition of state controls over foreign commerce; the nationalization of the key sectors of the economy, notably iron and steel, electricity, petroleum, and the meat-packing industry; the prohibition of all direct or indirect exports of capital; the cancellation of all financial agreements signed behind the backs of the people by the government; the prohibition of all imports in competition with Argentine industry; *the expropriation without compensation of the landed oligarchy; the imposition of workers' control over production*; the termination of commercial secrets and the rigorous taxing of business associations; and the planning of production in the interests of the Argentine nation through the fixing of priorities and outputs. Although taken separately most of these objectives had at best a reformist content, in conjunction they constituted a direct challenge to the ruling classes. Furthermore, the italicized items had an unconcealed and unquestionably revolutionary thrust.

The influence of Cooke and the experience of the Cuban Revolution on the younger generation of Peronist militants was also evident in the organization of a second rural foco under Ricardo Masetti and in the parallel organization of the first urban guerrilla

group led by the notorious "Joe" Baxter—both in response to the military coup of March 1962. Masetti's foco was planned, financed and armed with the collaboration of his fellow Argentine, Che Guevara. After crossing the Bolivian frontier into northwestern Argentina in September 1963, it issued a communiqué calling on Peronist militants to join the People's Guerrilla Army (EGP). Actually, the EGP had a Guevarist rather than a Peronist orientation and was an antecedent of the current People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). Although during the months that followed it successfully recruited some Peronist cadres from the industrial cities of Buenos Aires and Córdoba, after long and arduous military preparations it was surprised and overcome by border patrols in the province of Salta in April 1964.

In contrast, Baxter's organization registered some important victories. The Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Tacuara), reorganized by Baxter in 1963 under new Peronist leadership, had been founded in 1958 by Alberto Ezcurra Uriburu, a lineal descendent of General José Uriburu. (The latter was instrumental in the September 6, 1930, coup.) It also counted among its leaders the three Guevaras—all first cousins of Che Guevara. Originally Catholic, nationalist, and antisemitic, it was the youth counterpart of the authoritarian nationalists within the military—represented by the GOU under Perón and by the adherents of General Lonardi in the coup of September 16, 1955. It was opposed to materialism in philosophy, to liberal democracy in politics, and to capitalism as an economic system. In opposition to this bourgeois political syndrome it favored its own Christian version of national socialism, and was strongly influenced by the Spanish Falange and by the writings of José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Unlike the GOU, the Tacuara was an openly fascist organization. Nonetheless, under the combined influence of the Cuban and Algerian revolutions and of the revolutionary politics of Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon, it too developed a revolutionary tendency.

Benefiting from his association with Abraham Guillén, Baxter was the first to apply Guillén's urban-guerrilla strategy in an armed attack on the Polyclinic Bank of Buenos Aires in August 1963, which resulted in the taking of twelve million Argentine pesos. In a public declaration by the MNR (Tacuara) on May Day 1964, Baxter explained the motives of this operation. First, violence was the only means by which the oligarchy could maintain its privileges and

break the will of a people used to participating in the political process. Second, the Peronist masses had no access to political power through legal channels because of the proscription of the movement by the armed forces. And third, General Perón had directly called upon the people to defend their rights through armed resistance (*Militancia*, 19 June 1973). One should remember that, although Illia had been elected president on July 7, he did not assume office until October 12, 1963. Thus Baxter's operation took place under the military-appointed President José María Guido, after the results of the comparatively free 1962 elections had been annulled by President Frondizi.

The MNR (Tacuara) claimed to be one of the few Peronist organizations to obey with strict discipline the instruction of the movement's leader: "Against brute force the only effective response is force intelligently managed." Thus Baxter announced that the national command of the Tacuara had in extraordinary session resolved upon the following: to mobilize all its cadres for the purpose of armed struggle in conformity with the directives of the general staff of the people's army commanded by General Perón; and to implement through armed struggle and mass mobilizations the program of Huerta Grande, since forgotten by the lame and bungling leadership of the "62 Organizations." Although the Tacuara was effectively destroyed in Buenos Aires as the result of the arrest in April 1964 of its leading militants, Baxter successfully shifted its operations to neighboring Montevideo where he provided military instruction to the Tupamaros and participated jointly in further bank "expropriations." Only much later, when a Uruguayan police investigation of an assault on December 22, 1966, led to the discovery of the Peronist cadres who had participated with the Tupamaros, was the Tacuara formally compelled to disband.

The organization of rural and urban focos in 1963 represented a tremendous step forward for the partisans of revolutionary Peronism. However, this advance was offset by a major defeat within the "62 Organizations," which in 1963 saw the displacement of Olmos' influence on the trade union bureaucracy by that of Augusto Vandor. As head of the powerful Metallurgical Workers Union (UOM) and of the "62 Organizations"—a position he held until 1969—Vandor effectively sidetracked the revolutionary program adopted at Huerta Grande in favor of negotiations with the newly

elected government of Arturo Illia. Thus, parallel with the escalation of armed resistance against the pseudoconstitutional governments of Presidents Guido and Illia was a revival on an extended scale of a conciliatory faction within the Peronist movement, which resolved to pursue an independent policy should Perón continue to favor an insurrectionary strategy.

The increasing differences between the revolutionary line and the politics of negotiation favored by the legal and trade union branch of the movement prompted Cooke to postulate the coexistence of two rival and fundamentally opposed forms of Peronism. In a statement from Havana dated October 12, 1962, he contrasted the revolutionary strategy of the Peronist masses with the reformist politics of intermediate cadres whose claws had been manicured by an Occidental Christianity. These vestiges of the old Peronist political and trade union bureaucracies, along with the new figures just as reactionary, Cooke wrote, believed that the contradictions within the movement were being resolved in their favor. But those who constitute the vanguard during a period of negotiations, he noted, become the rearguard when the people are in open struggle. "Even admitting that their tactics of conciliation might have achieved something positive, it would be only for a short time and of only limited significance: the struggle cannot be resolved short of the defeat of one of the contending parties, and neither the oligarchy has a margin for bargaining nor can the people be bought off with charity" (*Militancia*, 2 August 1973).

As the differences within the movement threatened to explode, Perón was increasingly obliged to perform a moderating role in his capacity as supreme conductor. Accordingly, he began to favor a gradual accumulation of forces, a strategy combining legal and illegal forms of resistance that did not apparently favor either one. In a letter to Perón dated October 18, 1962, Cooke admitted to having differences with Perón over this new strategy. While acknowledging the difficult circumstances in which Perón was obliged to lead the movement, Cooke found fault with his reliance on Christian and Occidental slogans, his concessions to the reformist and legal wing of the movement, his second thoughts concerning an insurrectionary strategy, and his preference now for a reformist strategy, now for an insurrectionary one, "depending on the circumstances" (*Ibid.*). If the clandestine apparatus is dismantled during an electoral struggle and an insurrectionary

strategy is postponed until a more opportune moment, Cooke argued, one will have to start from scratch when that moment arrives. Such a strategy for all occasions is a pendular one impelled by circumstances, a strategy of rebound incapable of independently shaping events. Moreover, negotiation is likely to take the pressure off the oligarchy, to give it a breathing spell instead of increasing its difficulties. Granted the usefulness of fomenting divisions within the ruling class and within the armed forces and of neutralizing sectors of the clergy and the industrial bourgeoisie, Cooke concluded that none of these efforts can do more than prepare the conditions for a showdown. Hence their value is strictly secondary and auxiliary to the only strategy for victory—an insurrectionary one.

Cooke's differences with Perón spelled the end of the honeymoon between the supreme conductor and the revolutionary currents in the movement. Henceforth, Perón would assume a moderating role not merely from pressures within the movement, but also because revolutionary Peronism had acquired a Guevarist complexion at odds with the populist philosophy of Justicialism. Initially, Perón had sought to use Guevara and Guevarist tendencies to strengthen the Peronist resistance, but important sectors of the latter had ended by becoming "Cubanized." The People's Guerrilla Army was only one such instance of an armed force recruited from the Peronist rank and file, but under a leadership that was Guevarist rather than Peronist.

Perón could hardly have been unaware of this development and of its potential threat to his leadership of the resistance. Within a decade the convergence of revolutionary Peronism on Guevarism was to escape his control entirely. Meanwhile, pressure was put on him to make Havana rather than Madrid his place of exile. At a plenary meeting of the CGT in January 1965, Olmos and Cooke moved the acceptance of a letter to Perón to this effect. Although the letter was not rejected, neither was it approved. This led Olmos to conclude his participation in the plenary with the remark: "Perón's residence in Spain is the tomb of the National Revolution. . . ." (*Militancia*, 7 February 1974).

Designed originally to direct the resistance under conditions of clandestinity, Cooke's National Command began to outlive its function when President Frondizi granted semilegal status to the "62 Organizations." A new organization of the resistance was

evidently needed, including a new program. As the principal successor to the National Command, the Peronist Revolutionary Movement (MRP) was organized in 1964 for the specific purpose of carrying on the resistance under conditions of semilegality in which the struggle would be a protracted one and the seizure of power a prelude to a continuing revolution—an evident reference to the Cuban example. However, Cooke, the principal theoretician of revolutionary Peronism, was not destined to lead it. His own group, the Peronist Revolutionary Action (ARP), was much smaller and had comparatively little influence.

The program of the MRP, formulated by Gustavo Rearte and adopted on August 5, 1964, rejected the “false option” of 1958—the option of either forfeiting one’s vote or supporting a non-Peronist candidate—which had been imposed on the movement by efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. As for those who had tried to transform the Peronist movement into just another political party, the program demanded their expulsion. In view of conflicting “Battle Plans” for the return of Perón, which the merchants of Peronism hoped to secure through negotiations rather than mass mobilizations, the program favored revolutionary struggle in all its forms. Hence its insistence on reviving the tradition of the gaucho *Montoneros* during the War of Independence and of responding blow by blow to the violence of the repression: “From today forward we shall know how to use armed struggle as the principal means of political action. . . . To that end the people must oppose to the regime’s army of occupation their own armed forces and labor militias” (*Confluencia*, May 1974). Going beyond the program of Huerta Grande, the MRP called for the “total elimination of the parasitic social classes which serve the interests of international finance capital: not only the old oligarchy tied to British imperialism, but also the new sectors of the bourgeoisie which serve as an instrument of penetration by Yankee imperialism.” Furthermore, the struggle for national liberation was to be organically linked with an armed struggle for social liberation against domestic exploiters, tantamount to the replacement of capitalism by a new socialist order.

By 1964 the rivalry between the left and right wings of the Peronist movement was approaching the critical point. Although set aside by the national leadership of the CGT, the program of Huerta Grande became a rallying cry for the bulk of the rank and

file. With the help of cadres in the labor bureaucracy, it was translated into a "Battle Plan" designed to step up labor militancy. In 1964 three million workers were involved in strikes and take-overs of 11,000 factories and workshops. These actions also had the political objective of paving the way for Perón's return in December. The wave of strikes was finally backed by the CGT leadership. However, it supported the "Battle Plan" not in an effort to secure Perón's return, but rather to discredit him. It refused to believe that he would sacrifice a comfortable life in Spain in order to risk imprisonment by returning to Argentina. Thus by calling Perón's bluff, the trade union bureaucracy hoped to undermine his credibility and to assume formal as well as de facto control over the Peronist movement.

This maneuver of the CGT ultimately failed in its objective. On December 2, 1964, large numbers of Peronists began converging on the Ezeiza International Airport of Buenos Aires in order to greet their returning leader. At the request of the Argentine military, however, his plane was intercepted and boarded in Rio de Janeiro. Hours later the air force announced that it would be shot down should it proceed in its flight over Argentine territory. Although Perón was compelled to return to Madrid, the Argentine masses understood and accepted his predicament. Thus began a new letdown in the resistance, which was to last until June 1966 when yet another coup returned the country to direct military rule.

The rebellion against Perón led by the Vandorist faction within the CGT was designed to secure exclusive control of the movement in Argentina. Basic to its strategy was the revival of the Peronist Party under the control of the "62 Organizations" and the liquidation of Perón's chief basis of support in revolutionary Peronism. Although occupied with bread and butter issues, the Vandorists also sought to impose their political interests on the state. Moreover, they were not averse to collaborating with big capital, with the native monopolies and the U.S. multinational corporations through the intermediary of the AFL-CIO. Already in the July 1963 elections, representatives of the Vandorist tendency had refused to follow Perón's directive to cast blank ballots, choosing instead to nominate their own candidates under another name—a tactic repeated in the 1965 congressional elections. In 1963 they obtained enough votes to elect two governors, to gain control of five

provincial legislatures, and to win sixteen seats in the lower house of congress.

Concurrently, the Vandorist bureaucracy stepped up its efforts to isolate Perón from the militant sectors of the movement. It mounted a campaign of vilification against the newly organized MRP and against the Confederation of Peronist Orthodox Associations (CAOP), which had likewise incurred the wrath of the "62." Unlike Cooke, the new generation of revolutionary leaders, represented by Rearte of the MRP and by Jorge Di Pasquale of the CAOP, had risen directly from labor's ranks. Elected secretary-general of the Federation of Soap and Perfume Workers in 1956–57 when he was barely twenty-five, Rearte collaborated in the reorganization of the Peronist labor movement through the "62 Organizations" in 1957 and in the creation of the Peronist Youth in 1958, serving as a member of its executive board in 1959. Di Pasquale, elected secretary-general of the Association of Pharmaceutical Workers in 1958 when he, too, was in his twenties, served as press secretary of the "62 Organizations" from 1960 to 1962, as secretary of the Coordinating Supervisory Council of Peronism in 1962, and as a personal delegate of General Perón to the socialist countries in 1963. This new generation of trade union leaders appealed directly to the rank and file over the heads of the official leadership, thus constituting a challenge from within the "62 Organizations" that was potentially more dangerous than the threat from without.

The campaign against the MRP was followed by the crystallization of the rebellion against Perón at the Avellaneda Congress of the CGT in 1965. There Vandor publicly proclaimed his differences with the leader: "One must take a stand against Perón in order to save him"—presumably from the Peronist left. The response of the left to this blatant neo-Peronism of the trade union hierarchy was to organize in January 1966 the "62 on Foot with Perón"—the immediate precursor of the "CGT of the Argentines" created in 1968. Among the organizers of the "62 on Foot" were Amado Olmos, Rearte, Di Pasquale, and Armando Jaime, the last a member of the executive committee of the MRP, a founder of the Peronist Youth, and a former member of Cooke's National Command. Vandor's response was to expel the eighteen unions supporting the "62 on Foot" from the "62 Organizations."

At the same time a split developed in the leadership of the CGT between Vandor and José Alonso, the head of the Garment Workers Union. In 1963 Alonso had succeeded Andrés Framini as secretary-general of the CGT; then, at Perón's instigation, he had been re-elected for a second two-year term in 1965. However, in February 1966 Vandor pushed through a resolution demanding Alonso's resignation, after which he was replaced by one of Vandor's own men, Francisco Prado of the Light and Power Workers Union. Supported by Perón, Alonso then assumed the leadership of the "62 on Foot." Once again the flow of the revolutionary tide, which had reached its crest in December 1964, was followed by an ebb reaching its low point in mid-1966. By then the "62 on Foot" had virtually expired. When a new allegedly "nationalist" coup led by General Juan Carlos Onganía overthrew the pseudoconstitutional government of President Illia in June, it was supported by the Vandorist-controlled CGT which sought an immediate agreement with the military.

The fourth upsurge of the resistance that followed, lasting from the overthrow of President Illia on June 28, 1966, to May 25, 1973, when the military abdicated and President-elect Cámpora was inaugurated, sustained a higher level of militancy for a longer period of time than any of the preceding flows of the revolutionary tide. While the trade union hierarchy welcomed the dictatorship's proscription of all political parties and endeavored to fill the resulting vacuum with the "62 Organizations," a revived Peronist left wing unreservedly opposed both the new regime and the capitulationist tactics of the trade union bureaucracy. In a "Briefing to the Peronist Bases," Cooke exploded the illusion of a new unity between the armed forces and the people, arguing that the military government was a mixture of the worst features of both "systems": the liberalism of free trade, free enterprise, and economic development, technologically updated and modernized by the two Radical governments of Frondizi and Illia; and the authoritarian "nationalism" of the armed forces, reinforced by fascist currents and a revival of the Christian theology and feudal hierarchies of the twelfth century. In view of this combination of the worst of the old and the new, there could be nothing left to negotiate except one's own confusion (*Confluencia*, May 1974).

The initial accord between the military dictatorship and the Vandorist bureaucracy was founded on an illusion. Although

nominally nationalist, the military regime was bent on denationalizing the economy. In December 1966 the bureaucracy resisted the growing movement for a general strike, but in January 1967 the autoworkers struck in protest against the liberal economic policies of the new Minister of the Economy Krieger Vasena. Under his direction the currency was devalued, wages were frozen, prices were permitted to rise, and a boost was given to the penetration of Argentine industry and the domestic market by U.S. corporations. By February 1967 the CGT leadership had to bow to internal pressures by calling a general strike. Then in October it publicly denounced the government's economic program and its policy of denationalization. Labor struggles persisted and hostility by rank and file workers toward the Vandorist bureaucracy mounted until in March 1968, at the "Amado Olmos" Congress in homage to the deceased leader of the CGT, the top labor bureaucrats absented themselves and were voted out of office. The Vandorist bureaucrats then voided the elections. Since they retained control of the CGT's apparatus by fiat, from 1968 to 1970 there were two CGTs: the Vandorist CGT representing a minority of unions, although by far the largest, still hoping to become partners with the military dictatorship; and the "CGT of the Argentines" or CGT(A) under the leadership of Raimundo Ongaro, head of the Graphic Workers Union. In this first formalized split in the Peronist movement, José Alonso deserted the group loyal to Perón in favor of an alliance with Vandor.

On May Day 1968 the CGT(A) reaffirmed the program of Huerta Grande and organized lightning strikes throughout the country. By September the continued upsurge in labor militancy had led to a three-month strike by petroleum workers at the government refinery in La Plata and to a revival of armed resistance. The divisions in the labor movement prompted Perón to intervene through his new representative Jorge Paladino, but his effort to dissolve the Vandorist-led CGT met with no success. During 1969 labor struggles continued to escalate as well as student demonstrations and new urban guerrilla actions against the dictatorship.

A climax was reached in May 1969 with the first *Cordobazo* or mass insurrection in the city of Córdoba, a qualitative leap far in advance of the *Porteñazo* of 1959. Students and workers struck together, occupying a large sector of the industrial city until they were forcibly dislodged by the military. Although Onganía was

able to restore order, Krieger Vasena and four other cabinet members resigned. Onganía also lost his principal ally in the labor movement with the execution of Vandor by a revolutionary Peronist commando in June. Vandor was executed for scuttling the CGT(A)'s general strike in support of the *Cordobazo* and collaborating with the police in repressing the Peronist left. He was also held responsible for the shoot-out at the pizzeria "La Real" of Avellaneda on May 13, 1966, when his hired thugs took the lives of two militants. The CGT(A), which had sparked the *Cordobazo*, was intervened by the government: its offices were closed, its funds were confiscated, its leaders were jailed, and Ongaro was charged with responsibility for Vandor's death.

The *Cordobazo* was followed by a *Rosariazo* in September, but it too was crushed when martial law was imposed in Rosario and 14,000 striking railroad workers were promptly drafted into the army. In October the CGT(A) called another general strike, which was also opposed by the Vandorist CGT. Because of the limited response to the strike which was effective only in Córdoba, and because military repression had destroyed the capability of the CGT(A), the latter chose to dissolve. This action contributed to the reunification of the CGT at its Unity Congress in July 1970, when Perón intervened to impose José Rucci as the new secretary-general. Re-elected in 1972, Rucci was directly responsive to Perón. Although an official in Vandor's union, he represented a political position independent of both the Ongarist and Vandorist factions.

Although the "CGT of the Argentines" was no longer a threat, it had given birth to a new kind of unionism whose slogan "Unite from Below, Organize through Combat" was to become a basic feature of the resistance. From his prison cell, in August 1969, Ongaro reiterated its strategic line: "the permanent and generalized struggle of the people against the dictatorship, the oligarchy, and the imperialism of money" (*Confluencia*, May 1974). The objective of that struggle was nothing less than power to the people, a strategy designed "to socialize with a national character the wealth produced by the workers but appropriated by the capitalists and their servants." Such a strategy, according to Ongaro, required the CGT(A) to go underground as the only alternative to the restrictions on its political activity. After the *Cordobazo* new tactics were evidently required. These included the

concealment of the persons, names, and addresses of union leaders, the refusal to comply with the labor directives of the military regime, and the rejection of all directives not proceeding from the Peronist bases in the labor movement. In addition, Ongaro called for the organization of rank and file groups (*agrupaciones de base*) for exercising effective leadership in each union; the establishment of organic links with students, revolutionary intellectuals, and rebel priests in a united front for national and social liberation; and opposition to all projects for a new military coup, whether of the left or the right, in view of their reformist illusions and contempt for the leading role of the Peronist masses.

The "CGT of the Argentines" had been nurtured on the revolutionary tendency and on Rearte's Peronist Revolutionary Movement as the successor to Cooke's National Command. By 1969, however, the highly politicized trade union sector had all but eclipsed the political sector organized in the MRP. Consequently, in December 1969 Rearte organized the Revolutionary Movement 17th of October (MR-17), designed to overcome the limitations of the MRP by developing a political vanguard rooted in the trade unions. The new organization was also to replace the defunct CGT(A) and mobilize the masses for a popular war. Rearte was searching for a new kind of organization capable of overcoming the limitations of both Ongaro's *agrupación de base* and Guevara's political-military foco, one combining both armed and semilegal forms of resistance.

Parallel with the emergence of MR-17 was a somewhat different movement of convergence on the trade union bases—the Peronist Revolutionary Front (FRP). Founded in 1970 by Armando Jaime, it included a strong dose of Marxism-Leninism. Jaime began with an intensive campaign of political education among the workers of Salta and Tucumán with the help of two small periodicals, *Cabecita Negra* and *Vocero Popular*, whose first issue appeared in January 1971. In contrast to Rearte's main concern with unity of action, Jaime stressed the importance of ideology. All efforts at unification, he believed, should be realized on the basis of ideological-programmatic agreements compatible with the historical and class interests of the workers. Furthermore, he claimed that this unity depended upon the organization of a political party of the proletariat led by its most class-conscious and combative elements. And, finally, he held that the armed struggle for

overcoming imperialism and establishing socialism could be unified only under political, not military, leadership. Whereas MR-17 aimed at strengthening the Peronist left without regard to ideological differences, FRP worked to instill in the Peronist masses a knowledge of Marxism-Leninism.

The emergence of the "CGT of the Argentines" had provided the impetus not only for the *Cordobazo* of May 1969, but also for a revival of the armed struggle and preparations for a major confrontation with the dictatorship. Following the defeat and imprisonment of the principal cadres of the EGP and MNR (Tacuara) in April 1964, both the rural and urban armed resistance virtually disappeared for a period of four years. It was not revived until the middle of 1968 when militants of the Peronist Youth under the leadership of Envar El Kadri organized the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP). Its first guerrilla detachment, the "17th of October," was established at a camp called "El Plumerillo" in the vicinity of Taco Ralo, Tucumán. Having returned from a long march, the guerrillas were surprised by a large police force without being able to offer even minimal resistance. In a declaration from prison where they had been held incommunicado for twenty-eight days and savagely tortured, the "17th of October" explained the motives and objectives of its struggle.

Convinced of the need to achieve economic independence, political sovereignty, and social justice in our country and of the impossibility of doing so by any other means than armed struggle, groups of young Peronists decided to organize the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) and, like the gaucho *Montoneros* and the *descamisados* who made possible the 17th of October 1945, to initiate the revolutionary war as a way of showing the people the authentic road to their liberation . . . and of challenging the political power of the regime in the only language it understands (*Confluencia*, May 1974).

The influence of the Cuban Revolution on the FAP was openly admitted in an interview with its commander in December 1970, published in the English edition of the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma* (3 January 1971). Although by then the FAP had shifted to urban guerrilla operations in conscious imitation of Baxter's Tacuara, it did not exclude the role of rural guerrillas—provided they were initiated from the cities. The urban armed

struggle, no less than the rural, was intended to conform to Che's international strategy of confronting imperialism on a Latin American scale—a strategy requiring as many political ties as possible with revolutionary organizations in other countries. Within Argentina a strategy of solidarity and cooperation with other underground movements was favored, including joint military actions with the Guevarist-oriented Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), with which the FAP differed concerning the political interpretation of Argentine reality.

The FAP seems to have evolved through three principal stages. Until Perón's first return to Argentina on November 17, 1972, the guerrillas followed a strategy of *foquismo* (reliance upon mainly military operations by a vanguard without organic links to the masses). The guerrillas did not make a concerted effort to integrate themselves with the politics of Peronist mass organizations until the beginning of the electoral campaign, when they became immersed in community and neighborhood work. It was only after the electoral triumph in March 1973 that the FAP admitted to its "electoralist" and "triumphalist" errors (*Militancia*, 16 August 1973). Its neighborhood organizations had not organized workers in their shops and factories; it had also failed to develop political-military cells of support for its armed detachments. In an effort to establish ties with rank and file militants in the trade unions, the FAP then swung to the opposite extreme of a "classism without the laboring class." The resulting "ideologism," stressing the struggle for a socialist perspective in the objective interests of the proletariat, neglected to consider the workers' subjective interests and level of political development. This ultraleft strategy was as ineffective as its earlier "triumphalist" identification with the populist and polyclass character of the movement.

In direct response to the *Cordobazo* of May 1969, revolutionary cadres within the Peronist Youth gave rise to a second guerrilla organization, the Montoneros, named after the gaucho contingents of Argentina's first War of Independence in 1810 and of the civil wars that followed against the port city of Buenos Aires. Unlike the FAP, the Montoneros were an urban armed movement from the start with a pronounced adherence to Christian militancy. Fernando Abal Medina, its founder, had been a leader of Catholic Action (AC); his successor, Mario Firmenich, a leader of the Catholic Student Youth (JEC). Carlos Ramus, killed with Fernando

Abal on September 7, 1970, had also been a leader of the JEC. All had come under the direct influence of Juan García Elorrio, the editor of *Cristianismo y Revolución* and the principal Argentine interpreter of Camilism—the revolutionary theory and practice of the Colombian guerrilla-priest Camilo Torres. Thus the Montoneros represented the convergence of two different but related ideologies on the left: the revolutionary Peronism of Cooke under the general influence of Guevarism; and the revolutionary Christianity of Juan García as molded by Camilism. In effect, the Montoneros had less in common with the FAP than with Baxter's Tacuara, which had also originated in Catholic circles and had been a preeminently urban guerrilla movement.

The Montoneros were also unique in their choice of tactics, beginning with the abduction, trial, and execution of ex-President Pedro Aramburu on the first anniversary of the *Cordobazo*. In a communiqué dated May 31, 1970, the Montoneros announced the decision of its revolutionary tribunal to execute the former president for the following "crimes" against the Argentine people: for "legalizing" the execution without trial of the twenty-seven Argentines who had collaborated in the first Peronist military action of the resistance in June 1956; for formally condemning to death, in violation of the authority of the War Council, the eight military officers who led the insurrection; for proscribing the Peronist Party and the Peronist trade union organizations; and for desecrating the tomb of Evita Perón and stealing her remains. In addition he was charged with a series of delicts for which he refused to admit responsibility. The execution of Aramburu was followed on July 1 by the seizure of the town of La Calera in the province of Córdoba, where the Montoneros recuperated money and arms for the resistance. By the subsequent successful raid on the Bank of Galicia and Buenos Aires in the capital's suburb of Ramos Mejia on September 1, 1970, they gave further evidence of the viability and strength of the new organization.

Unlike the FAP, the Montoneros gave priority to spectacular actions which aimed to raise the political consciousness of the people. In almost every instance their armed operations were designed not to inflict a military defeat on the enemy, but to cultivate popular support directly through some action the masses might readily identify with. Although the Montoneros went through an early stage of *foquismo* in which they gave precedence

to the work of political-military vanguards, the purely military side of their struggle always had a clear and evident political content. Since their actions could dispense with lengthy explanations and justifications, the Montoneros' communiqués were usually brief. Unlike those of the FAP, they consisted of little more than firsthand reports of the facts and motives of a particular operation; they relied mainly on the propaganda of the deed rather than on doctrinaire exhortation and verbal agitation to awaken a political response. Although the communiqués and documents of the Montoneros lacked political depth, their very simplicity made them immediately understandable to people with only the rudiments of a political education—which contributed to making the Montoneros the largest and most powerful armed movement of the Peronist resistance.

Emerging publicly about the same time as the Montoneros was a third armed organization of the resistance, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Unlike both the FAP and Montoneros, the FAR was originally Guevarist in inspiration, although by December 1970 it had begun to converge with Peronism. Actually, its origins antedated those of both the FAP and Montoneros since its original nucleus was organized toward the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967 in preparation for joining Che's Bolivian campaign. The original cadres of the FAR, who were then known as "Che's men," were to acquire their military experience in Bolivia after which they were expected to return to Argentina to fight under Che's orders there.

In 1969 the FAR planned to join Inti Peredo's revived Army of National Liberation (ELN) in Bolivia, until the *Cordobazo* in May convinced it that the first task of liberation was a national rather than a continental one. At the same time, the effectiveness of the Tupamaros' strategy of urban guerrilla warfare in neighboring Uruguay helped to turn it away from a rural guerrilla strategy. The FAR first attained notoriety on July 30, 1970, when it seized the town of Garín with 30,000 inhabitants, a military action deliberately modeled on the Tupamaros' occupation of the city of Pando on October 8, 1969. A FAR communiqué covering the action gave lip service to the Peronist resistance and to the independent road initiated by the Argentine masses on October 17, 1945, when they demonstrated in Plaza de Mayo for Perón's release. But it noted that the guerrillas' main allegiance was to the "revolutionary

example of that other great Argentine and Latin American, fallen in Bolivia and converted by his struggle into a San Martín of the twentieth century: Comandante Che Guevara" (*Confluencia*, May 1974).

Within six months of the seizure of Garín, the FAR began to have second thoughts concerning the viability not only of Che's continental strategy, but also of any revolutionary strategy pursued independently of the Peronist movement. By the end of 1970 it had opened discussions designed to explore the bases for unity with the Montoneros. In December a leader of the FAR informed *Prensa Latina*, the Cuban news agency, that Che's insistence on the Bolivarian or continental character of the Latin American revolution was tantamount to putting the cart before the horse. The failure of the Bolivian campaign was attributed to Che's failure to achieve recognition by the Bolivian masses by responding to their specific needs and mandates. In effect, the FAR was the first Guevarist-type organization on the continent to learn the lessons of Che's failure in Bolivia and to adapt Guevarism to a national context. As a generator of political consciousness, the FAR's political-military vanguard was henceforth to act within the historical limits and possibilities imposed by Peronism as the dominant ideology among the Argentine masses. This called for a strategy of convergence with the Peronist movement for the purpose of uniting with its revolutionary tendency and combating its conciliatory wing. The FAR's political strategy was no longer sectarian: "Our organization considers itself to be a Peronist one. . . . If Marxism does not define our political identity, it is because Marxism is not a universal political banner" (*Cristianismo y Revolución*, April 1971).

Although in its beginnings the resistance was an exclusively Peronist affair, it became fused with a Guevarist tendency as early as 1959–60. This tendency gained further momentum with the escalation of armed resistance in 1963–64 and again in 1969–70. As the resistance developed, new Guevarist organizations also appeared independent of Peronism. The Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), organized in 1962 by dissidents of the Communist Youth to implement Che's call to prepare for armed struggle, launched its first armed action in April 1969 by attacking the military base at Campo de Mayo outside the nation's capital. Unlike the FAR, which had a similar origin, it never acquired a Peronist character.

At its Fifth Congress in July 1970 a Trotskyist vanguard, the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT), organized its own armed forces, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP)—likewise in response to Guevarist influence. It soon became the most active guerrilla force in Argentina, outrivalling the Peronist Montoneros. Although the PRT-ERP later broke with the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat), it retained its Guevarist orientation and independence of the Peronist movement. Thus the Argentine resistance developed an increasingly influential side-current and ceased to be synonymous with Peronism.

The Onganía dictatorship had managed to survive the *Cordobazo* of May 1969, only to collapse before a joint coup by the three military chiefs of staff a year later. Confronted by mounting armed resistance to the dictatorship, the military decided to intervene when General Pedro Aramburu, responsible for the original wave of repression against the Peronist movement, was abducted by the Montoneros and then executed. After forcing the resignation of General Onganía in June 1970, the military replaced him with General Roberto Marcelo Levingston.

Under General Levingston the death penalty was decreed for kidnappings and other terrorist acts. But it did not stop the mounting popular violence in July nor dissuade a pre-Montonero commando in August from executing José Alonso, who had betrayed Perón by collaborating with Vandor against the "CGT of the Argentines." Labor unrest reached another high in November when the reunified CGT under the alleged "neutral" leadership of its new Secretary José Rucci, called a general strike that was eighty-percent effective. In November the principal political parties banned by the military regime were also successful in organizing a broad front for the purpose of pressuring the government to abdicate and to call new elections. This coalition, calling itself the "Hour of the People," included the Radical Party, the Popular Conservative Party, the Progressive Democratic Party, and the Socialist Party, in addition to the Peronist Party.

In March 1971 a second *Cordobazo* again shook up the military regime. The three chiefs of staff launched a second coup-within-a-coup by forcing Levingston's resignation and replacing him with General Alejandro Lanusse. Unlike his predecessors, Lanusse combined increased repression against the Peronist resistance with a liberalization of the dictatorship. In June he decreed new

penalties for terrorism, but in July legalized political parties; in September he announced forthcoming presidential elections.

The legalization of political parties and preparations for new elections, however, did not put a lid on social discontent. In April 1972 Lanusse, like his predecessors, was confronted with mass demonstrations against the military government. In Córdoba, Rosario, San Luis, San Juan, and Mendoza the masses mobilized to protest an increase in electricity rates. The culminating point of the demonstrations occurred in Mendoza. The *Mendozazo*, which lasted four days, required the intervention of federal troops to quell it. Several deaths resulted before the government finally capitulated and reduced the rates to their former level, not only in Mendoza but in all the provinces where mass mobilizations had occurred. The *Mendozazo* was shortly followed by a *Rocazo*, an uprising in the city of General Roca in the province of Rio Negro. A provisional government was formed in that city in repudiation of the official one, and the army was again asked to intervene. During his brief administration, Lanusse had his hands full in coping with social disorders.

In 1971 Lanusse launched a plan known as the "Great National Accord" (GAN), a final desperate act by the military designed to incorporate the political opposition into a government-led electoral front. The GAN's immediate objective was to bring together in a single coalition all sectors of the population, both those which had and had not participated in political power since the outlawing of Perón's party in 1955. This front was expected to include the traditional right, the representatives of business both large and small, sectors of the labor bureaucracy, and the military. It was flatly rejected by the "Hour of the People."

At the same time that the military sought to co-opt important sectors of the Peronist movement, it also threatened to place new restrictions on the Peronist Party unless Perón denounced his movement's left wing. Perón refused and in November 1971 replaced Paladino with Héctor Cámpora, who was friendly to the Peronist left, as his personal representative in Argentina. Under Cámpora's leadership the Peronist movement then stepped up its resistance, while the Peronist armed formations put further pressure on the government.

Once the "Hour of the People" had accomplished its objective, Perón's response to the GAN was to organize his own electoral

front based on a general program of national reconstruction. This program brought together organized labor, the national bourgeoisie, and a variety of political groups of the moderate right and left. First presented to the country on February 15, 1972, it became the doctrinal basis of the Civic Front of National Liberation (FRECILINA) organized in the months that followed. Later, in December, the new electoral front changed its name to the Justicialist Front of Liberation (FREJULI), a coalition of twenty-five organizations led by the Peronist Party.

Selected as his party's presidential candidate in June, however, Perón was unacceptable as a candidate to the military government. Anticipating that any popular front with Perón on its ticket would carry the elections scheduled for March 1973, Lanusse announced on July 9, 1972, the adoption of a residential clause prohibiting any person from running for public office who had not established his residence in Argentina prior to August 25, 1972. Perón was unable to comply with this new restriction. He could not return safely until Lanusse chose to annul the charge against him as a "traitor," pending before a military tribunal since 1955, nor could he return legally without the proper documents and the government's authorization.

Perón was finally authorized to return in November, which prompted speculation of a Perón-Lanusse agreement behind the scenes. However, Perón never met directly with Lanusse nor is the evidence more than circumstantial that he agreed to a negotiated settlement with the military. He endorsed instead of repudiating the Peronist Youth and chose left-leaning Héctor Cámpora to be the FREJULI's presidential candidate in his place. Thus he was unable to nullify the effect of the residential clause directed against him in his absence. After failing in this objective, he returned to Madrid in December.

Although Lanusse personally vetoed Perón's candidacy, he did not carry through his threat to ban the Peronist Party. Apparently, he counted upon Perón to pacify the tumultuous masses and to discipline the special armed formations which Perón could safely countenance from exile, but might be expected to repudiate if he returned to Argentina. But Perón had come and gone, without once denouncing the armed struggle. On the contrary, his statements tended to encourage it. The pressure of the resistance from below rather than that of the armed forces from above helped to dictate

Perón's decisions. Instead of hurting the electoral chances of the FREJULI, Perón's firmness offered the only prospect of social peace. Although the military tried to manipulate the elections to prevent a Peronist victory, Cámpora won approximately fifty percent of the vote, while six representatives of the Peronist left wing were elected governors of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Mendoza, San Luis, Salta, and Chubut.

Perón's role during the resistance was a complex one corresponding to the heterogeneous nature of the Peronist movement. It is to be explained as a product of his responses: first, to the countervailing pressures from rival tendencies within the movement; and, second, to a variety of external pressures, notably the extent of official repression and the movement's ability to work effectively within the law. As long as the Peronist Party was banned from running its own candidates, and as long as gubernatorial and congressional elections were likely to be annulled in response to a Peronist victory, Perón favored the boycotting of elections and the mobilization of workers against the government. Although he did not exclude the possibility of a negotiated settlement, first with Frondizi and later with Lanusse, he was extremely skeptical of such a solution. This accounts for the predominantly revolutionary image of Perón throughout the resistance and the continued loyalty of the movement's left wing following his return to power.

To succeed against the military he had to mobilize the Peronist masses, which required a return to the original dynamism and revolutionary thrust of his first administration. At the same time, he had to hold his movement together and make periodic concessions to its moderate or reformist wing. Yet an extreme situation called for extreme measures which Perón did not hesitate to take once he was safely out of the country, and once the movement had recovered from its initial shock—the systematic repression launched by General Aramburu in November 1955. In any case, his original role was to launch the resistance, not to moderate the differences between opposing factions within the movement.

Later, Perón was obliged to perform a moderating role in order to preserve unity and a common front against the enemy. The Peronist movement was divided into rival and increasingly hostile tendencies. On the one hand, the "62 Organizations" constituted the principal organized support for the movement's reformist wing. On the other hand, the Peronist Youth, officially organized in 1958,

provided the bulk of the cadres for the armed struggle and the revolutionary wing. Since the Peronist Party was banned, the fundamental opposition internal to the movement was that between its trade union and youth branches. Although important sectors of the CGT backed the revolutionary tendency in 1959, 1962, and again from 1968 to 1970, more often than not its leadership favored negotiation rather than confrontation.

Perón was not compelled to play a moderating role until he had successfully reorganized and rebuilt the Peronist movement. Then a revived trade union bureaucracy would begin to challenge the confrontationist tactics of the movement's left wing. Ironically, in exile he soon discovered that the role of moderator carried little weight with Peronist leaders, whether of the right or the left, who had become accustomed to directing their particular sector of the movement without him. To be effective at all, he had to align himself either with the movement's revolutionary or conciliatory wing. Throughout most of the eighteen years of the resistance, Perón sided with the popular currents which had characterized his first administration. It was only after his return to power that he began to favor again the trade union and political bureaucracies and to put a halt to the revolutionary process unleashed by the resistance.

At the beginning of the resistance, when the trade union leadership was imprisoned and Perón found himself deserted by the political leaders of the movement, his only recourse was to turn to new leaders from the militant tendency represented by John William Cooke. Later, when the trade union bureaucracy had revived and taken a position independent of Perón, he again sided with the Peronist left. Only when the left likewise threatened to become independent did he begin to adopt a more moderate position. But that transpired only after the Peronist movement returned to power in May 1973.

Perón himself relied upon the special armed formations and the *agrupaciones de base* to harass the military into calling new elections with Peronist participation. As he conceived it, the role of the Peronist left was to pressure the military to abdicate, certainly not to seize political power or to serve as the fulcrum of a popular front aimed at winning the elections. The Peronist electoral front was to consist of as broad a coalition as possible compatible with the hegemony of the Peronist Party. Once the military had

abdicated, but only then, the revolutionary currents would be either disciplined or purged from the movement. Both prior to and after his return to Argentina in November 1972, Perón refused to bow to military pressures that would have him openly repudiate his movement's revolutionary wing.

Unquestionably, the resistance under the leadership of its left wing was the fundamental factor in bringing to an end the military dictatorship. A series of different strategies had been approved by the military between 1955 and 1973 for nullifying the influence of the Peronist movement. From 1955 to 1958 a military government ruled as an interim measure aimed at restoring the old political parties and the type of political system existent prior to Perón; from 1958 to 1962 a "developmentalist" economic strategy was tried; from 1963 to 1966 the military experimented with a "demoliberal" government; and from 1966 to 1973 it attempted to govern on its own. With the outbreak of the second *Cordobazo* in March 1971, it was evident to the military that all had failed. After deposing General Levingston, the leaders of the coup decided to call new elections in an effort to obtain a constitutional sanction for their rule. This decision was a response to the combined pressures of two *Cordobazos*, an explosive social situation characterized by a sustained wave of strikes with no end in sight, mounting guerrilla warfare that had mushroomed in 1970, and mass political pressures for the return of Perón.

Seen in perspective, the Argentine resistance passed through four major stages or cycles in the flow and ebb of opposition to military dictatorship and pseudoconstitutional governments. During the first stage (1955–58) the resistance had as its objective the undermining of the military regime through mass industrial unrest, sabotage, guerrilla operations, and the enlistment of support from the regular army. During the second stage (1958–62) the principal objective was the legalization of the CGT and the Peronist Party, with the expectation of returning to power through an electoral victory. During the third stage (1962–66) the objective was the creation of systematic chaos through a "Battle Plan" aimed at paralyzing the country economically and, with the help of armed resistance, at putting pressure on the government to secure Perón's return. The resistance during the fourth and final stage (1966–73) sought to end the military dictatorship through a combination of tactics including labor unrest, mass mobilizations, armed struggle,

and the organization of a new electoral front. With the exception of the last stage in which the resistance succeeded in getting the military to abdicate, each one was characterized by an initial militant upsurge followed by an ebb in the revolutionary tide.

The resistance also exhibited certain overall patterns. With the exception of the first stage, when the Peronist movement experienced its greatest setback, each successive stage was accompanied by an escalation of repression and preparedness on the part of the masses for resisting it. Once the masses had recovered from their initial shock and organized themselves for a protracted struggle, the level of the resistance tended to correspond to the level of repression. Each successive flow or high tide of insurgency mobilized a larger percentage of the population in opposition, escalated the armed struggle, and was more militant than its immediate precursor. Parallel with this growth in the revolutionary tendency was a corresponding strengthening of the tendency favoring a negotiated settlement with the military. Paradoxically, the strategy that failed during the resistance was to prevail after victory. From beginning to end the Peronist left was the main impetus or driving force of the resistance, but the negotiating tendency was its principal beneficiary.

Contradictions in the Revolutionary Tendency

During the resistance, which may be conventionally dated from the military coup of September 1955 to the reestablishment of the Peronist Party in power on May 25, 1973, the various sectors of the resistance were unified by one common objective: overthrowing military rule. Although the revolutionary forces were divided into rival factions, their differences did not impede special armed formations from carrying out joint military actions of various kinds. In 1972, for example, the FAR engaged in joint operations with both the Trotskyist ERP and the Montoneros. In a joint communiqué with the ERP, the FAR acknowledged its role in the April 1972 execution of General Juan Carlos Sánchez, chief of the Second Army Corps in Córdoba, in retaliation for his role in the suppression of the second *Cordobazo* in March 1971. On August 15, 1972, twenty-five militants of the FAR, ERP, and Montoneros escaped from the Rawson Penitentiary in Patagonia in a joint action planned by the three organizations. Again, in June 1973, the FAR and Montoneros issued one of the first in their series of joint communiqués, calling on the people to defend the Peronist victory at the polls “through a struggle without quarter, in all terrains and by all means used by the people since 1955” (*Militancia*, 21 June 1973).

This tendency toward joint military actions was to culminate in the organizational merger of the FAR and Montoneros on October

12, 1973. In September Perón had commissioned the leaders of the FAR and Montoneros, Roberto Quieto and Mario Firmenich, to invite representatives of the various youth organizations to a top-level reunion with him to discuss the reorganization of the movement's youth sector. The purpose of the reorganization was to guarantee the representative character of the youth leadership without dissolution of their special organizations (*El Descamisado*, 11 September 1973). Although the FAP was present at the meeting on September 8, the dominant influence was that exercised by the FAR and Montoneros. Shortly afterward, these two organizations announced the fusion of their respective structures and commands and became the largest and most influential paramilitary apparatus in Argentina. Under the name of Montoneros, the new organization was intended as a contribution to the reorganization, institutionalization, and unification of the youth movement demanded by Perón. In a public speech to the Peronist Youth (JP) a week later, Quieto singled out Carlos Olmedo of the FAR and José Sabino Navarro of the Montoneros as the pioneers of the Act of Unification, whose foundations had been laid as early as 1971.

The tendency toward unification was more than offset, however, by an accentuation of the differences within the Peronist left following the return of the Peronist movement to power in May. Although originally unified by the objective of overthrowing a common enemy, the principal factions of the left began quarreling among themselves once this goal had been achieved. The "movementist" sector represented by the FAR-Montoneros and the Peronist Youth concluded that the resistance had indeed come to an end, and that a major change of strategy—aimed at working within the official Peronist movement—was needed. Henceforth the Peronist armed formations would be used to defend the popular government against efforts to subvert it. In effect, the armed struggle would be given a legal sanction and subordinated to the preeminently political effort to implement the Peronist program of national liberation. Another, or "classist," sector, led by the FAP and the Peronist Bases (PB)—remnants of the "62 on Foot" and the "CGT of the Argentines"—made common cause with the principal non-Peronist guerrilla organizations, believing that the resistance should continue until the establishment of a "Socialist Fatherland." This meant a strategy not only of independence of the Peronist movement, but also of confrontation with the Peronist political and

trade union bureaucracies, the reactionary armed forces, and the multinational corporations.

The Montoneros had emerged as an armed detachment of the Peronist Youth, but it was not long before it became the head of a reorganized youth movement. Once its political-military vanguard acquired control over the JP, the latter became the principal legal as well as mass front of the Montoneros. Together they became the parent body and organizing nuclei of the Peronist University Youth (JUP), the Union of Secondary Students (UES), and the *Agrupación Evita* or youth sector corresponding to the feminine branch of the movement. Cadres of the Montoneros and JP also collaborated in 1973 to organize the Peronist Working Youth (JTP), a trade union branch, and the Movement of Peronist Urban Squatters (MVP), made up of the inhabitants of the *villas miseria* or occupied lands and slum dwellings alongside the railroads, canals, and fringes of the big cities. In addition, the Montoneros could count on the support of part of the older generation of Peronists, Perón's old friends organized in the Association of Authentic Peronism (APA). This group was made up of former leaders from the National Command, the strike at Lisandro de la Torre, and the 1962 conference at Huerta Grande.

For the Montoneros the new period, beginning with the formal abdication of the military and Héctor Cámpora's inauguration as president, signified that Perón had captured the government without seizing political power. Because their strategy was to use the government to win power, they temporarily abandoned the armed struggle. However, it is important to note that the Montoneros continued to train the Peronist Youth in guerrilla warfare and to engage in occasional acts of popular justice. One such action was the assassination of CGT boss José Rucci in September 1973, in which they concealed their identity. Another was the March 1974 slaying of Rogelio Coria, the discredited former head of the Construction Workers Union (UOCRA).

The strategy of the Montoneros toward the government was one of critical support or loyal opposition. As long as Perón lived, their loyalty remained unshakable. The government's shift to the right they interpreted partly as a betrayal of Perón by the political and trade union bureaucracies, partly as a response to external pressures from the cordon of military regimes established along Argentina's eastern, northern, and western frontiers. For these

developments Perón could not be held responsible, although they virtually obliged him, or so it was believed, to retreat from constructing a form of national socialism in Argentina. Loyalty to Perón did not imply unquestioning acceptance of his every act, some of which were said to have been forced upon him by right-wing elements in the movement. Thus throughout this period the Montoneros tended to vacillate between the two poles of their strategy: support for Perón, and opposition to the Supreme Council of the Peronist Party which was presumably working against him.

The overall result of this strategy was an alternating succession of retreats and advances. At one moment loyalty to Perón would lead the Montoneros to endorse his acts; at another, to denounce legislation inconsistent with his earlier program of national liberation. Actually, the strategy of the Montoneros underwent the following shifts during 1973–74: first, a steady retreat before the advances of the right wing of the movement lasting from May 25, 1973, until the Olivos meeting between Perón and representatives of the youth branch on February 7, 1974; second, a temporary advance or assertion of independence that began with the boycotting of the Olivos meeting and culminated in the confrontation with Perón and the walkout from Plaza de Mayo on May 1; third, a new retreat signaled by Firmenich's speech of June 13, 1974, in response to Perón's last public appearance and threats to resign; and finally, a new advance beginning on September 6 when the Montoneros returned underground to make common cause with the FAP and the ERP against the escalation of police and military repression by the government of Isabel Perón. Although these pendular shifts in strategy were supposedly evidence of opportunism, at least according to its critics, such shifts were inevitable in view of the Montoneros' efforts to avoid a confrontation with Perón while revolutionizing the Peronist movement from within.

The strategy of retreat initiated on May 25 was reaffirmed and clarified in a communiqué by the Montoneros to the Peronist people on November 3, 1973. "Until the 25th of May we were subversives," the message declared, but "since the 25th of May we support the popular government and defend it by every means" (*Militancia*, 8 November 1973). Once the Montoneros had achieved their objective of overthrowing the military regime and paving the way for Perón's return, the communiqué explained, they adapted their strategy to the new objective of national reconstruction

followed by liberation under a government of their own choice. In short, they gave up armed struggle except for the purpose of defending the popular government.

The government was to be defended not only against reactionary elements in the armed forces, but also against efforts to undermine it by a new breed of subversives working within the Peronist movement. These consisted of representatives of the trade union bureaucracy and their supporters in the political branch of the movement, who had launched an offensive against the newly elected provincial governors identified with the Peronist left wing. They were also responsible for attacks against the basic units of the JP and for harassing, kidnapping, torturing, and assassinating Peronist militants. From the moment C  mpora became president, the communiqu   noted, the subversives began raising obstacles to the government's program through disruptive tactics that "coincided objectively with some of the provocations of the ultraleft." Beginning with the occupations of factories in order to prevent their occupation by militant sectors of the labor movement, they turned to direct attacks against locals belonging to the Peronist left. After pressuring C  mpora to resign prematurely in the guise of a campaign to make Per  n president, they proceeded to attack the provincial governments of Buenos Aires, C  rdoba, Corrientes, and Salta, followed by similar attempts against the governments of Mendoza, Tucum  n, Formosa, San Luis, and Santa Fe.

There is no doubt, the communiqu   continued, that these forces had tried to subvert the popular government in the course of impeding its program of national reconstruction and liberation. Objectively, they were serving the interests of imperialism, which had chosen to obstruct the Peronist movement by working within it and penetrating its trade union bureaucracy. They had also tried to push the left wing into an armed confrontation as a way of embarrassing the government, creating a climate of political violence, and provoking intervention by the armed forces: "We know that they want to inveigle us into a direct confrontation, but we are not going to fall into the trap." Thus in practice the Montoneros chose to defend the popular government by relying mainly on constitutional means. Although committed in principle to the use of violence, they regarded legal measures as the most effective instruments under the new conditions of popular rule.

The program of national liberation defended by the Montoneros

was an evidently populist one, predicated on the establishment of a popular state which would control and plan the economy as a necessary condition of political and economic independence. This would be achieved through the expropriation of the property of the landed oligarchy and big foreign enterprises in Argentina, and the transformation of the professional army from an occupation force in the service of those interests into a force for national liberation. The liberation of the people in an immediate sense was to be accomplished through provisions regulating matters of health, housing, and employment; through the abolition of repressive laws and the granting of amnesty to political prisoners who had fought the dictatorship; and through the participation of the people in government through their political, trade union, and youth organizations. This was the Peronist program for which the people voted in the March elections—a program of revolutionary nationalism aimed at overcoming Argentina's condition of dependency.

But it was not long in being betrayed. Politically, the process of national liberation was distorted through the displacement of Peronist militants by opportunists within the movement; economically, through successive ratifications of a "social pact" between the trade unions and employers associations. The betrayal began on a government level with a conspiracy by the Vandorist vice-governors of the provinces of Buenos Aires, Mendoza, Santa Fe, and Salta. In January 1974 they were successful in ousting the left-wing Governor of Buenos Aires Oscar Bidegain, and replacing him with Vice-Governor Victorio Calabró, the ex-treasurer of the Metallurgical Workers Union (UOM), still the principal stronghold of Vandorism in the labor movement. In other provinces the vice-governors were aided and abetted by corresponding police conspiracies disguised as a struggle for higher wages and supported by the labor bureaucracy. The efforts to oust Peronist militants from positions of political power were carried out in connection with the campaign of ideological purification launched by the Supreme Council of the Party, in response to the assassination of José Rucci, the head of the CGT, in September 1973. Under the guise of ridding the movement of Marxist subversives, Peronist militants were gradually replaced by representatives of the Vandorist bureaucracy, whose record of faithlessness to Perón had become legend during the eighteen years of the resistance.

The Social Pact freezing wages and salaries and restricting the

right to strike was originally presented to the people as an alliance between labor and capital in the interest of national reconciliation. Signed by the representatives of the CGT and CGE during Cámpora's administration, its implementation had become the responsibility of the Vandorist bureaucracy and sectors of big business, who used it to serve their own interests. The Social Pact became a device for freezing not only wages and salaries, but also the class struggle. It became a generalized argument not only for maintaining the economic status quo, but also for freezing trade union political action. As enforced by the labor bureaucrats, it was used to perpetuate themselves in office and to hold back the pressures for union democracy and the efforts by labor militants to administer the pact from below. It was also used to legitimize political repression. Although the Montoneros had supported the original pact, they could not support its abuses. Accordingly, they tried to "correct" it in order to recover its original significance as an instrument for the protection rather than oppression of the working class.

A major break with this strategy of retreat occurred during the first week of February 1974 when, for the first time since May 1973, the Peronist left presented a solid front against the right wing of the movement. Called by Perón to meet with representatives of other youth organizations for the purpose of institutionalizing the youth branch of the movement, the Montoneros, JP, JUP, and JTP joined the FAP and PB in unanimously rejecting the invitation. Although in September the Montoneros had actively participated in such a reunion, by February a new youth group, the Peronist Youth of the Argentine Republic (JPRA), had so consolidated its position with the support of the political and trade union hierarchies that, despite its unrepresentative character, it threatened to acquire hegemony within a restructured youth organization. Moreover, the Montoneros recognized the absurdity of maintaining a united front with the right-wing paramilitary groups, which had been decimating the leadership of the JP, JTP, and kindred organizations since Perón's final return to Argentina in June 1973.

Only a few days earlier eight deputies of the Peronist Youth had resigned their seats in congress rather than vote for the repressive legislation urged in response to the ERP's January attack on the army base at Azul in the province of Buenos Aires. Furthermore, the Vandorist campaign against Oscar Bidegain contributed to his

resignation as governor once Perón charged him with "culpable tolerance" in relation to the ERP and sectors of the Peronist left. In short, the escalation of repression and right-wing terrorism against all sectors of the left called for a clarification of positions and for a direct confrontation rather than artificial unification with their professed antagonists. Thus began the first serious questioning by the Montoneros, if not of the leading role they still imputed to Perón, at least of their earlier strategy of trying to influence the Peronist movement from within.

The official organ of the Peronist Youth, *JOTAPÉ*, included in its February issue two brief articles on the meeting proposed by General Perón. Among the reasons for not attending it were the following: the need to determine first the ends to be served by a reorganization of the youth branch; the lack of assurance that the bulk of the youth would be faithfully represented by the organizations claiming to represent them; and the futility of reorganizing the youth branch without also reorganizing the rest of the Peronist movement in accordance with the principle of representation. The JP was prepared to discuss and elaborate a serious project of organization with representative sectors of the right-wing JPRA, but it could not do so with the armed gangs which had been assassinating its own comrades.

The Montoneros and JP had arrived at a common front with other sectors of the Peronist left, but they had yet to change their assessment of the political situation and the theoretical basis of their strategy. The same issue of *JOTAPÉ* contained an editorial in which the fundamental question before the country continued to be presented as "Liberation or Dependency?" This question had been sidestepped by Perón, who had redefined the struggle in terms of national reconstruction as a precondition of national liberation. But as the editorial pointed out: "If we settle for reconstruction and do not liberate ourselves, we shall achieve only a reconstruction of dependency." It also noted that the seven million Argentines who voted the Peronist ticket on March 11 and September 23 did so for national liberation in the first instance. Thus the Montoneros and JP chose to remain firm behind Perón's original program. They were against his later efforts to revise it from the right, as if reconstruction were a condition of national liberation; and they were just as opposed to efforts to revise it from the left.

Theoretically, as well as programmatically, the gulf remained

between the Montoneros-JP and the "classist" sector of the Peronist left. The Montoneros gave priority to an anti-imperialist front of liberation; the FAP insisted that such a front be also prosocialist. On January 30, 1974, the FAP issued a message to the laboring class and the Peronist people specifically denouncing a strategy of alliances with the national bourgeoisie as incompatible with the struggle for social liberation (*Militancia*, 21 February 1974). In contrast, the *JOTAPÉ* in its February issue reaffirmed the viability of such an alliance, if not with the big national bourgeoisie, at least with its middle sectors. Accordingly, the front of national liberation was to continue being an alliance of three classes instead of two: the working class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the middle sectors of the national bourgeoisie.

Following the temporary detention of Quieto and Firmenich and the nationwide campaign for their release, Firmenich delivered a major address at the Atlanta stadium in Buenos Aires in commemoration of the March 11 electoral victory the year before. The Supreme Council of the Party headed by Humberto Martiarena had warned that it would expel all those who concurred at the celebration. Nonetheless, some forty thousand militants were present to hear Firmenich denounce the trade union bureaucrats as traitors to the movement, and call for a new program to replace the old one of "Support, Control, and Defense of the Popular Government." As Firmenich explained, the escalation of repression had brought into question the popular character of the government, which could no longer be supported as formerly. Instead, the fundamental problem was to recover the government which had become lost to both Perón and the people. The new strategy of the Montoneros was to expose the "traitors" within the movement and return it to its original course. That strategy was continuous with the earlier one in its assumption that the government could be recaptured within the existing structures of the Peronist movement.

A major feature of Firmenich's speech was his denunciation of the Social Pact signed by the CGT and representatives of Argentine business. Since the original pact had been distorted and then institutionalized through a series of laws, it could no longer be simply "corrected" by mobilizing the workers against it. The pact was prejudicial to labor's interests; accordingly, the Montoneros were in favor of abrogating it. Firmenich called for a strategy of mass mobilizations against the wage-freeze. Unlike the old strategy

of alliances with influential sectors of the official movement, the new one supported the autonomous organization of the trade union rank and file. But the differences with the Peronist Bases (PB) remained. The Montoneros still hoped to recover Perón's original program, whereas the PB was struggling to go beyond it in the belief that national liberation was impossible without the prior construction of socialism.

The new direction chartered by the Montoneros on March 8 was formalized with the publication on March 29 of its new program entitled "Rechannel the Peronist Movement as the Axis of Liberation—Reconstruct the Front under the Hegemony of the Workers—Recover the Government for the People and for Perón." This program was also adopted by the JP and its fraternal organizations, the JUP, UES, JTP, *Agrupación Evita*, and Movement of Peronist Urban Squatters (MVP). Most of it constituted a repetition of the fundamental points outlined by Firmenich on March 8. The fundamental enemy was still identified with North American imperialism, aggravated by the infiltration of reactionary and "gorilla" elements into the government and state apparatus. Instead of confronting Peronism as in the past, imperialism had shifted to a strategy of integrating it into its plans. The Vandorist labor bureaucracy had been chosen, according to the Montoneros, to accomplish imperialism's objective of displacing Peronist militants from positions of influence, after which the plan was to dispute the leadership of Perón himself.

The Montoneros' new program noted that, from the heights of the Peronist government and the Peronist or Justicialist Party, the labor bureaucracy had in fact succeeded in its task of isolating Perón from the Peronist masses. The aim of the Vandorist bureaucracy was not to share power with other sectors of the movement, but to monopolize all power for itself in a virtual "Metallurgical Fatherland"—Vandor's base of support had been the Metallurgical Workers Union (UOM)—whose real leader would be the dead Vandor rather than the living Perón. Behind all the new repressive legislation was this same Vandorist bureaucracy, which had directed its armed bands to cooperate with the police in ousting the elected governor and vice-governor of Córdoba in February. It had come to dominate not only some of the most important provincial governments, but also some of the key positions in the federal government and the Peronist Party.

Given this perspective, the immediate enemy in the struggle to recover the Peronist movement for the people and for Perón consisted of the Vandorist bureaucracy and its allies in the government, Ricardo Otero, López Rega, and Benito Llambi, respectively ministers of labor, social welfare, and the interior. So strong was the Vandorist bureaucracy that Perón's efforts to create a counterforce through the parties of the opposition and the political branch of the movement were of no avail without the parallel organization of the Peronist bases. This, then, was the strategy proposed by the new program: to mobilize mass support for Perón in order to break through the Vandorist encirclement that was isolating him from the people and crippling his original project of liberation.

The Montoneros had taken their first steps toward formulating a political strategy independent of that of the Justicialist movement and, for that matter, of Perón. Their unconditional rejection of the Social Pact marked a major advance over their earlier critical support of it. Although their new strategy continued to play up to the vacillating character of middle and lower sectors of the bourgeoisie, there could be no alliance with these sectors that did not concretely benefit the workers. The Montoneros also began to question the effectiveness of Perón's moderating role above the several classes and factions within the Party. They questioned his alleged encirclement by hostile elements within the government over whom he supposedly had no control. They noted the fundamental agreement between his behavior in office and the project of a "Metallurgical Fatherland" favored by the Vandorist bureaucracy. Whereas earlier they had tried to guess Perón's real motives, his deeds spoke louder than words. Furthermore, his words tended to support his deeds.

The Montoneros' new strategy led directly to the May 1 Plaza de Mayo confrontation and to the massive walkout in the middle of Perón's address. Although the FAP and PB had refused to attend the May Day celebration in protest against the government's labor policies, the Montoneros-JP attended en masse for the purpose of talking with Perón and making known their differences with the government. Specifically, they hoped to convert the May Day celebration into a popular assembly and to impress upon their leader the following demands: that the "traitors" be expelled from

the government and the movement; that the popular program voted by the people on March 11 and September 23 be fully implemented; and that there be an end to "gorilla" repression against Peronist militants (*JOTAPÉ*, April 1974).

Instead, the meeting degenerated into a hostile confrontation and exchange of insults. While the Montoneros chanted "What's wrong General, the popular government is filled with gorillas?", Perón retorted with remarks about the stupid and beardless youth, who pretended to have more merit than the trade union organizations which had maintained themselves intact throughout twenty years of struggle. Angrily, the Montoneros began to shout "Sawdust, saw on, the people are going!" and "Rucci was a traitor, greetings to Vandor!" Meanwhile they gave the order to retire and began their exodus from the square. This action appeared to have enraged Perón, who lost the thread of his discourse and launched into a diatribe in which the Montoneros-JP were contemptuously accused of infiltrating the movement, of betraying it, of being more dangerous than the enemies working from outside it, and of acting as mercenaries in the service of foreign interests. While approximately sixty thousand of the estimated one hundred thousand present withdrew from the Plaza, the Vandorist bureaucracy and its youth groups chanted menacingly "The Peronist police will get the Montoneros!" And, as if responding to this threat, the police joined by armed gangs of the Metallurgical Workers Union and the Peronist Trade Union Youth (JSP), the youth section of the CGT, began harassing, assaulting, and arresting some of those who were leaving.

A significant retreat from the new program formulated in March, which had pushed the Montoneros into the May Day confrontation, was initiated by Firmenich in a press interview on June 13, 1974. Responding to Perón's threats to resign and to his last public speech on June 12 in which he had denounced the maneuvers of the oligarchy and imperialism, Firmenich again called for the defense of the popular government—a return to the Montoneros' 1973 program. In a prepared document read by Firmenich entitled "We support the Organization of the People against the Oligarchy and Imperialism," the Montoneros reneged on their unconditional rejection of the Social Pact. Thus they returned to their earlier policy of "correcting" it, hoping to halt the inflationary spiral and

to reach an agreement between capital and the authentic representatives of the workers that would cease being prejudicial to the latter.

In part, the retreat was motivated by the need for mass support against the sinister campaign by the oligarchy and imperialism to sabotage and create difficulties for the Peronist government. These difficulties included the artificial creation of shortages and the development of a black market with inflated prices designed to wreck the Social Pact—tantamount to an economic boycott of the regime reminiscent of the one which contributed to President Allende's overthrow in neighboring Chile. In addition, the newspapers of the oligarchy were creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension tending to aggravate the effects of the boycott. The new document of the Montoneros took special pains to distinguish its opposition to the government from the campaign of sabotage launched by the oligarchy in conjunction with foreign interests. The new situation called for unequivocal support of Perón, against "the agents of the oligarchy and imperialism who are the cause of shortages and speculation on the black market, and those who through their control of the mass media try to create confusion and panic. . . ." (*Noticias*, 14 June 1974). Although the Vandorist bureaucracy was assailed for placing obstacles in the way of mass demonstrations against this conspiracy of the right, the document made clear that the fundamental enemy was not within the Peronist movement but outside.

This temporary retreat lasted until September 6, 1974, when, in opposition to the repressive policies of the new government of Isabel Perón, the Montoneros returned underground. On that day, in a press conference, Firmenich announced that "the imperialist and oligarchical offensive had succeeded in capturing all the key positions in the government" in consequence of which "we will continue our actions until these circumstances are modified" (*El Día*, 7 September 1974). At the same time, he declared that the Montoneros would desist from their opposition to the government on the following conditions: first, the elimination of all forms of repression; second, the restitution to the workers of all government-intervened trade unions; third, the implementation of union democracy; fourth, a general amnesty for political prisoners; and fifth, the end of political censorship. Until these conditions were satisfied, the Montoneros would carry forward the process of

national liberation in the only effective ways left to them, i.e., through illegal actions. This was the first time since Perón's death in July that the Montoneros had taken a decisive stand against the new government, which it accused of taking a right-wing course. Thus, once again, they reaffirmed their independence of the official movement, returning underground in anticipation of a long and hard struggle against the combined efforts of López Rega (in control of the Party and the government) and of the Vandorist bureaucracy (in control of the CGT).

In sharp contrast to the Montoneros' strategy of retaining their links with the official movement, the much smaller and increasingly uninfluential Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) gave up all hope of influencing the movement from within. Like the ERP, the FAP opted to continue the resistance by participating in armed operations against the oligarchy and the multinational corporations until the land, the factories, the hospitals, and the schools should have become the property of the people. The main difference between the FAP and the ERP was that the FAP continued to regard Perón as its leader, actively working for his election in September. Nonetheless, it relied on its own powers rather than Perón's to push the movement forward on a socialist course. The independent organization of the Peronist rank and file was believed to be the only force available for breaking through his encirclement by hostile elements within the party. Not until January 1974 did the FAP lose faith in Perón. Simultaneously it began to look upon the Peronist movement as having outlived its historic usefulness to the working class.

From May 25, 1973, to the end of January 1974, when the FAP definitely broke with Perón, the principal differences between the FAP and Montoneros did not concern their respective assessments of Perón, but rather the opportunities and prospects of working within the official movement. For the FAP the opportunities were nil and the prospects dismal; hence the masses would have to be organized independently. The movement was handicapped not only by a corrupt bureaucracy, but also by a program of liberation predicated on a broad populist coalition including sectors of the bourgeoisie. Such a program, the FAP argued, was self-defeating. The national bourgeoisie had a vested interest in maintaining the capitalist system of exploitation which was the principal institutional support of the native oligarchy and the multinational

corporations in Argentina. How, then, could it be a reliable ally in a struggle against those forces if its own interest required their perpetuation?

The FAP's struggle for national liberation precluded any agreement with the national bourgeoisie and the collaborationist or conciliatory trade union leadership. On the premise that the establishment of socialism was a necessary condition to overcoming domination by the landed oligarchy in league with foreign interests, the fundamental issue for the FAP was not "Liberation or Dependency" but "Dependency or Socialism." It was not that the FAP's cadres were impatient to push ahead toward a socialist alternative. Like the Montoneros, they opted to move forward cautiously through separately demarcated stages, but differences between them were compounded by their opposing interpretations of Argentine political reality.

Apparently, the FAP's original strategy tried unsuccessfully to steer a middle course between the sectarianism of the ERP and the integrationist policies of the Montoneros. Not until the resignation of President Cámpora on July 13, 1973, did the FAP undergo a serious self-criticism of the pendular stages in its development and of the corresponding "deviations." The first such criticism appeared in its August 3 "Briefings for an Analysis of the Present Situation" (*Militancia*, 16 August 1973). There it summarized its past errors under the headings of "the policies of sects" which tended to atomize or isolate the political-military vanguard from the Peronist bases, and of "the policies of vacillation" which tended to absorb or integrate the vanguard in a Peronist movement controlled by the political and trade union bureaucracies.

In this perspective, the principal internal task of the FAP was to restructure its political-military vanguard so that it would be neither atomized nor absorbed. This task, requiring the independent organization of the trade union rank and file, was presented as a condition of overcoming the principal internal enemy, i.e., the trade union bureaucracy. Envar El Kadri, the founder of the FAP, in a speech at a convocation of the Peronist Bases (PB) on September 15, made a special point of identifying this task with that of the PB:

In order to make a reality of Evita's slogan that Peronism will be revolutionary or it will be nothing, we propose the

necessity of organizing the Peronism of the Bases in all places where there are two, three, five, twenty Peronists who share our principles; because only in this way, through organizing ourselves in factories, workshops, schools and neighborhoods, through creating an independent organization of the laboring class and the Peronist people from below, are we going to realize the just, free, and sovereign fatherland, the Socialist Fatherland, for which our comrades have given their lives and for which the people have been struggling for the past 27 years (*Militancia*, 20 September 1973).

The FAP's new program adopted in response to Perón's return to power on October 12, 1973, was set forth in an October 17 communiqué, commemorating the day in October 1945 when he was released by the military under pressure from the first grand-scale mobilization of the Peronist masses. A special effort was made to distinguish the popular brand of Peronism from that of the political and trade union bureaucracy. On the premise that there was more than one Peronist tradition, that of October 17 and that of July 13 when President Cámpora was pressured to resign by the Peronist political and trade union leadership, the FAP's new program was articulated in response to two fundamental questions. Why did the Peronist workers vote for Perón on September 23? Why did the bourgeoisie and the political and trade union bureaucracies also vote for him? (*Militancia*, 8 November 1973)

The workers voted for Perón in order that they might receive a decent wage, that their children might have access to education, that they might control the production and sale of their own products, that workers' democracy might be implemented in each factory and neighborhood, that housing and medicine might become a right for everyone, that the land might belong to those who cultivate it, that the military might be barred from any participation in government decisions, and that imperialism might be expelled from Argentine soil. The communiqué also underlined what the workers had voted against. They had said no to the presence in the country of monopolies and capitalist exploiters, to the political and trade union bureaucracy linked to the interests of the bosses, to the Social Pact, to the use of the mass media to silence popular opposition, to the military and police repression, to the growth of right-wing parapolice organizations encouraged by

the government's campaign against the left, and to the proposed law of professional associations aimed at perpetuating in office the trade union bureaucrats and their stranglehold over the rank and file.

During the eighteen years of the resistance, the communiqué continued, Perón had proclaimed that the only road to liberation was through the construction of a socialist fatherland and the elimination of capitalist exploitation. However, his program was later redefined independently of the need for socialism, which encouraged the bourgeois to make it their own since it did not prejudice their special interests. The bourgeoisie who voted for Perón did so in order to develop the infrastructure of the Argentine economy and as a condition of bargaining with the multinational corporations from a position of strength instead of weakness. At the same time, the political and trade union bureaucrats voted for him in order to maintain themselves in office and to keep the Peronist masses in a condition of dependency on the party and the CGT.

Having made this implicit distinction between a Peronism co-opted by the national bourgeoisie and the political and trade union bureaucracy, on the one hand, and a Peronism of the masses on the other, the communiqué proceeded to outline how the first variant of Peronism might be combated. In the first place, Perón's hand had to be strengthened by the independent and revolutionary organization of the Peronist bases. Since the implementation of a program of national liberation was not his responsibility alone, the only way of guaranteeing it was through the continued mobilization of the masses against the bosses and the capitulationist political and trade union leadership. Accordingly, the FAP proposed the following slogan: "Perón in the government, but without exploiters and traitors." In the second place, the resistance had taught the workers that imperialism, the monopolies, and their native allies were not going to resign their privileges voluntarily, that the armed forces were still the principal protector of those interests, and that the armed struggle ends not with an electoral victory but with the seizure of power by the people and the construction of socialism. Since the continuation of the resistance was evidently not in the interests of the Peronist bureaucracy, the FAP called for an independent alternative for the working class.

Such an alternative required a new set of tactics leading to the implementation of workers' democracy from "below" against the

maneuvers of the bureaucracy from "above." This required the sabotage of all plans and measures not voted by the workers themselves, mass mobilizations in repudiation of all deals and negotiations made by the trade union bureaucrats over the heads of the workers, and the replacement of the old conciliatory leadership in the trade unions by combative and authentic representatives of the rank and file. In addition to these tactics, the communiqué also recommended certain political ones: the application of "popular justice" through armed actions against the most hated figures in the political and trade union leadership; the occupation and self-management of factories and commercial enterprises in retaliation for the action of paramilitary groups and the armed gangs of the Peronist right wing; and the transformation of the basic units and neighborhood juntas of the Peronist movement into centers of popular opposition to the bureaucracy. In these ways, it was anticipated that the resistance would not lapse, but continue forward as a "people's war" against the class enemies of the workers.

The course that the FAP had charted in October was short-lived and replaced by a tougher one in January 1974. On January 5 the FAP issued a communiqué directly criticizing Perón for dissociating national from social liberation—a criticism that was also directed at the Montoneros (*Militancia*, 17 January 1974). Then on January 30 it issued a communiqué changing its assessment of Perón's role in the movement. For the first time in a FAP message to the working class, the thesis of Perón's encirclement by hostile elements within the government was silently abandoned together with the earlier slogan "For the return of the People and Perón to power!" (*Militancia*, 21 February 1974). Perón was held responsible for new repressive legislation against the left in January and for encouraging the growth of right-wing paramilitary organizations. Presumably, little was to be gained by having Perón in power with the people's backing—hence the rationale for abandoning the earlier slogan.

The definitive rupture with Perón in January was based on the conviction that it was hopeless to have a leader who was trying to restore a program viable in 1945, but no longer in 1973. Because the international situation immediately following World War II permitted a semi-independent development of the national economy, the national bourgeoisie had originally had an objective

interest in joining an anti-imperialist alliance with the Peronist masses—which was no longer the case. Moreover, the Argentine working class had ceased to struggle in order to make exploitation more tolerable, in favor of abolishing it altogether. Consequently, there were no longer grounds for the cooperation of labor and capital or for a social pact between them. For these reasons the FAP chose to reject Perón's program of national liberation not only as obsolete, but also as an objective apology of imperialism and of the government's repression of the workers. Henceforth, the FAP's escalation of armed operations would be justified not by appeals to Perón, but independently of both him and the Peronist movement.

Like the Montoneros, the FAP needed a legal cover and a mass front for its operations. The FAP's front consisted not of the Peronist Youth, from which both it and the Montoneros had originally emerged as armed detachments, but of the Peronism of the Bases (PB). The Peronist Bases had been organized in 1972 independently of the FAP, but by the middle of 1973 FAP cadres, who were seeking to build their principal base of support within the factories, were taking the initiative in developing new branches throughout the country. Although a sizeable sector of the PB retained its independence of the FAP's political-military directives, by the beginning of 1974 the FAP had established itself as the political-military command of an influential part of the PB. Unlike the Montoneros, who continued to rely upon students and university youth for recruits, the FAP hoped to recruit its fighters mainly from among young workers. Organized along lines similar to those of the *agrupaciones de base* which had survived the demise of the CGT(A), the PB consisted at the beginning of 1974 of sixteen regional branches loosely coordinated through a national committee.

The principal labor support for the PB came from the "Combative CGT" of Córdoba. During the second *Cordobazo* in March 1971 the conciliatory and collaborationist trade union bureaucracy was again discredited, with the result that in April the Córdoba regional organization of the CGT voted out of office those union leaders identified with the policies of the national leadership. Its new secretary-general, Atilio López, was subsequently elected vice-governor of Córdoba, after which he was illegally removed by a provincial police coup and later assassinated by right-wing elements. Among the new leaders of the Córdoba CGT were also

several professed Marxists, notably Agustín Tosco, head of the Light and Power Workers Union, and René Salamanca, secretary-general of the Córdoba branch of the Union of Mechanics and Affiliated Automotive Workers (SMATA) and of the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR). Such figures, backed by other trade union militants, assumed control of the regional organization which became known as the "Combative CGT"—unquestionably the most militant branch of the national CGT.

Just as the Montoneros-JP became the parent body or organizing nucleus of a series of fraternal organizations focusing on special issues, so did the Peronist Bases. The industrial city of Córdoba continued to be the center of organizing activities based on the rank and file. In July 1973, the PB helped to organize the Movement of the Trade Union Bases (MSB), which formally pledged itself to a union movement that would be antibureaucratic, anticapitalist, and independent of the new popular government. In February 1974, the Combative Trade Union Movement (MSC) was organized with the support of both the MSB and Armando Jaime's "Classist CGT" of Salta. Its main objective was to mobilize workers against the Social Pact.

The Peronism of the Bases also deserves attention as the most enlightened political expression of the "classist" tendency within the labor movement. Its program, based on the proceedings of its Second Congress late in 1973, focused on the development and strengthening of a "classist" orientation (*Militancia*, January 31, 1974). The class struggle against the fundamental enemy, the ruling or capitalist class, was to take two principal forms: an economic struggle and a political-military one. As trade unionists and members of a political organization of the working class, the Peronist bases were to wage a struggle on both fronts simultaneously. The classist economic struggle was conceived mainly as a defensive one against exploitation—"the first step in the politicization of the workers." The classist political struggle was designed to destroy the capitalist system and build a new socialist society. The economic struggle was to give precedence to the organization of the masses; the political struggle, to the role of a vanguard fully conscious that a merely economic struggle is insufficient to abolish exploitation. Since it is a mistake to transform the trade union struggle into a struggle for power, the program noted, the leadership of a revolutionary movement must be assumed by

“classist” political organizations, not by the trade unions. At the same time, the immediate task was to implant a “classist” orientation in the trade unions as a condition of developing a political vanguard. Hence the importance of the slogan “Trade Union Recovery,” which signified putting labor’s house in order prior to a clandestine and illegal confrontation with the system.

In this sense, the workers’ struggle to regain control of their unions—the struggle for trade union democracy—was also a political struggle. As the preliminary step toward workers’ control of production, it was bound to create difficulties with the state. Basic to the application of such a strategy, according to the program, was an organization politically suited to the rank and file: the *agrupación de base*. The latter was defined as a political organization within the trade unions, a vanguard organization of Peronist militants whose purpose was to give political content to the economic struggle and build a revolutionary army of the people. The *agrupación de base* was a more advanced form of organization than the trade union: it had a political purpose and it did not have to become legally recognized to be effective because it operated clandestinely. In short, the *agrupación de base* was to the classist trade union movement what the armed apparatus was to the classist political struggle.

According to the PB’s program, the strategy of isolating one’s enemies one by one was nothing short of utopian, since one could not confront effectively the capitalist class without waging a simultaneous struggle against the trade union bureaucracy and the state. Although the trade union and political bureaucracies were not the main enemy, they had to be confronted in the course of challenging the ruling class—but through a preeminently political struggle, not an economic one. In effect, their economic share in exploitation could be left unchallenged. What could not go unchallenged was the bureaucracy’s politics of capitulation, its role as an agent of the capitalist class. Ironically, the anticapitalist revolution would have to be made by the rank and file not only in its own interests, but also those of the bureaucracy. Whereas Lenin in 1905 had argued that the proletariat in a backward and semicolonial country would have to take the initiative in liberating the bourgeois from their status of dependency on the landed oligarchy, by 1975 the strategical problem had shifted, at least in Argentina, to that of liberating the political and trade union

bureaucracies from their status of dependency on the bourgeoisie.

In retrospect, it is now evident that the FAP began to evolve in a sectarian direction once it became absorbed in building the "classist" tendency of the Peronist Bases. Actually, the FAP failed to note any difference in kind between Perón's own government and that of the duo Isabel-López Rega which followed. This interpretation failed to appreciate the centrist role of Gelbard in Perón's last administration and the moderating role of Dr. Taiana, the leftist minister of education. The fact that these and other centrist ministers were dismissed shortly after Isabel Perón became president is an indication that a fundamental shift to the right occurred with the emergence of López Rega as the power behind the throne. This called for a different set of tactics against the new government, but not the kind that the FAP had prematurely applied against its predecessor. A popular front with other parties was still necessary to combat the official one, but the "classist" orientation tended to discourage instead of promoting it.

Whatever the purely intellectual merits of the two principal sides to this debate, it was the Montoneros and their mass fronts rather than the FAP and the Peronism of the Bases which carried the principal weight in the struggle against the trade union bureaucracy and the official sector of the movement during the period from May 1973 to September 1974. It is noteworthy, for example, that most of the victims by hired killers, by the police, and by right-wing death squads during 1973-74 were known militants of the JP, JTP, and MVP. Moreover, the practical outcome of the contradictions within the Peronist left was that the FAP virtually dissolved in October 1974, while the Peronism of the Bases likewise disappeared from the political scene. Just as the FAP's surviving militants were absorbed mainly by the Montoneros and the ERP, so one sector of the PB joined the Montoneros-JP while another broke with Peronism altogether in favor of Marxism-Leninism and the Front Against Imperialism and For Socialism (FAS). The remainder seem to have rejoined the Combative Trade Unions. Meanwhile, the Montoneros' capacity for combat continued to grow along with their support among the working class. Together these factors account for the clear and evident hegemony of the Montoneros-JP within the Peronist left, thus making them rather than the FAP-PB the principal political and military opposition to the policies of the official movement and the government.

Restructuring the Revolutionary Front

The restructuring of the revolutionary front came in response to new repressive legislation against the working class and sectors of the Peronist movement under the changed conditions of the Peronist Party in power. Following Perón's election as president on September 23 and the beginning of a new wave of repression in response to José Rucci's assassination on September 25, there was a growing awareness that the so-called popular government represented a sanction and continuation of the repressive policies of the former military and pseudoconstitutional regimes. The resulting disaffection first with the Justicialist Party and later with Perón himself encouraged the growth of a separatist or "classist" sector within the Peronist left and its convergence with the Guevarist opposition in Argentina.

The main impetus to this convergence was the revival of the resistance in November 1973, spearheaded by the FAP and its fraternal organizations. On the premise that Perón had been "encircled" and "betrayed" by the Peronist right wing, the partisans of an independent alternative continued to regard him as their leader until the end of January 1974, when they either expressly or tacitly broke with Perón and the official movement. Although many revolutionaries continued to regard themselves as Peronists, they identified with the Peronism of the original Labor Party and the traditions of October 17, 1945, instead of with the official wing. Peronism had ceased to be the attractive label it once

was, with the result that many others disillusioned with the outcome of the Peronist government went beyond the FAP in rejecting the label altogether.

The first step in the restructuring of the political left was overcoming the doctrinal differences between revolutionary Peronism and Guevarism. This began with joint military operations made possible by convergent strategies, and ended with a series of organizational mergers. Thus the "Peronization" of the Guevarist FAR culminated in its integration with the Montoneros in October 1973, and the "Guevarization" of sectors of the FAP ended in their fusion with the ERP the following October. An important result of this process of convergence and organizational mergers was a restructuring of the left into "movementist" and "classist" sectors, with Peronists and Guevarists to be found in both camps.

One alternative in the restructuring of the left, and in the revival of the resistance, was the formal organization of a revolutionary front capable of encompassing independent Peronist and Guevarist organizations alongside mergers of the type just mentioned. By November 1973 both the Peronist Revolutionary Front (FRP) and the Revolutionary Workers Front (FTR) began appealing to workers to overcome their ideological differences and to join in a united front against the hostile Peronist forces in control of the government. These two fronts also joined the larger Front Against Imperialism and For Socialism (FAS), which distinguished itself by clarifying and expunging the populist ambiguities in the Peronist slogan of "National (anti-imperialist) and Social (socialist) Liberation." Although the FAS was created as early as 1972 on the initiative of the FRP and the combative trade unions of Córdoba, it did not acquire the proportions of a mass organization until its Fifth Congress in November 1973, when it was joined by virtually all the representatives of the "classist" sector.

Even before the abdication of the military and the return of Perón to power in September, efforts were being made to strengthen the resistance through joint actions by Peronist and Guevarist armed groups, whose convergent strategies culminated in the organizational merger of the FAR and Montoneros on October 12, 1973—the day of Perón's inauguration as president. The significance of this merger is that it rested upon a split within the Guevarist sector of the resistance parallel to that within the Peronist left. The partisans of Perón and Guevara would henceforth

be fighting side by side. In effect, the parallel ruptures in both the Peronist and Guevarist left were more than compensated, and in part healed, by the convergence and eventual merger of their respective "movementist" sectors in 1973 and of their "classist" sectors in 1974.

Since the emergence of a nationalist tendency within the Guevarist FAR was a necessary condition of its future realignment with the Montoneros, it is worth considering in some detail. It began with the May 1971 polemic by cadres of the ERP against a FAR interview published in the April issue of *Cristianismo y Revolución*. The ERP's polemic, republished in *Militancia* (5 July 1973), proceeded from an analysis of the conceptual confusions in the FAR report to a consideration of the FAR's misunderstanding of Marxism and then Peronism. It concluded with a consideration of the FAR's strategical errors.

First, the FAR was nominally committed to both revolutionary nationalism and socialism, but without having distinguished the Marxist or "classist" from the non-Marxist or populist uses of these terms. Only by using such terms loosely was it able to establish a common denominator between Marxism and Peronism. The FAR's emphasis on the ideological common denominator of these separate movements had contributed, according to the ERP's analysis, to obscuring their fundamental differences. The FAR had neglected to consider, in other words, the basic incompatibility between a socialist and bourgeois ideology. In fact, its fundamental opposition was between a "clear" and a "distorted" view of historical reality—as if history could be interpreted independently of class interests.

Second, the FAR had distorted the fundamentals of Marxism in the process of adapting it to the historical experience and national traditions of the Argentine workers. It had maintained, for example, that "Marxism is not a universal political perspective." On the contrary, the ERP argued that during the present phase of imperialism, in which the most remote regions of the earth have been submitted to the capitalist mode of production, the revolutionary struggle had acquired an international dimension. A Marxist perspective on a universal scale was possible precisely because the communists on different continents were fighting a common enemy. The FAR had further claimed that Marxism consisted exclusively of a science of society and of man, in turn a theoretical

instrument for bringing about a socialist revolution. Such a science was not a monopoly of Marxists, it argued, but might also be placed at the service of Peronist philosophy. The ERP's reply was that Marxism was not only a science, but also a unique philosophy or interpretation of the world. Accordingly, to place its science at the beck and call of a populist movement was to subordinate it to a different philosophy, while distorting its original Marxist significance.

Third, the FAR had no better an understanding of Peronism than it had of Marxism. The effort to present Peronism as an indigenous expression of the Argentine working class failed to weigh accurately its polyclass character. If the fundamental political antagonism of Argentine society was that between Peronism and anti-Peronism, as the FAR maintained, then why were Perón's enemies negotiating his return? Evidently, they did not take seriously his appeals to a Christian form of national socialism—nor should Marxists—an indication that the opposition between Peronists and anti-Peronists was neither fundamental nor irresolvable. Instead, the ERP argued that the basic antagonism presented by the class struggle was also evident within the Peronist movement in the coexistence of two different Peronisms, each competing for the attention of the leader. In effect, the FAR's acceptance of Perón's leadership was tantamount to accepting his pendular politics, based on the eclecticism of a fictitious Third Position.

Finally, the FAR's efforts to formulate a realistic strategy were limited to a narrowly national context. Without an appreciation first of the international situation, then of the situation on the South American continent, and finally of the situation in the Southern Cone (Uruguay, Argentina, Chile), the ERP argued, it is impossible to acquire an accurate and comprehensive picture of conditions within Argentina. A revolutionary strategy that does not take all of these factors into account can only proceed blindly and cannot achieve the desired objective of a political and social victory for the working class. Thus political realism should not be confused with an analysis tied to the immediate situation or to the narrowly empirical without regard for the dynamic relationships between a given country and the rest of the world—conditions that define its national reality.

The FAR's reply to this criticism, published in the same issue of *Militancia*, was the work of Carlos Olmedo who died in combat on

November 3, 1971. The conditions of repression under the military dictatorship prompted him to conceal the manuscript, which was not located until 1973. Because of its timeliness and accentuation of the differences within the Guevarist tendency following Perón's return, the document was regarded as a major contribution to the discussion of the FAR's continuing discrepancies with the ERP.

Instead of a point-by-point reply, which would not have risen above the level of polemics, Olmedo chose to clarify the basic political concepts separating the two organizations. Underlying their political differences, he discovered radically different conceptions of the role that national factors play in the elaboration of a revolutionary strategy. In claiming that the Argentine working class could never seize power without the direction of a Marxist-Leninist party, the ERP had taken a negative view of the historical role of Peronism in Argentina. For the ERP, Peronist ideology served fundamentally bourgeois interests, which meant that it had to be openly combated and eradicated from the sentiments of the people. In this perspective, the fundamental issue for the ERP was not the popular issue of national liberation versus imperialism, but Marxist social liberation versus the counterrevolutionary ideology of the national bourgeoisie—with Perón as its spokesman.

On the contrary, Olmedo argued that Marxism was not an integral part of the historical experience of the Argentine masses, whereas Peronism was; and that the people, and not a self-denominated vanguard, determined the issues that were fundamental at any given moment. Subjectively considered, the basic issue for the Argentine masses revolved around the antagonism between Peronism and anti-Peronism. In effect, the differences between the FAR and the ERP stemmed from their choice of starting points: the conscious interests and sentiments of the Argentine workers (FAR) as opposed to their objective economic and political interests (ERP). If the Argentine workers were in fact confused concerning what their interests really were, then the ERP was right in believing that they stood in need of a guardian. Nonetheless, it is not enough to declare oneself a guardian of the people's interests, Olmedo noted, to become recognized as their legitimate representative.

These contrasting assessments of the importance of the people's conscious and unrecognized interests were tied to a corresponding difference in the ERP's and FAR's analyses of Argentine political

reality. The ERP began with world economic conditions and the international revolutionary struggle; the national situation of the Argentine working class was analyzed only as a function of the international situation. The FAR began with an analysis of the national peculiarities of Argentina and with the concrete historical experience of Argentine workers in relation to Peronism, in the conviction that any scientific analysis of world conditions would have to be based on a prior knowledge of national conditions not only in Argentina but also in all other countries. Owing to their different theoretical starting points, the ERP focused on the ideological backwardness of Peronism as a polyclass movement, ending by condemning it mainly for what it had not done. In contrast, the FAR stressed the advanced character of Peronism in relation to the workers' immediate past, ending by accepting it mainly for what it had accomplished.

This byzantine discussion, or dialogue of the deaf, in which neither party came to grips with the problem of its adversary but argued instead at cross-purposes, Olmedo continued, might nonetheless be resolved. The crucial advantage of revolutionaries who adopt a national starting point is that they are able to identify politically with Peronism, while using the Marxist science of society as a guide to revolutionary struggle within a specifically national context. In this way they avail themselves of the chief contributions of both Marxism and Peronism. Marxists who identify with a universal political position and proceed in their analysis from the world economic situation, however, cannot discover any positive contribution in the Peronist experience. To do so would contradict their conception of its role within a global analysis. According to Olmedo, the international left has only two choices, both undesirable from a strategical perspective: to ignore or to negate the contributions of Peronism. Since on either of these options something useful has to be sacrificed, an intelligent strategy requires the assimilation of the actual political positions of the Argentine workers and a Marxist science of society. "The Peronist revolutionary movement," Olmedo concluded, "can appropriate and will appropriate everything that can be of use, such as Marxism, in order to understand reality better and to struggle for the restoration of the people in power, yet without compromising its political identity in the least."

Olmedo's reply conformed in principle to the FAR interview

which touched off the controversy. The fundamental mistake of the Marxist-Leninist groupings in Argentina had been their failure to appreciate the historical experience and level of political development of the Argentine masses. In the original FAR report, vanguardism was identified as one expression of this neglect. To serve the people in the role of a vanguard, the report noted, one cannot stand alone. There are no leaders without followers; a self-denominated vanguard without mass support is a contradiction in terms. Since the Peronist resistance lacked a revolutionary force capable of leading it beyond populist solutions, the strategical problem was to create such a vanguard: first, by establishing organic links with the masses through a process of incorporation within the Peronist movement; second, by establishing organic ties with other revolutionary movements. It was not enough to know and to represent faithfully the objective interests of the workers in order to become their vanguard. One also had to represent their subjective interests, or risk losing their respect and confidence. In effect, revolutionaries must adapt themselves to the ideological development and expectations of the masses and learn to work within those limitations.

"Ideologism" was identified as a second barrier to the appreciation of the concrete political experience of a people. It was defined as a type of analysis focusing on what people believe, mainly on their ideological conceptions, independently of the concrete circumstances which led them to adopt a particular belief or might lead them to modify it in the future. The realization that Peronist ideology was confused or that it mixed up the interests of antagonistic social classes, for example, should be understood as a necessary part of its historical role in making the Argentine workers recognize their independent interests. The discovery that Perón borrowed and incorporated elements of a fascist ideology should not be divorced from the historical circumstances of Argentina's relation to British and North American imperialism, which prompted Argentine neutrality during World War II. To dissociate the ideological expressions of Peronism from the successive stages of its development as a political movement, according to the FAR, was to give them an abstract and static content that did violence to their changing meanings. The ERP's association of the Peronist movement with a polyclass or populist ideology was tantamount to denying the movement's capacity to go beyond the

formulations of Justicialism—the theory of the peaceful coexistence of labor and capital. Although Peronist ideology had become infused with a socialist content without a corresponding alteration of its conceptual foundations, the fact that the Peronist left was also part and parcel of the same movement indicated that the foundations might be changed to adapt to new circumstances.

The shift in the FAR, from a position within the international left to one of convergence with revolutionary Peronism, was made possible by the new mass politics it developed within a Guevarist framework. It also marked the beginning of a restructuring of the revolutionary movement in Argentina: the national wing of Guevarism was in conformity with the “movementist” sector of the Peronist left, in opposition to the international wing which was in conformity with the “classist” sector.

In breaking with the Trotskyist Fourth International (Unified Secretariat) in June 1973, the ERP sought to “proletarianize” itself, which signified its insertion within the historical experience of the Argentine working class and, to some extent, its nationalization. Evidently, it had learned something from its discussions with the FAR. Nonetheless, that it continued to favor a modified international strategy was evident from the regional bloc it organized in February 1974 with the Uruguayan Tupamaros, the Chilean Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), and the Bolivian National Liberation Army (ELN)—a “Revolutionary Coordinating Committee” that was designed, after the manner of Che’s Bolivian *foco*, to coordinate the revolutionary struggle in neighboring countries and to give narrowly national struggles a continental dimension.

The principal beneficiary of the ERP-FAR debate was not the ERP, but a minority which split from the ERP over the issue of support for the FREJULI in the March 1973 elections. Unlike the majority in favor of abstention, the minority advocated active support for the Peronist ticket. Calling itself the ERP-22, it served as a memorial of the Trelew massacre of sixteen comrades of the ERP, FAR, and Montoneros on August 22, 1972. Having escaped from the Rawson penitentiary in Patagonia, they surrendered at the Trelew airport, after which they were butchered in cold blood on orders of the military in an action reminiscent of the firing squads of June 1956. Although the ERP-22 favored a continuation of the links established with these comrades in arms, it had more in

common with the "classist" strategy of the FAP and other fraternal organizations. Thus by May 1974, several months before the Montoneros chose to return underground, the ERP-22 began making common cause with the Peronist Bases.

The ERP and ERP-22 were not the only Guevarist groups to benefit from the FAR's new perspective. The Peronist ticket in September was also supported by the FAL and by the newly formed Popular Commandos of Liberation (CPL)—which left only the ERP as a consistent advocate of internationalism. Like the ERP-22, their interpretation of Guevarism gave precedence to a strictly national struggle for liberation. However, the ERP-22 became incorporated into the unofficial wing of the Peronist movement, whereas the FAL and CPL chose to cooperate with the Peronist left while retaining their ideological and political independence.

This convergence of Guevarist organizations on the revolutionary sectors of Peronism was attended in 1973–74 by a parallel case of convergence of the FAP on the international sector of Guevarism. The shift in the FAP's strategy became a matter of public knowledge beginning with its manifestations of solidarity with the ERP's attack on the army base of Azul in January 1974. In its January 30 communiqué, it gave special credit to the mobilizations of Peronist workers, the actions of their armed organizations, and the massive vote for the FREJULI in overcoming the military dictatorship. At the same time, it noted that the organizations and the mass of the workers responsible for this transformation had no possibility of deciding anything under the Peronist government (*Militancia*, 21 February 1974). That government, like its predecessors during eighteen years of the resistance, continued to represent the interests of the bourgeoisie—through the Social Pact signed by the bosses and the trade union bureaucrats, through new repressive laws, and through the approval of old ones which left the workers in the same plight they suffered under the dictatorship. Only this time the repression had met with Perón's approval.

The FAP's repudiation of Perón's leadership had been preceded by a communiqué issued by the Hilda Guerrero de Molina Commando of the FAP in Tucumán (*Militancia*, 7 February 1974). Although it warned against placing in Perón's lap all of the responsibility for constructing a socialist fatherland, he was accused of legalizing a system of repression more barefaced and violent

than the one displaced. He was also charged with attacking comrades belonging to the movement's left wing. This critique was combined with a defense of the ERP's attack on the army's base at Azul as being in the best tradition of the resistance.

The ERP was quick to acknowledge the FAP's support and escalation of armed actions in response to the Azul operation. The statement issued by the FAP Commando in Tucumán was republished, prefaced by a brief note, in the ERP's official organ *Estrella Roja* (11 February 1974). The note commended the FAP for its military actions and solidarity on the heels of the ERP's confrontation with the regular army. In addition, it underscored the importance of the FAP's rebuttal of the government's charges that the ERP consisted of mercenaries and psychopaths, instead of comrades working to forge a socialist fatherland by building a people's army. Thus the ERP's response to these expressions of support was to reciprocate with a corresponding statement of solidarity with the FAP.

In July 1974, after Perón's death, the convergence of the FAP with the ERP was accelerated. This was prompted by the Catamarca massacre of sixteen cadres of the ERP in August, the resignation of the "soft-liner" Ber Gelbard as minister of economics in October, and the virtual take-over of the government by López Rega, the minister of social welfare and Isabel Perón's principal adviser. On October 25 a FAP commando executed Lieutenant-Colonel René Mas, in solidarity with the ERP's oath of vengeance against the armed forces for its actions in the Catamarca affair—a repeat performance of the Trelew massacre of August 1972. The next day it issued a communiqué announcing its adherence to Marxism-Leninism and its organizational merger with the ERP. "We subordinate ourselves to the project of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) and incorporate ourselves in the ranks of the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP)," declared the communiqué (*Excelsior*, 26 October 1974). Unlike the Act of Unification announcing the merger of the FAR with the Montoneros, the incorporation of this FAP commando in the ERP was the first instance of the opposite process—of a Peronist armed movement becoming identified with Guevarism.

The FAP was not alone in repudiating Perón, the Peronist government, and the Justicialist movement. On February 2, 1974, the national board of the Peronist Bases held a press conference on

the government's response to the Azul operation and its concessions to the non-Peronist right. These concessions included the appointment of Alberto Villar, torturer and originator of the antiguerrilla brigades under the military regime, as assistant chief of the Federal Police; and of Luis Margaride, repressor of the 1959 strike at Lisandro de la Torre, as chief of Federal Security. Among the questions put to Jorge Di Pasquale, speaking for the national board, were those asking about the position of PB with respect to the Peronist movement and Perón's leadership. In an indirect slap at the official wing of the movement and at Perón, Di Pasquale replied that the PB would continue organizing and working among the masses, as it had during the eighteen years of the resistance, in a combined struggle not only against imperialism and the monopoly bourgeoisie, but also against the political and trade union bureaucracies and the reactionary armed forces. Should there be room for this kind of struggle within the governing party, then the PB would be there; otherwise it would work for an independent alternative. The Peronist movement, Di Pasquale continued, had been totally penetrated by elements of the right, who were serving the owners and bosses more than the workers. For that reason the PB had constructed its own independent organization in the conviction that the bureaucratic structures of the Peronist movement and the Peronist Party had outlived their original purpose (*Nuevo Hombre*, 15 February 1974).

This response of the Peronist Bases was seconded on February 6 at a press conference called by the Peronist Revolutionary Front (FRP). Speaking for the FRP, Armando Jaime denounced the profascist bourgeoisie entrenched in government circles, while calling for a new coalition between the Peronist left wing and the non-Peronist left. The government's war on Marxism, he noted, had fomented a species of ideological terrorism which, combined with new repressive laws, had given encouragement to the multinational corporations and their hired assassins. Confronted with this escalating repression from the right, the FRP called upon all Peronists to observe the following: first, to return to the style of struggle for national and social liberation before May 25, 1973; second, to repudiate the bureaucratic and proimperialist clique which had usurped control over the movement; third, to avoid becoming intimidated by agents of the CIA and imperialism, by paramilitary and fascist groups hiding under the camouflage of Peronist

orthodoxy; fourth, to unite all sectors of the movement's left wing for the purpose of directly confronting the combined forces of imperialism, capitalism, fascism, and the capitulationist political and trade union bureaucracies; and fifth, to extend this front to include all the popular and revolutionary forces in the country struggling for national liberation and socialism (Ibid.).

Actually, the effort to restructure the revolutionary movement through a united front of the Peronist "Independent Alternative" and the bulk of the Guevarist left did not begin with the government's response to the Azul operation, but was brought to a head by it. By November 1973 Perón's failure to reverse the political trend, which began with the efforts by the Peronist right to force President Cámpora's resignation, prompted the questioning of a government that was not living up to popular expectations. Perón's abandonment of his earlier program of liberation gave an added impetus to efforts to restructure the revolutionary forces against the stranglehold on the movement exercised by the Party's Supreme Council. Thus on November 19, 1973, in its Act of Unification with other fraternal organizations, the FRP reaffirmed its socialist objectives while calling for the mobilization of the Peronist masses and for the creation of a united front with non-Peronist revolutionary organizations against the official Peronists in control of the government.

In the confrontation with the official leadership of the movement, the Revolutionary Workers Front (FTR) was among the first to abandon the Peronist label. The first plenary meeting of the FTR occurred in Córdoba on November 18, 1973, when representatives of its various regional organizations issued a Declaration of Principles and established the basis for a national organization. The Light and Power Workers Union of Córdoba led by Agustín Tosco played a prominent role in creating the new front, which concentrated on uniting the "classist" and combative tendencies within organized labor. The Declaration of Principles did not mince words in demanding the "violent destruction of the system and its replacement by a society without exploiters and exploited. . . , possible only through the organized and armed forces of the people" (*Militancia*, 29 November 1973). The FTR was conceived as an organization of the most politically advanced and militant sectors of the labor movement for the purpose of confronting the common enemy represented by the official wing of

Peronism in alliance with Argentine business. The Declaration concluded by welcoming within its ranks revolutionaries from both the Peronist and non-Peronist left, regardless of political origins and party affiliation.

The most important of these revolutionary fronts was the Front Against Imperialism and For Socialism (FAS). By the time of its Fifth Congress on November 24, 1973, it had already acquired the dimensions of a mass organization under the principal influence of the PRT-ERP. For over a year it had been urging a united front for overcoming the artificial divisions and sectarian differences on the left. This project was later formalized at its Sixth Congress on June 15, 1974, which proposed the creation of a "Coordinating Junta of Popular and Revolutionary Organizations" (*De Frente*, 27 June 1974). The FAS had the singular advantage of including under one roof not only Peronists, but also non-Peronists who had voted for Perón (ERP-22, FAL, CPL). It also included anti-Peronists who had abstained from the elections (PRT-ERP). The FAS had been conceived as a revolutionary alternative to the FREJULI's watered-down version of national and social liberation. Nonetheless, the majority of its constituents, Guevarists as well as Peronists, had supported the Peronist slate.

Although unable to attract the Montoneros-JP, the FAS was supported by several regional branches of the Peronist Bases (PB), the Trade Union Movement of the Bases (MSB), the Peronist Revolutionary Front (FRP), the Revolutionary Workers Front (FTR), and other representatives of the "classist" sector including the FAP. Among the Guevarist groups that participated in the Fifth Congress were the PRT-ERP, the FAL, and CPL. Although the CPL refused to become formally integrated with the FAS, it continued to share the latter's objectives (*Militancia*, 13 December 1973). Especially important to the FAS was the formal adherence of some of the principal journals and periodicals of the Peronist and Guevarist "classist" tendencies, among these *Posición*, *Patria Nueva*, *Nuevo Hombre*, the PRT's *El Combatiente*, and the ERP's *Estrella Roja*.

In addition to the "classist" Peronist and Guevarist tendencies, the FAS was integrated by the pro-Peking Communist Party (ML), the Spartacist Group, the Trotskyist "Labor Politics" (PO), and by a delegation of observers from the Socialist Workers Party (PST)

—the leading Trotskyist party in Argentina informally allied to the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat). The FAS was also supported by an alliance of four Marxist-Leninist *groupuscules* consisting of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), the Revolutionary Organization “Labor Power,” the Communist Revolutionary Organization “The Laborer,” and Communist Struggle (LC). Although they eventually went the way of the CPL by formally withdrawing from the front, they continued to support it in principle (*El Obrero*, 17 April 1974).

The Montoneros-JP remained visibly aloof from these efforts to restructure the revolutionary movement independent of Peronism. Only after Perón’s death on July 1 was there an indication of a rapprochement with the “classist” sector. By September 6 the Montoneros had returned underground in order to resist effectively the repressive policies of the new government. For the “classist” sector this action signified an indirect admission that the Montoneros’ strategy of working within the official movement had failed and that the only intelligent response to the government’s war against Marxism had been to continue the resistance.

On closer inspection what appeared to be the vacillating and conciliatory policies of the Montoneros was part of an integral but malleable strategy combining a variety of tactics adapted to different moments and circumstances. Although the Montoneros renounced the tactics of subversion in May 1973 only to revive them again in September 1974, they did so not in consequence of a change in strategy but in response to an objective change in the government. Unlike Perón’s administration, whose repressive policies were designed to curb the influence of the Peronist left and to establish an equilibrium with the Peronist right wing, the policies of its successor aimed to crush the left altogether. Considering the impunity with which right-wing death squads were slowly decimating Peronist as well as Marxist militants, the government’s highly publicized campaign against the “two extremisms” was evidently a cover for an all-out war of extermination against the left. Thanks to the presence of “soft-liners” and centrist ministers in Perón’s government, the tactics of the Montoneros had succeeded at least partly in their objectives. But they were wholly ineffective against the Peronist right wing which, in the guise of representing the center of the movement, had usurped control of the Party and of

Isabel's government. In this perspective, the Montoneros' earlier tactics were not so much mistaken as they were ill-adapted to the new political situation following Perón's death.

Although the Montoneros became an acknowledged part of the renewed resistance in September, they admitted to having engaged in earlier and anonymous political-military actions, including the execution of a regional leader of the right-wing Peronist Organizational Command (*El Día*, 8 September 1974). Claiming loyalty to Perón's mandate, the Montoneros and its mass fronts again opted for an independent alternative, but for tactical reasons opposed joint military actions with the ERP. Although a new Peronist resistance had taken shape as early as November 1973, it did not build up momentum until after September 6, 1974, when the principal force of the Argentine left rejoined the other groups in opposition.

In October the president appealed to all sectors of the movement to join in condemning the campaign of terror waged by extremist factions of both the right and the left. In a maneuver to support this project the Intelligence Services published on October 9 a communiqué by a nonexistent group called the "Montoneros of Perón." In response to Isabel's appeal, this group was said to have separated from the Montoneros because of an agreement which placed the Montoneros under the operational directives of the ERP (*El Día*, 10 October 1974). As an expression of good faith and its intention of returning to the official fold, it had allegedly exploded its arsenal in the Paraná River on the island of "La Paloma," located approximately thirty kilometers from Rosario. The only basis in fact for this police invention was the existence of a dissident tendency which had opposed the new tactics of returning underground and had split to form its own "Loyalty" sector. To this psychological warfare aimed at bolstering the president's highly publicized and hypocritical campaign the Montoneros replied with an offensive of their own. Thus, a week later, they abducted the corpse of ex-President Aramburu, threatening to retain it until the repatriation of the remains of Evita Perón and the restitution of the combative trade unions intervened by the minister of labor (*El Día*, 17 October 1974).

The Montoneros' decision to revive the armed struggle was sealed on November 6 by the government's declaration of a state of siege. Originally contemplated in response to the Montoneros'

September 6 decision to return to clandestinity, it was actually invoked because of the assassination of the chief of the Federal Police Alberto Villar on November 1 and the Montoneros' communiqué the next day threatening a similar action against López Rega and Minister of Labor Ricardo Otero. The communiqué explained that Villar had been executed for having organized the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance ("Triple A") and for having tortured and ordered the assassination of members of the resistance during the military dictatorship (*El Día*, 3 November 1974). That the chief of the Federal Police was directly implicated in the wave of right-wing terrorism that was plaguing the country was evident from the fact that not one person had been arrested in connection with the score of assassinations publicly boasted by the "Triple A," whereas hundreds of leftists were being detained or indicted on lesser charges.

The state of siege was originally limited to actions by the Federal Police, in conjunction with local police forces, with the logistical support of the army. On February 9, 1975, however, the government escalated its private war against the left by calling for the full-scale intervention of the armed forces in the repression of subversion. In August 1974 the government had requested the army's participation in repressing the ERP's first rural foco in Catamarca. Thus the armed forces were again asked to intervene, this time on a national scale, after the appearance of the ERP's second rural foco in Tucumán.

The escalation of repression against all sectors of the Peronist left, and not only against Guevarist and Communist groups, contributed to the Montoneros-JP plan to organize a new political party in conjunction with other dissident sectors of the Justicialist movement. First announced on January 27, 1975, the plan for a new *Descamisado* Party in the province of Misiones was directed at uniting the Peronist resistance and other revolutionary sectors in opposition to the official party in the forthcoming provincial elections. Although the party was to be constructed on the basis of the various regional organizations of the JP, it was also expected to unite with other sectors of the Peronist left in establishing a party on a national scale.

Formally constituted on February 9, 1975, it was immediately challenged in the courts for appropriating the name *Descamisado*, allegedly the property of the FREJULI. Having changed its name

to the Authentic Peronist Party (PPA), it was again challenged by the FREJULI. The charge was dropped only when the UCR, the principal opposition party, threatened to withdraw its candidates and to discredit totally the elections (*El Día*, 13 April 1975). Supported on a national scale by the entire Peronist left including the deposed governors of five important provinces, the PPA in Misiones rejected a proposed alliance with the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, and the Intransigent Party on the ground that its battle was within the Justicialist movement. Thus it hoped to unify the left under a Peronist banner—in fact the only banner with a significant mass appeal.

On March 11, 1975, the new Peronist party became organized as a national party. The PPA was the joint product of the Montoneros-JP and the Authentic Peronist Association (APA) under the direction of Andrés Framini, former secretary-general of the CGT and governor-elect of Buenos Aires in 1962.

The origins of this group went back to the “Permanent Commission of Homage to the 11th of March,” created at the beginning of 1974 by veteran Peronists with a long history of loyalty to the leader. This commission was reorganized as the APA on September 3, 1974. The principal political role of the APA was to bring under a single roof the Peronist “old guard,” the adherents of ex-president Cámpora, and the Montoneros-JP in an effort to restore internal democracy in the official movement. Failing this, its political purpose was to give an electoral expression to the united forces of the Peronist left aimed at defeating and replacing the official party in power. It also sought the support of other parties on the left in a broad appeal aimed at overcoming imperialism and establishing a national form of socialism in Argentina.

By 1975 the political options open to the revived armed resistance had boiled down to a choice between two revolutionary fronts: the Front Against Imperialism and For Socialism integrated by the “classist” Guevarist and Peronist sectors; and the national liberation front integrated by the Montoneros-JP, their fraternal organizations, and the PPA as their legal and electoral instrument. Although the FAS had the advantage of uniting the various splinter parties of the left, as *groupuscules* they contributed little to its overall growth. Within the FAS these parties were overshadowed by the financial resources and fire power of the PRT-ERP, which

was also better organized to survive repression by the Federal Police and paramilitary forces of the right. Although the leaders of the FAS came from the "classist" and combative trade unions of Salta and Córdoba, they had adopted Marxist-Leninist policies which effectively converged with those of the PRT-ERP—its most disciplined and influential nucleus. In effect, the FAS was a preeminently Guevarist or modified Marxist-Leninist front, whose ideology was bound to appear foreign to the Peronist masses.

The choice of revolutionary fronts was basically an option between the PRT-ERP and the Montoneros-JP. Specifically, the options for armed struggle against the new government had narrowed to a choice between the ERP and Montoneros. The smaller Guevarist armed nuclei, notably the FAL and CPL, had either been smashed by the repressive forces or reduced to impotence by the state of siege and the antiguerrilla campaign launched by the army in February. In October 1974, the FAP-17 of October merged with the ERP. Meanwhile, other sectors of the FAP, principally its National Command and the Buenos Aires regional branch of the FAP, chose to dissolve their various organizations. Carlos Caride, the most important leader of the FAP next to Envar El Kadri, publicly announced his decision to join the Montoneros. Other militants of the dissolved FAP commandos presumably followed him. Having pursued a strategy intermediate to those of the ERP and Montoneros, the FAP split apart at the seams when the showdown occurred with the new government in September and many of its militants joined one or the other of the two principal remaining armed groups. Although the choice was between two political-military organizations each testifying to Guevarist influence, one identified with Peronism while the other rejected the Peronist mantle.

They differed over matters of strategy as well as politics. The Montoneros argued that the indiscriminate killing of army officers, in retaliation for the army's assassination of ERP militants in Catamarca, was counterproductive for the resistance since it alienated intermediate sectors of the population. Accordingly, the death sentence was reserved only for the most notorious and hated members of the government, such as López Rega and Ricardo Otero, along with recognized torturers and the heads of the principal paramilitary right-wing organizations. Although the Montoneros and the ERP were both political-military vanguards,

organizationally they were quite dissimilar. Every member of the Montoneros was also a member of the JP; but not every member of the JP belonged to the Montoneros. In contrast, all members of the PRT were incorporated in the ERP, but not conversely. Organizationally broader than the Montoneros, the JP had the law formally on its side until September 1975, whereas the PRT was handicapped by having to function as an illegal political party. Thus the Montoneros were able to combine all forms of struggle, both legal and illegal, which gave them a decided advantage.

6

The Crisis of Peronism

The resistance was ultimately successful in compelling the military to give in to popular pressures so that elections were called for March 1973. These resulted in the consequent landslide victory for the Peronist ticket headed by Héctor Cámpora. But that victory, followed by Cámpora's assumption of the presidency on May 25 and Perón's final return on June 20, was a hollow one from the start. For the Peronist movement, like Salvador Allende's Popular Unity coalition in Chile, still had the reactionary armed forces to contend with. If it is true that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," then the armed forces continued to be a potential threat to the Peronist movement in Argentina. Although Perón had a considerable advantage over Allende in controlling not only the executive, but also the legislative and judicial branches, it was the military, after all, that had consented to his return. It is safe to say that the military never fully relinquished power in Argentina; that it continued to supervise the political process from behind the scenes with the intention of intervening again should the Peronist movement get out of hand.

The Cuban Revolution, like the Mexican and Bolivian Revolutions before it, had refused to negotiate with representatives of the old regime. To different degrees each had dismantled the regular army, while replacing it with a new rebel army and popular militias. Although the Peronist resistance also refused to negotiate with military leaders, it succeeded through new elections and

through a political victory at the polls, rather than a military rout of the professional armed forces. Having abdicated peacefully, the Argentine military could preserve its ranks virtually intact, save for the forced retirement of some of its top-ranking officers active during the dictatorship. Thus the Peronist movement was handicapped in power by a military bureaucracy that treasured its independence and only grudgingly gave its allegiance to the new government.

Among the first to anticipate what might happen on Perón's return were the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP). In an interview with FAP commandos in December 1970, published in the English edition of *Granma* (3 January 1971), they were asked if the power structure could incorporate Perón into the system as a last-ditch effort to halt the armed struggle by Peronist organizations. The FAP's answer was that, if he returned on the basis of negotiations with the armed forces, he would have to give up his socialist demands and play ball with the military. At the same time, the FAP did not believe that Perón could be integrated into the system because, should he return on those conditions, he would be politically dead. In effect, the Peronist movement would be threatened by a split that would ultimately undermine its status as the majority party.

Although the FAP was right in the conviction that Perón would not settle for a negotiated peace, it was wrong in believing that he could not be integrated into the system. Having returned from exile, Perón renounced all talk of a "Socialist Fatherland." His repeated calls for moderation soon prompted an "Open Letter" to Perón, dated August 1973, from sectors of the movement's extreme left wing. The letter reminded him of what he had said during his eighteen years in exile: that his 1945 project for social reconstruction would not suffice for 1973; that the only viable alternative to military dictatorship was revolutionary war; that he had been mistaken in believing that a social revolution could be achieved through evolutionary means; that the political and trade union bureaucracies had betrayed the movement; that the historic mission of the working class was to destroy capitalism root and branch; that Guevarist as well as Peronist armed organizations had jointly contributed to the dictatorship's impasse; and that Perón would always do what the people wanted.

Fearing a head-on collision with the armed forces, Perón hesitated to launch a massive purge of the military hierarchy. Actually, there was little he could do to transform the political character of the professional army since its intermediate ranks were also solidly anti-Peronist. But at the same time, he failed to organize an adequate counterforce of his own. It was not enough to gain control over the Federal Police. The development of popular militias was also indispensable to offset the monopoly of force by the professional military—a strategy proposed in April 1973 by Rodolfo Galimberti, the head of the Peronist Youth. However, that too would have evoked a military response. Moreover, the Radical Party denounced the proposal, while the trade union bureaucracy did not publicly support it. Galimberti was called to Madrid for top-level talks with Perón and on his return resigned from the leadership of the JP, presumably at Perón's bidding.

Perón's failure to dominate the military signified that the Argentine resistance, unlike the Cuban, heralded little hope of a decisive transfer of power from its reformist to its revolutionary sectors. From the beginning of the resistance the objective of its reformist sector was to use the armed struggle as a means of political bargaining and to overcome through negotiations the military barriers to the free functioning of the Peronist Party and the Peronist-controlled CGT. In sharp contrast, its revolutionary wing aspired to a social as well as political revolution. Throughout the resistance Perón performed a moderating role in the effort to hold together the two sectors of the movement, while using its revolutionary wing as a counterforce to the comparatively stronger and semiautonomous political and trade union bureaucracies. It was only after his return in June 1973 that he regained undisputed control over the Peronist movement, although at the price of accommodation to its right wing and alienation of the left. If he then sided with the bureaucracy it was because the revolutionary tendency had become a liability rather than an asset. Under conditions in which his overwhelming victory at the polls and his cooperation with the opposition Radical Civic Union made him comparatively sure of retaining power, the armed sectors of the movement became increasingly superfluous. Besides, they were damaging his relations with the military. Once his preoccupation shifted from seizing power to using it toward national reconstruc-

tion in which there would be neither victors nor vanquished, the movement's left wing was almost bound to be purged in the interest of pacifying the armed forces.

Peronism had gone through many internal crises before, but this one was unquestionably the worst. Following the military coup in September 1955 the movement was faced with mass desertions by representatives of its right wing. Later, during the emergence of Vandor as the strong man in control of the "62 Organizations," the trade union bureaucracy threatened to take over the movement if Perón did not accede to its demands including the purging of the Peronist Revolutionary Movement (MRP). Even so, the revolutionary tendency continued to be fostered by Perón as an unofficial sector of the Justicialist movement. Not until his election to the presidency and the assassination of José Rucci in September 1973 did he publicly chastise his movement's left wing and warn it to mend its ways. On assuming the presidency in October he then took the initiative in purging representatives of the Peronist left from important positions in the party and the government. In short, the crisis in the movement which began with Perón's repudiation of its left wing in September 1973 ended not only in a split that promised to be irrevocable, but also in one whose long-term effect was to damage, weaken, and discredit the Peronist government.

The Peronist electoral victories of 1973, the amnesty for political prisoners, the legal recognition of the outlawed Peronist armed vanguards and the non-Peronist People's Revolutionary Army, the diplomatic recognition of Cuba, and the fraternal relations with Allende's government of Popular Unity encouraged a triumphalist posture in the conviction that these achievements would lead to other similar ones and that the eighteen years of struggle would shortly lead to social as well as national liberation. These hopes were abruptly shattered beginning with Perón's return. The June 20 massacre at the Ezeiza Airport following a confrontation with the Montoneros, Perón's declared war on Marxism, the emergence of group terrorism against the Peronist and non-Peronist left, the armed gangs encouraged by the Ministry of Social Welfare and successive chiefs of the Federal Police, the continuity (*continuismo*) in high government positions of former servants of the military dictatorship, the unrepresentative character of the Peronist high command or Supreme Council, the Social Pact freezing wages and salaries, the enactment of new repressive laws, the use of the

national guard to protect the plant, offices, and executive personnel of U.S. and European corporations, and the campaign of ideological purification designed to weed out revolutionary currents within Peronism—all these came as unexpected blows to the Peronist left.

In contrast to Perón's first and second administrations, his third government began with a series of repressive laws. The Law of Professional Associations, dating from November 1973, gave to each national organization the right to intervene in the affairs of its subordinate regional and local bodies, which effectively eliminated their independence or any opposition from popular leaders elected by the rank and file. It also extended the mandate of elected officers from two to four years, and the obligation to convoke national congresses or assemblies from one to two years, which gave the bureaucracy a free hand to act and to perpetuate itself in power. Beginning in 1974, the Law of Redundancy gave all organizations, including universities, the right to fire excess personnel—a law used to get rid of political militants and trade union activists. The Law of Compulsory Arbitration made all strikes for higher wages illegal, thereby placing labor entirely at the mercy of the government. This law, originally decreed under the military regime of General Onganía, was given continuity and sanctioned by the Peronist Congress. The Law of the University guaranteed that the universities would be "non-political" in turning out only professionals and specialists. The Reform of the Penal Code, consisting of twenty-one amendments to the old law, increased the maximum terms of imprisonment for political crimes. The penalties were raised to life imprisonment for homicide through premeditated collective action, to fifteen years for armed assault, to ten years for extortion, to fifteen years for kidnapping with the intent of ransom, to fifteen years for the possession of arms or the manufacture of explosives, to ten years for the leaders or organizers of subversive organizations, to ten years for acts of public intimidation, and to six years for inciting to collective violence against persons or institutions. The Act of Obligation to the National Security gave the federal government the right to intervene in the internal affairs of the provinces in the interest of national security. Once signed into law by the provincial governors, this act gave the minister of the interior the right to remove elected officials and representatives identified with or friendly to the Peronist left wing, who could be legally deposed despite their popular mandate.

The escalation of police terror and actions by paramilitary right-wing groups, as a counterterror to that of the various Peronist and non-Peronist armed organizations, also became a typical and continuing feature of Argentine political life. On the day Perón returned, marching contingents of the JP, JTP, and JUP, flying Montoneros' banners, were fired upon at the Ezeiza Airport to prevent them from assembling in front of the platform where Perón was expected to speak. The shooting began when a JP column from La Plata, headed by the Montoneros, FAR, and ERP-22, approached the central stage. Armed bands of the Peronist right had occupied the Ezeiza Hospital and stationed themselves at the windows of the airport's International Hotel forty-eight hours before the event, apparently to prevent the movement's left wing from gaining access to Perón. The hospital and its ambulances were seized by members of the Organizational Command (C de O) wearing white armbands, while the hotel was occupied by armed workers of the JSP wearing green armbands and by professional bodyguards on the UOM payroll. These forces were supported by armed cadres of the University National Concentration (CNU), a parapolice organization whose specific objective was to rid the universities of student militants. All of these groups were under the command of Colonel Jorge Osinde, the chief of Perón's security guard, who had privately circulated the rumor that he had been personally charged by Perón with sweeping the "bolshies" from the movement. The marching contingents with their Montoneros banners were caught in a cross fire from the hotel and the central platform where the security guard was armed with heavy weapons including rifles, carbines, and machine guns. Although the Montoneros had come armed with pistols in self-defense, they were no match for Osinde's armed thugs. The resulting massacre, which left more than thirty dead and several hundred wounded according to official reports, was actually an ambush rather than a spontaneous skirmish between the Peronist left and right wings.

The original actions attributed to the C de O and CNU were subsequently overshadowed by those of the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA). The "Triple A" acquired notoriety in January 1974 when it announced its first death list—a long one including political and trade union leaders, a bishop in the Catholic Church, and a colonel in the regular army (*Militancia*, 7 February 1974). This came in response to the January attack by heavily

armed contingents of the ERP on the army base at Azul. Although the AAA's death lists were not taken seriously at first, after Perón's death in July it began in earnest to hunt down "Marxist subversives" both inside and outside the Peronist movement, including "sympathizers" from all walks of life—the theater, the cinema, the sports world, the press, and the universities. Even congress was not exempt, as demonstrated by the attempts on the lives of representatives of the opposition Radical Civic Union and threats to blow up its national headquarters. The resulting flood of political refugees to Mexico included two former rectors of the University of Buenos Aires, the ex-minister of the interior in the government of President C  mpora, and Ricardo Obreg  n Cano, the former governor of C  rdoba who was deposed by a police-sponsored coup in February 1974. Among the scores of death victims attributed to the AAA, calculated at more than seventy between July and December 1974, were the historian Rodolfo Ortega Pe  a, co-editor of *Militancia*, Atilio L  pez, the vice-governor of C  rdoba, the lawyer Alfredo Curuchet, the priest Carlos Mugica, the hero of the resistance Julio Troxler, and Professor Silvio Frondizi, an outstanding Marxist political scientist and the brother of ex-President Arturo Frondizi.

The assassination of Frondizi came in response to a press conference in August in which he, along with three other lawyers, publicly denounced the mass murders and tortures by the armed forces in Catamarca Province. The military was specifically charged with having assassinated sixteen members of a rural guerrilla column of the ERP, *after* they had surrendered. A fifth colleague, Alfredo Curuchet, was intercepted by the AAA and executed on his way to the conference. In an AAA communiqu   dated September 17, 1974, Frondizi was condemned to death along with ex-President C  mpora and the congressman H  ctor Sandler. A second communiqu  , affirming the AAA's responsibility for Frondizi's death on September 27, read:

Under the mandate of his brother, he was responsible for infiltrating communist ideas among our youth. . . .As our beloved and patriotic Argentine people observe, we have been keeping our word slowly but steadily. We are not identified with the "left-handed" mercenaries of death, but with Peronist and Argentine patriots who want the present tribulations of our fatherland to have an Argentine future and

not a communist one. . . . Long live the armed forces! Death to the "bolshie" assassins! (*Excelsior*, 28 September 1974)

In another communiqué published the same day the AAA also assumed responsibility for three other deaths, including those of two actors for corrupting the minds of the youth: "As our people can see, we are eliminating the 'bolshies' from our country, in which we will have peace only after liquidating the very last one of them. No matter how clandestine they are, we will catch the 'bolshie assassins' of our military patriots" (*Ibid.*).

The escalation of political murders by the "Triple A," which bears a marked resemblance to Brazil's infamous "Death Squadron" and "Commando for Hunting Communists" (CCC), was a direct reply to the ERP's announcement that it would avenge the murders of its sixteen comrades in Catamarca by the indiscriminate killing of as many officers of the regular army. Thus began a duel between the ERP and the AAA to see how many corpses each could pile up in the developing civil war between them. In this unequal duel, however, the AAA had the advantage of government protection. It was well known that López Rega, a former policeman, had subsidized the Organizational Command with funds from his ministry of social welfare, and that Alberto Villar, the chief of the Federal Police, had been his protégé. That the AAA operated with complete impunity and with the complicity of the Federal Police was evident from the number of kidnappings that were transformed into police arrests in response to immediate pressures by the opposition political parties, and efforts to implicate the government in these activities. In effect, the AAA did the work of the repressive forces for them, by hunting down "subversives" and otherwise compelling them to flee the country.

The new repressive legislation and the escalation of paramilitary terrorism against the left paved the way for increasing concessions to the right wing of the Justicialist movement. Once the military had formally abdicated, Perón was confronted with the double task of holding his movement together and also of moderating the differences between Peronists and anti-Peronists that all might work together toward the reconstruction of the country. This was a complex and difficult assignment, if only because the solution to either one of these problems effectively barred a solution to the other. The two horns of the dilemma were the following; to

proceed directly to social liberation and the establishment of a Socialist Fatherland, at the risk of alienating the military and provoking a new civil war; or to develop Argentina into a great power and to postpone indefinitely the objective of national socialism, at the risk of alienating the Peronist left.

The issue hinged on a choice of allies. Should Perón align his movement with the main party of the opposition, the Radical Civic Union, or should he try to cement the unity of all Peronists? To whom should he make concessions: to the few who wielded military and economic power or to the many committed to a socialist transformation against an enemy that could easily wreck all hope of social reconstruction? That Perón decided from the day of his return to cast his lot with the stronger of these forces, even at the risk of splitting the Peronist movement, is evident from his response to the Ezeiza massacre.

In a speech to the nation delivered the day after the massacre, he outlined the priorities of the new 1973 post-civil war period in which national reconstruction was supposedly a condition of national liberation (*El Descamisado*, 26 June 1973). First, the deplorable economic situation of the country was such that the struggle for national reconstruction was hopeless unless everyone participated and collaborated in the common endeavor. Hence the need for a great national agreement concerning fundamentals—a project which also had the support of the armed forces. Second, the crusade for national reconstruction would be guided by the structure of established values and the best interests of the country. A revolution was necessary, but it would have to take place peacefully and constructively, without sacrificing the life of a single Argentine. Only hard work, Perón insisted, could redeem the country from its past follies. One had to choose the best men, whatever their political origins, for the job that had to be done; each man should be judged by his services to his country, regardless of his political predilections. Third, as the only guarantee of liberty and justice, a legal and constitutional order was necessary. Each Argentine had the inalienable right to live in peace and security, which the government had the obligation to secure. The only enemies of the people were those who violated the public order established by a legitimate and popular government. Fourth, Peronists had to return to the foundations of the movement in the effort to neutralize those who would deform it from below and

from above. Those who ingenuously believed they could infiltrate and capture the movement through duplicity were mistaken and would be dealt with accordingly. Finally, the goal of reconstruction was the creation of a great power (*Argentina potencia*), in which the citizens would enjoy the highest standard of living of which the nation was capable. Everyone should work for the future and put aside old rancors in the common effort to achieve this goal.

Perón's address constituted an appeal to concentrate on preeminently economic objectives. Political considerations were deemphasized, which suggested that the struggle for social liberation was no longer on the political agenda. As in 1955, under the pressure of the armed forces on one side and the Peronist bases clamoring for the organization of a workers' militia on the other, the general had taken the path of least resistance by declaring in effect: "I have ceased to be the leader of the National Revolution in order to become President of all the Argentines."

The grounds for national unity were further clarified in a private interview with representatives of the Peronist Youth organizations on September 8, 1973 (*El Descamisado*, 11 September 1973). The ingredients of a revolution, Perón declared, were twofold: blood and time. "If much blood is spent, time is saved; if it takes a lot of time, blood is spared." Which option should one choose? Perón noted that it was not enough to try to change the world, but to do so intelligently. "One must realize that on the other side there is an opposed will which also has force, and that it is pointless to break one's skull in a head-on collision, which is what is happening in Chile." What is the point, he continued, of workers occupying factories and putting their organizations in jeopardy? What was well organized should be conserved and not placed at the mercy of a renewed military intervention. During the resistance the trade union organizations were unjustly criticized by representatives of the Peronist Youth for their alleged lack of militancy, although it was Perón himself who had ordered them to desist from dangerous actions. The youth sector had been ordered to proceed in a different manner only because it had less to lose. In the guidance of a popular movement, Perón observed, one has to orchestrate different kinds of action suited to different kinds of men. At the present time, the youth sector was fragmented and desperately needed to be unified. Some were to the right of the ideology and

doctrine of the movement, others to the left—but they were all equally Peronists. “I don’t know which side has more reason for protesting,” Perón remarked. “What interests me is that there is a movement that is multifaceted and that includes all the facets which such a movement needs.” In politics one has to accumulate the largest number of people possible in pursuit of a given objective. Consequently, the fundamental consideration was to establish unity rather than to decide who was right: “I am here to lead all, the good and the bad, because if I only want to lead the good I shall be left with only a few, and in politics one cannot do much with them.”

The price of so-called national unity, however, was disunity within the Peronist movement. In the effort to achieve the former, Perón unwittingly promoted the latter. As in 1955, the Peronist Party sought to forge a union of incompatibles. Only this time its official sector no longer enjoyed the confidence of militants in the movement. Once the internal struggle against the left had become an obsession of the “popular government,” the party’s shift to the right was a matter of course.

Perón misinterpreted the radicalization of the Peronist Youth as an occasional or passing phenomenon, as a direct response to military repression which would presumably dissipate under a popular government. Instead of a wave of the future, Marxist socialism was treated in terms of a cold war mentality, as a political perversion with no more future than capitalist imperialism. For Perón the persistence of the revolutionary current after power had been won indicated a pathological inability to adapt to the new social reality. Evidently, he lacked an historical perspective of the changes in the balance of social forces which had contributed to transforming the character of both the Peronist movement and the working class during the eighteen years of the resistance.

Like the pacification policy of 1955, the new Social Pact of 1973 brought together organized labor and a bourgeoisie whose economic interests had become increasingly identified with the multinational corporations. Perón’s mistake was to have believed in the possibility of reviving the original alliance of 1945–55, when the national bourgeoisie still had an interest in economic protectionism and a policy of vast social and labor reforms. If such an alliance was no longer feasible, it was because the national bourgeoisie had

since cast its lot with the international or imperialist bourgeoisie. In effect, the Peronist movement in 1973 was at best a pale replica of that during Perón's first and second administrations.

Perón also failed to recognize the long-range effects upon the movement of Argentina's changed status as a dependent country. During his first and second governments the laboring class experienced the benefits of a genuine redistribution of the national wealth promoted not only by the armed forces, but also by sectors of the national bourgeoisie. Since these sectors benefited from the development of the internal market spurred by higher wages and the increased consumption of the masses, they too had a vested interest in Perón's national revolution and struggle against imperialism. By the time of his ouster in 1955, however, economic independence had ceased to be a fighting issue because of the internationalization of capital and the changed strategy of foreign corporations. From having sought to destroy local enterprises as possible competitors, the multinationals had turned to absorbing or integrating them through interlocking directorships and the exchange of securities. In that way native capitalists were able to trade off their independent ownership for the advantages of holding stock in the multinationals, while continuing to manage their former enterprises in dependence on foreign interests.

Between 1955 and 1973 the Argentine national bourgeoisie actively cooperated with foreign interests in extending the scope of imperialist economic penetration in Argentina. As a result, the share of this sector of the bourgeoisie, producing mainly for the domestic market, was reduced to a small fraction of what it had been under Perón. In a study by the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), *Argentina in the Hour of the Furnaces*, the participation of foreign corporations in industrial production was reported to have grown during this period from eight to forty percent. Competition with the superior technology represented by foreign interests struck hard at the small and medium manufacturers. Bankruptcies mounted while restrictions on the transfer of profits abroad, combined with successive devaluations by the government, encouraged the use of foreign reserves to buy up local companies.

By the end of the resistance more than sixty percent of the total production of goods and services had come under the control of the multinational corporations. According to a FAP report dated

August 3, 1973, "Briefings for an Analysis of the Present Situation," this figure was compared to twenty-five percent for the state sector and only fifteen percent for the native private sector. At the same time, the most successful representatives of the national bourgeoisie were endeavoring to negotiate their dependence in order to become junior partners of the international bourgeoisie—a sad commentary on Perón's earlier projection of an independent capitalist development for Argentina.

The crisis of Peronism may be attributed in part to the political pressures on the Supreme Council of the Party by these least favored sectors of the national bourgeoisie. Seeking an accommodation with imperialism that might benefit them as well, they favored an anti-imperialist front with the working class for the purpose of renegotiating their dependence from a position of strength. But precisely because this front was conceived as mainly an instrument to such negotiations, they could no longer support, as during 1945–55, the full-scale confrontation with imperialism demanded by the Peronist rank and file. In effect, they could no longer count on the bulk of the labor movement to conform to their economic projects—a circumstance that virtually obliged them to woo the trade union bureaucracy. Thus the anti-imperialist front or Justicialist Front of Liberation (FREJULI) was never the organization it was imagined to be by sectors of the Peronist left. Far from striving for either national or social liberation, it sought to improve the fortunes of the national bourgeoisie together with those of the Peronist political and trade union bureaucracies, at the expense of the Peronist masses.

The official Peronist Party had survived more than one crisis during the past three decades and there was reason to believe that it would also survive the present one. Merely to survive a crisis, however, is not to recover from it. Throughout all earlier crises the Peronist Party had retained its status as the majoritarian party in Argentina. In sharp contrast, the present crisis threatened to transform it into the party of a minority.

During the eighteen years of the resistance the Peronist movement was confronted with a mainly military crisis. A military coup had forcibly ousted the Peronist Party from power, after which the armed forces intervened in successive elections to nullify the Peronist majority at the polls. The first Peronist resistance was aimed at military and pseudoconstitutional governments designed

to prevent the majoritarian party from ever reaching the government. During those years the Peronist movement was faced by crises external to its own organization. Although the movement also had to face internal divisions including a major split in the CGT between 1968 and 1970, these tended to be overcome through a united front against the common enemy.

With the return of the Peronist movement to power, the military crisis gave way to a political one. From having been a secondary source of difficulties, the internal divisions in the movement became the principal source. Beginning in January 1974, the movement began to disintegrate in consequence of a new wave of repressive legislation and paramilitary terrorism, which led to a fundamental and irreparable split between its left and right wings. A year later, in March 1975, a second Peronist Party was founded for the purpose of contesting the hegemony of the official party at the polls. Led by Andrés Framini, the Authentic Peronist Party (PPA) anticipated running its own presidential candidate in the national elections. Thus there was reason to believe that the division of the Peronist vote would put an end to the majoritarian status of the FREJULI. In short, the most serious challenge ever to be faced by the official movement was not a military but a political one: the erosion of its popular support to the point that its historic invincibility at the polls could no longer be taken for granted.

The premonitions of a major electoral crisis were first evident in the gubernatorial and congressional elections held in the province of Misiones on April 13, 1975. There the principal beneficiary of the decomposition of the Peronist movement was the old Radical Civic Union. The FREJULI won with forty-six percent of the vote, as against thirty-eight percent for the UCR and fifteen percent for a coalition of the PPA and the Third Position—a local left-wing Peronist party. The distribution of seats was somewhat less favorable for the victor: sixteen congressmen for the FREJULI, thirteen for the UCR, and three for the coalition of the PPA and the Third Position. More revealing than these absolute figures were the comparative ones. Thus the FREJULI vote was approximately twenty percent less than in September 1973, whereas the UCR vote had increased by more than sixty percent.

In March 1973 the Third Position had received 29,000 votes compared to 51,000 for the FREJULI; two years later it and the PPA won only 15,000 votes between them, tantamount to a loss of

almost fifty percent. That the Peronist left had suffered an electoral reversal was understandable in view of the conditions under which it had to wage its political campaign. In March 1973 it was heralded as the vanguard of the popular forces which had compelled the military to abdicate; two years later it was publicly discredited and persecuted by the Peronist government and the Federal Police. With the Montoneros waging a war against the government, it was extremely difficult and also hazardous for representatives of the Peronist left to build a new party. At the same time, the ministry of social welfare mounted the most expensive electoral campaign in the history of Misiones, including the massive distribution of free refrigerators and sewing machines in an effort to win votes. Despite these efforts and the repression, the PPA amassed more than double the votes of all the other opposition parties with the exception of the UCR. Even in defeat, the PPA emerged as one of the three principal political parties in the country and as the most important single party on the left. Moreover, the Misiones elections were hardly typical of the country as a whole. With an urban population of only forty percent compared to the national average of eighty percent, with virtually no industry and an insignificant working class—the principal support of the new party—the results of the elections were an unreliable index of national trends.

That the Authentic Peronist Party was a force to be feared was evident from the government's response to its showing in the elections. On April 18 the police in Buenos Aires announced the arrest of the head of the JP, Juan Carlos Dante Gullo, and of Dardo Cabo, a leader of the PPA, after an armed encounter in which both were accused of directing the Montoneros. This action was followed on April 22 by the formal expulsion of ex-President C  mpora from the Justicialist Party for "treason and disloyalty." Specifically, C  mpora was expelled for not having denounced the guerrillas, the new movement of resistance to the government of Isabel Per  n, and the Peronist Youth reorganized under the banners of "Authentic Peronism"—evidence of his disrespect for the principle of verticality and directives of the official party. The following day C  mpora replied in a "Message to the Argentine People" in which he astutely denounced his accusers as persons without political merit and as having only circumstantial authority to judge his case. Appealing over their heads to the Argentine

people, he asked it to judge whether he was at fault or whether the fault lay with his accusers.

In addition to organizing a new party, the disaffected left wing of the movement had entered into an informal alliance with other left-of-center parties to set up a rival to the FREJULI in the forthcoming presidential elections. The initial move in that direction had been made by the Peronist Youth in a press conference on November 24, 1974, in which, after denouncing the government of Isabel Perón as "illegitimate," it called upon all the national and popular sectors to form a new front of national and social liberation to replace the old one. One of the first steps was the organization of a rival Peronist party, which contested the legitimacy of the FREJULI in the provincial elections in Misiones in April.

A month later and in response to the showing of the PPA in Misiones, the Intransigent Party (PI) of Oscar Alende announced on May 9 its support for a broad front similar to that in Uruguay in 1971. The Intransigent Party consisted of the remnants of the former Intransigent Radical Civic Union, after ex-President Frondizi had split with it in 1963 to organize his own Movement of Integration and Development (MID) committed to a front with the banned Peronist movement. Alende hoped to participate in a center-left coalition that would overcome the forced option at the polls between the official Peronist Party and the Radical Party (UCR), the former Popular Radical Civic Union, of Ricardo Balbín. In an effort to organize a new coalition, contacts were made with the Authentic Peronist Party, the Communist Party, the Christian Revolutionary Party (PRC), and the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP). Later, the Front Against Imperialism and For Socialism (FAS) was to add its support to the new front.

The urgency of a new front was reiterated at the First National Congress of the PPA, held in Córdoba at the end of November. Besides clarifying the party's revolutionary program and its role as the political and legal arm of the Montoneros, the congress discussed ways and means of constituting an electoral front. Alliances were to be established mainly with the Intransigent Party and with ex-President Cámpora representing a sector of loyal Peronists still included within the official Party. Following the congress the principal leaders of the PPA, Andrés Framini and former governor Oscar Bidegain, met with Cámpora and Alende in an effort to reach an agreement in which it was anticipated that

Cámpora would head the front's presidential ticket with Alende as vice-president. In a lengthy message to the National Convention of the PI on December 13, likewise meeting in Córdoba, Alende reiterated his own party's call for an electoral front based on the Peronist masses, the Yrigoyenist radicals, and other democratic sectors striving for "authentic social and economic change." It was the imminent formation of such a front that prompted the government on Christmas Eve 1975 to outlaw the PPA, precisely for serving as a legal front of the Montoneros, and to ban the publication and circulation of its fortnightly *El Auténtico*.

On the model of a kind of left-wing FREJULI, the PPA was successful in establishing the embryo of such a front with a group of left-of-center parties committed to implementing the program voted by the people on March 11, 1973, but subsequently abandoned or betrayed by the government. Among the smaller parties supporting such a front were the Christian Revolutionary Party (PRC), the Christian Popular Party (PPC), the Yrigoyenist National Movement (MNY), and the Vanguard Socialist Party (PSV). This list has a certain interest because only a few hours before the coup against Isabel Perón on March 24, 1976, these smaller parties joined with representatives of the Intransigent and Authentic Peronist Parties to found a new weekly, *Información*, whose purpose was to arrive at common solutions to the political and economic crises ravaging the country.

During the resistance the Peronist movement managed to present a common front against its enemies. After the March 1973 elections and during the fifty days of euphoria under the leftist government of Héctor Cámpora, however, it became increasingly evident that the competition between the two Peronisms was rapidly eroding the unity of the movement. It also became obvious that the revolutionary current rather than the opposition political parties and the reactionary armed forces had become the principal threat to the Peronist political and trade union bureaucracies. Since peaceful competition was successful in attracting the Peronist rank and file to the side of the Peronist left, the Peronist right wing was pushed into launching a cold war against the "Marxist infiltrators" who were allegedly subverting the movement. These measures were apparently insufficient to halt the growth of the "Marxist insectifying tendency." Accordingly, the cold war was escalated into a hot one in which police terrorism was

reinforced by the actions of paramilitary gangs bent on physically liquidating the Argentine left. Once again the history of Argentina was being written with the blood of revolutionaries, which cannot be negotiated.

Hitherto the struggle between the reformist and revolutionary tendencies in the movement stopped short of a decisive rupture because of the urgency to join forces against the military. Yet within less than a year of Perón's return from exile, his original alliance had virtually collapsed to be replaced by another one. Government figures sympathetic to the Peronist left wing were pressured to resign, beginning with Oscar Bidegain, the governor of Buenos Aires. The self-styled orthodox tendency had prevailed upon Perón and then Isabel to depose the elected governors of six provinces—Córdoba, Mendoza, Santa Cruz, Formosa, Salta, and Misiones. Regional offices of the major trade unions were intervened by the reformist trade union bureaucracy in control of the CGT, followed by the government's seizure and "normalization" of recalcitrant unions, the Graphic Workers Union led by Raimundo Ongaro and Agustín Tosco's Light and Power Workers Union of Córdoba. With warrants for the arrest of union leaders and the assassination of key spokesmen of revolutionary Peronism, the Peronist left had ceased in 1975 to represent the same effective force for social change that it had a year earlier. Nonetheless, the emergence of the Authentic Peronist Party on a national scale amounted to the left's resurgence within the area of electoral politics. Since the conditions which had originally engendered the Peronist left showed no signs of disappearing, a longer view of history indicated that the Peronist movement had entered upon a phase of continuing crisis from which it was unlikely to recover.

Evidently, the effort of the Justicialist movement to "Mexicanize" the Argentine revolution had partly failed in its objective. The FREJULI had fallen short of receiving an absolute majority in the Misiones elections and was likely to fall even shorter in the elections scheduled in other provinces. Clearly, it was in no condition to repeat the example of Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) by converting the government into its private possession, at least not through constitutional means. Unlike the Mexican virtual one-party system, Argentina had two viable political parties contending for a simple majority—with the prospect of still a third.

In other respects, the Argentine revolution seemed to be

traversing the same stages as the Mexican Revolution. Following the leftist administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas during the 1930s, the ruling party abandoned its radical populist orientation for a policy of dependent capitalist development with the help of large doses of foreign capital. If Perón's first and second administrations are in many ways comparable to that of Cárdenas, his third government is a reminder of the shift to the right under Cárdenas' immediate successor, Avila Camacho. In this perspective the government of Isabel Perón corresponds to the institutionalization or freezing of the Mexican Revolution under President Miguel Alemán, combined with the escalation of political repression under President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz in 1968. Historical analogies, however, are misleading. Thus there is reason to question whether Argentina in the 1970s was capable of repeating the experience of the Mexican Revolution during the 1940s, much less the repudiation of President Díaz Ordaz' repressive policies by the new President Luis Echeverría.

Were the repressive policies of Isabelita's government really comparable to those under Alemán or Díaz Ordaz? Or had the Peronist movement been so polarized by the events of 1974-75 that there was no longer hope of recovering its original balance? In view of the far greater strength of the Peronist left compared to the Mexican, it was understandable and predictable that the Peronist right wing would go to much greater lengths in its struggle against the left. To the Ezeiza massacre in June 1973 were to be added the exploits of the "Triple A," which had been both subsidized and protected by government agencies. In April 1975 the Montoneros released a document entitled "What is the AAA?" which described in detail López Rega's complicity and that of the Federal Police in the wave of right-wing assassinations of Peronist militants. The substance of the indictment was confirmed a year later, in February 1976, by an investigatory commission of the Chamber of Deputies on the basis of a confession by Salvador Paino, one of the founders of the "Triple A." Repression of the political left was worse under Isabelita than it had been in Mexico under any of Cárdenas' successors. To add to the climate of repression, Argentina was completely encircled by hostile military regimes. Thus foreign, as well as domestic, pressures contributed to the shift toward the right and to the continuing political crisis that foreshadowed the collapse of both the Peronist Party and the government—first of López Rega and then of Isabel Perón.

The Peronist Enigma

If few political analysts have reached an accurate understanding of Peronism, it is because of its extreme complexity compounded by a mass of demagogical appeals and ideological compromises. As Perón noted in a March 1973 interview in *Oui* magazine, nobody had yet been able to fathom its fundamentals nor had he been willing to help for political reasons. Its enigmatic character is to be found precisely in its ambivalence and defiance of traditional categories and efforts to classify it. Because Peronism is a pragmatic social and political philosophy, it has shown an extraordinary capacity to adapt to the most varied historical circumstances. This has earned for it the reputation of opportunism. Peronism, as we shall see, has several faces. Actually, its interpreters have judged it to be attractive or repulsive depending on when and which of its many profiles it has chosen to present to the public.

In this perspective it is understandable that, after almost three decades of open or repressed hostility to Perón and Peronism, the U.S. State Department should have suddenly reversed itself following the Peronist landslide in the March 1973 elections. The foreign policy of the new government installed in May threatened to break the U.S. blockade of Cuba, but its domestic policy promised a new era of social peace and political stability with an end to guerrilla operations against U.S.-based corporations in Argentina. The State Department was on friendly terms with comparable populist and nationalist regimes in Mexico and Peru, which also had diplomatic

ties with Cuba. Since an accommodation to such regimes was apparently worth the price of domestic stability in those countries, a similar logic seems to have dictated the State Department's accommodation to Peronism.

The liberal establishment in the U.S. also took an active interest in the success of the new Peronist government. In view of the rash of right-wing coups against democratic regimes in Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, and Uruguay, not to mention the military dictatorship in Argentina from 1966 to 1973, the fascist character of Peronism had evidently been exaggerated. At the same time, the monopoly of political power by a populist party tended to be reappraised as at least a viable form of democracy south of the Rio Grande. Since Peronism represented the most persistent effort on the continent to repeat the experience of Mexican one-party rule based on periodic elections, liberals in the U.S. began reassessing its authoritarian features in favor of its democratic facade.

This, however, was only one of the many faces presented by Peronism. Representing an alleged middle road between capitalism and communism, Peronism constitutes a complex tissue of ideas congenial alike to authoritarian nationalists and to non-Marxist, self-styled socialists. During the late 1940s and early 1950s Perón claimed that his philosophy of Justicialism represented the only viable alternative to social unrest and communist subversion provoked by the then prevailing liberal-democratic governments in Latin America, dominated for the most part by landowning and plutocratic interests. Subsequently, he claimed that it was the only viable alternative to the corporate military dictatorships in Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, and Uruguay as well as to the Fidelist and Guevarist movements on the continent. In the effort to reconcile the claims of capital and labor through the massive organization of the working class and its participation in political power, Justicialism became the Argentine equivalent of a similar philosophy of social justice first institutionalized by the Mexican Revolution under President Lázaro Cárdenas—a pragmatic and flexible social philosophy aimed at reconciling political opposites.

As late as 1968 Perón reaffirmed the continuity of his "Third Position" with the struggle of pre-World War II Italian fascism and German national socialism to steer a middle course between the demoliberal plutocracies of the West and Soviet totalitarianism. Historically considered, fascism and communism were regarded by

Perón not as polar opposites, but as rival aspects of the same redemptive movement of the twentieth century: the struggle against capitalist-imperialism and its political counterpart, liberal democracy. Ethically, however, communism was interpreted as barbaric and inhumane, and its promotion of class struggle instead of class peace as detrimental to civilized society. Thus the official sector of Peronism made common cause with the Third World in opposition to the "two imperialisms," a struggle against the same unholy alliance of international finance capital and international subversion waged by the fascist powers during World War II.

The fascist elements in Peronism are evident not only in its populist appeal to a fictitious "Third Position" intermediate to capitalism and communism, but also in its demagogic efforts to win over the working class through the nominal acceptance of a socialist ideology. There are at least two historic instances in Latin America of the defeat of a revolutionary tendency through the adoption of its banners by a political and military bureaucracy. The first occurred during the Mexican Revolution when Carranza, following General Álvaro Obregón's advice, accepted popular demands for an agrarian reform as a condition of acquiring mass support, after which he proceeded to smash the peasant armies of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. The second occurred during the Peronist resistance when, on the advice of John William Cooke, Perón gave free reign to the pro-Guevarist tendencies within his movement—a strategy of guerrilla warfare which directly contributed to the abdication of the military and to his eventual return to power—after which he proceeded to purge the movement of "Marxist infiltrators" and the Peronist revolutionary tendency.

Years earlier, in preparation for the presidential elections of 1946, Perón had also made demagogic use of leftist tendencies by running as the Labor Party's candidate. Then, after becoming president, he forcibly dissolved the party and imprisoned its independent leaders. This seemingly ambivalent strategy of stealing the thunder of the left and then proceeding to crush independent movements of the masses is to be distinguished from that of other "Young Turks" within the military who, following a successful campaign against guerrilla movements, have embraced the revolutionary banners of anti-imperialism, economic independence, and social justice in order to overcome the causes of social unrest. Thus the Peruvian military coup of October 1968 and the

Bolivian military coup by General Juan José Torres in October 1970 contrast strikingly with the comparable Mexican and Argentine experiences, in which a systematic war against the left followed rather than preceded the conquest of political power.

Actually, the Peronist movement harbored a lion which could not be tamed. Under the impact of John William Cooke and the Cuban Revolution, the Peronist resistance developed a Guevarist tendency. The influence of the Cuban Revolution was also evident in the program of the Peronist left wing, reorganized by Gustavo Rearte in 1964 as the Peronist Revolutionary Movement (MRP). Calling for armed struggle against the elected government of Arturo Illia, the program anticipated a protracted struggle that would continue even after the conquest of power. Thus it is not surprising that both Cooke and Rearte were delegates to the Cuban-sponsored Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) in 1967 and that their group dominated the Argentine delegation. That they could still be identified with Peronism was made possible by Perón's encouragement of the revolutionary tendency as a counterforce to the collaborationist Peronist political and trade union bureaucracies, and by his concerted efforts to moderate the differences between his movement's left and right wings.

Peronism pretended to reconcile political opposites. But what are we to make of its alleged synthesis of capitalism, communism, and fascism? That capitalist and communist tendencies can coexist in peaceful competition is no longer cause for skepticism. That capitalism and fascism are compatible is even less perplexing, as the historical record of European politics between the two world wars indicates. But that revolutionary Marxist and counterrevolutionary fascist currents can exist side by side within the same political movement—that is surely cause for surprise. In fact, the central enigma of Peronism is precisely how to account for the coexistence of these hitherto irreconcilable and contradictory political tendencies.

The doctrine of Justicialism, formally presented to the Argentine public in 1949, was the philosophic expression of a polyclass movement that had deliberately incorporated fascist as well as capitalist and communist features. Each of these political-economic syndromes was conceived as a response to two sets of antinomies, which Peronism sought to reconcile in a higher

synthesis or "Third Position" intermediate to the extremes: first, the opposition between individualist and collectivist tendencies; second, the opposition between materialism and idealism. Communism, for example, was interpreted as a synthesis of collectivism and philosophical materialism; capitalism, as a composite of individualism and materialism; fascism, as a combination of collectivism and philosophical idealism.

These principal political combinations of the twentieth century had the advantage, according to Justicialist doctrine, of overcoming the extremes represented by each of their special poles in isolation. Thus the unviable political options were anarchism (individualism), totalitarianism (collectivism), egoism (materialism), and theism (idealism). Perón's objection to communism, capitalism, and fascism was that they, too, were mutually exclusive. Accordingly, Justicialism was conceived as an effort to harmonize these major political and economic tendencies through a system of ideological checks and balances permitting their coexistence. By its self-identification with a form of Christian national socialism, moreover, Justicialist doctrine also gave prominence to the theocratic element overshadowed or ignored by these other combinations.

What is the relationship between these ideological components of Justicialism and the division of the Peronist movement into left and right wings? Under the impact of the Cuban Revolution, the left wing has increasingly favored a socialist solution to Argentina's social problems. In contrast, the right wing supports the capitalist system without the leadership of the capitalist class. Since fascism has historically represented a last-ditch defense of capitalism through a political transfer of power from the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie to a professional bureaucracy ruling in its own interests, the Peronist right wing shares the political objectives of fascism, if not its methods. Agreeing with elements of the fascist syndrome in opposition both to the political sovereignty of the bourgeoisie and to a social revolution from below, the Peronist right has stood for a "Third Position" allegedly intermediate to both capitalism and communism, but in fact partial to capitalism. In this respect, Peronism has served and continues to serve as the representative of specifically bourgeois economic interests.

The fascist sources of Peronism may be traced to Perón's direct experience of Italian fascism and his efforts to assimilate its lessons.

During his two-year stint from 1939 to 1941 as a military attaché of the Argentine Embassy in Rome, he had ample opportunity to study Italian fascism and was evidently influenced by Mussolini's example. "Mussolini was the greatest man of the twentieth century, although he made a few mistakes," Perón quipped. Presumably, Mussolini's greatest mistake was to have misjudged the military strength of the allied powers and the continued viability of representative political institutions in the West. Although the Group of United Officers (GOU), the military lodge created by Perón, was a pro-Axis and intensely nationalistic organization dedicated to displacing the corrupt electoral system in Argentina with a military one, Perón adapted after World War II to the ways of the victors. Thus the Peronist movement acquired a democratic character, but with a strong dose of authoritarianism institutionalized in the person of the leader and the so-called "principle of verticality"—the transmission of authority from the top down. It was civilian rather than military in composition and opted for electoral avenues rather than armed violence as a means of achieving political power. Accordingly, many interpreters tend to rule out the fascist features of the movement. However, just as one can speak of a revolutionary tendency within Peronism, so the movement was broad enough and sufficiently complex to include a fascist current.

That fascist currents continued to be an important and integral part of Peronism was evident from Perón's decision in May 1974 to return to the fundamentals of the movement by reaffirming the centrality of Justicialist doctrine. In an address to the Congress of the Justicialist Party at the end of May, he redefined the conditions for membership in the movement in terms of unconditional acceptance of the Peronist ideology contained in the following works: *The Organized Community*, *Peronist Doctrine*, and *Peronist Leadership*. This meant that the essence of the movement was to be determined by those works dating from the period when Peronism was in office, as opposed to those which sanctioned the policies of the Peronist Youth and the revolutionary wing of the resistance, such as *Latin America: Now or Never*. It was abundantly clear from Perón's speech that, although he had relied on the revolutionary tendency during the critical years when the movement was outside the law, the politics and strategy of a "Socialist Fatherland" were no longer acceptable after his return to power.

In retrospect, all of Perón's declarations concerning an Argentine form of socialism were to be interpreted within the context of his "Third Position," i.e., a mixed economy governed by capitalist relations of production but including a strong public sector. Socialism in the strict or Marxist sense of a new social formation dominated by noncapitalist relations of production was out of the question—a distortion of Justicialist doctrine. Prior to his speech Peronism could be nominally conceived as embracing the politics and strategy of social as well as national liberation. After his speech it was clear that the deviations from Peronist orthodoxy, which had characterized the resistance during his involuntary exile, were to be finally exorcised from the movement. Accordingly, Perón's simultaneous attacks on both the left and the right were not intended as a repudiation of the Peronist right wing. On the contrary, they were directed against the Marxist-Leninist left allied to the revolutionary tendency *within* the Peronist movement, and against the native oligarchy allied to imperialist interests *outside* the movement.

The enigma of Peronism during the past twenty years was thus partly clarified. The Peronist left was never more than an instrumentality, never the finality of the movement. Having established the conditions of orthodoxy, Perón declared that those elements and tendencies which would not or could not accept the ideology crystallized in the above works constituted pathological germs. Since these germs were contagious, they had to be eliminated from the movement before the infection could spread. Hence Perón's recommendations for combating the infection: first, the election of a new leadership capable of returning the movement to its ideological foundations in Justicialist doctrine; second, the elimination from the movement of the subversive or pathological tendency represented mainly by the Peronist Youth.

The aftermath of Perón's speech was that the Supreme Council of the Party excluded the left-wing Peronist Working Youth (JTP) from the trade union branch, which was officially limited to the CGT and to the right-wing Peronist Trade Union Youth (JSP). At the same time, the Supreme Council was restructured because of Perón's decision to replace the representative of the youth branch by a representative of the pro-fascist Peronist Revolutionary Legion. The provisional Supreme Council, created by Perón in July 1973 for the purpose of making the movement more representative,

had consisted of delegates from the four principal branches of the movement: Humberto Martiarena, president of the Justicialist Party bloc in the senate, representing its political branch; José Rucci, secretary-general of the CGT, as the representative of the trade union branch; Silvana Roth, representing the women's branch; and Julio Yessi, leader of the right-wing Peronist Youth of the Argentine Republic (JPRA), as the representative of the youth branch. By replacing Yessi, Perón did not make the movement any more representative, since the Legion had been part of the JPRA from which it had only recently separated.

Following the lines of the fascist corporative state in Italy, the Revolutionary Legion proposed to establish a national syndicalist state in Argentina, a project documented in *Primicia Argentina* in June and July 1974. In conformity with this project, business enterprises would be compelled to "give possession or, better still, the ownership of commodities and the means of production to the workers." This would eliminate the role of absentee owners, mostly foreigners or agents of foreign interests, who attach little importance to the greatness of Argentina and to the well-being of its people (*Primicia*, 2–8 July 1974). This piece of demagoguery was far from identifying workers with organized labor. On the contrary, the category of "workers" was conceived in the broadest sense, including the managers of corporations and, by implication, capitalist entrepreneurs and partnerships as opposed to anonymous stockholders.

Ideally, the Peronist movement was to prevent this current from acquiring independence by subordinating it to a broad coalition or complex political synthesis that included the Peronist left wing. The fascist current was to become an instrument of the party and the government in securing an equilibrium of forces allegedly beneficial to the country as a whole. In practice, however, neither the party nor the government established an equilibrium between their left and right wings, but dedicated themselves to the defense of the existing economic system through the repression of revolutionary tendencies both inside and outside the movement. Matters were aggravated after Perón's death, when the sinister features of Argentine fascism were encouraged through paramilitary organizations secretly financed by sectors within the party and the government. Once the bourgeoisie had been removed from power through a Peronist landslide at the polls, the principal threat no

longer stemmed from it but from sectors intent on abolishing capitalism and establishing a "Socialist Fatherland." Although prior to achieving political power Peronism represented an uneasy truce between its anticapitalist and anticommunist sectors, after power had been won and the bourgeoisie had been tamed the only serious enemy internal to the movement became its revolutionary wing. In displacing the bourgeoisie from power, Peronism was politically revolutionary; but in suppressing the struggle for socialism, it was economically reactionary.

Unquestionably, there is a family resemblance between fascism and Peronism; but that Italian fascism was the first in a series representing a new twentieth-century political syndrome did not make it the ideological parent of Peronism. The difficulty with those characterizations of Peronism as a "left-wing fascism," "fascism of the lower classes" or "labor fascism" is that they mistake a sibling relationship for a parent-child one. Although Peronism owes more to Italian fascism than to any other single source, its relationship to the latter can be more accurately designated by the metaphor of a political younger brother than by that of an intellectual brain child or ideological progeny. Perhaps the outstanding difference between Peronism and Italian fascism, to which one might add German national socialism and Franco's "military fascist" regime in Spain, is that Peronism stopped short of being totalitarian. For one thing, the armed forces were never successfully subordinated to the Peronist Party. If there were no mass concentration camps in Argentina, if the jails were not overflowing with political prisoners, if police tortures and assassinations were isolated rather than everyday events, if civilian life was not militarized, it was because Peronism never had to face—at least not until Perón's third government—a systematic and powerful Marxist opposition capable of paralyzing the government and the country. The conditions of social unrest that Mussolini faced in 1920–21, Hitler during the Great Depression, and Franco during the Civil War, Perón was not obliged to confront until his third administration, and then only from January to July 1974.

There is another salient difference between Peronism and fascism. The Latin American governments that most resemble the totalitarian dictatorships of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Franco's Spain are the military regimes in Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, and Uruguay—governments which are anti-Peronist as well as

anticommunist. In Chile, where a socialist-communist coalition controlled the government from 1970 to 1973, a totalitarian political order was established with massive concentration camps and a government-backed campaign aimed at the physical extermination of the entire Chilean left. The Chilean military junta and the comparable military regimes in Brazil, Bolivia, and Uruguay share with Spanish *Franquismo* the additional feature of having fashioned a political alliance with the most reactionary sectors of monopoly capital and the big bourgeoisie without the countervailing force of organized labor. Since the Latin American bourgeois were dependent for the most part on the interests of North American imperialism, such an alliance was tantamount to dependence on the international bourgeoisie. Thus, if the military regimes in Chile and Brazil became a pliable instrument of North American imperialism, it was because the bourgeois in those countries were neither autonomous, as they were in Western Europe, nor countervailed by a powerful and nationalistic labor movement as in Argentina.

A distinction has been made between the independent and aggressively expansionist fascism of the developed countries and dependent or so-called "colonial fascism" in the underdeveloped ones. The question is whether Argentina under Peronist domination fits either one of these descriptions. Unlike the pro-U.S. military regimes in Chile and Brazil, Peronism continues to favor a policy of alignment with the Third World, including efforts to overcome the U.S. political and economic blockade of Cuba. From the beginning Peronism represented a social pact with the nationalist sectors of the bourgeoisie in alliance with organized labor, not as in Chile and Brazil with a bourgeoisie intent on destroying the labor movement through an alliance with imperialism. Accordingly, Peronism shares far more in common with the Mexican model of authoritative democracy than with the military repressive regimes in Latin America. Rather than a form of fascism suited to underdeveloped countries, it is an alternative to the fascist model.

All of these regimes, whether military-repressive or militantly antifascist as in the case of the Mexican model, are instances of the same broad and relentless twentieth-century tendency toward the displacement of the bourgeoisie from power through a political revolution, but without a corresponding economic or social revolution—a current briefly described as politically antibourgeois and

economically antisocialist. This is what these governments have in common rather than a common parentage in European fascism. As for their common denominator, it is so far nameless, although Perón roughly characterized it in terms of a "Third Position." In fact, these governments share features common to both the capitalist and socialist orders, notably the political sovereignty of a bureaucratic class and the economic sovereignty of the bourgeoisie.

Having undergone a common bureaucratic political revolution, these regimes differ mainly in the sectors of the bureaucracy which have assumed the lion's share of political power. In Western Europe the differences were limited to the two principal variants of fascism, applying this term in its broad usage: the classical political variant in Italy and Germany, where the Fascist and National Socialist parties were the supreme organs of power; and the *Franquista* variant in Spain, where the Falange was subordinated to the military bureaucracy—the origin of so-called "military fascism." Thus in Italy and Germany the political sector of the bureaucracy played a dominating role; in Spain, the military sector.

In Latin America the bureaucratic political revolution has taken nonfascist as well as seemingly fascist forms, which accounts for its varied outcomes. I say seemingly fascist because it is hardly possible to have "military fascism" without not only military rule, but also a fascist party and ideology in a subordinate role as in Franco's Spain. But in Latin America such parties and ideologies are virtually nonexistent with the exception of Bolivia, where the Bolivian Socialist Falange actively shared, after the manner of the Spanish Falange, in the military regime which overthrew the popular front government that preceded it. In November 1974, however, that party too was outlawed in a ban proscribing all political parties under the military regime. Among the new military regimes, Brazil stands alone in condoning political parties; but these have been remodeled into a two-party system in which fascist currents are conspicuously absent. Considering that these regimes, in every case except Brazil, have adopted a liberal economic policy relying on the free play of market forces instead of a regulated capitalism, they also fall short of the economic common denominator of both political and military fascism.

In addition to the repressive, if nonfascist, variants of the bureaucratic political revolution, there are several outstanding

populist models. One model is presented by Mexico, unique in having achieved the participation of all sectors of the bureaucracy in power during the period when Lázaro Cárdenas was president (1934–40). Although the Mexican Revolution continues to be the most stable and viable form of the “Third Position,” the political bureaucracy has since acquired hegemony over the other sectors. Peronism offers a different model in which the trade union bureaucracy has a privileged role. Such a labor variant of the bureaucratic political revolution is unique to Latin America. The Peruvian national revolution offers still another model in which the military sector of the bureaucracy is clearly in the ascendancy, but without taking the form of the military repressive regimes in neighboring Chile, Bolivia, and Brazil.

Each of these bureaucratic revolutions—Mexican, Argentine, and Peruvian—has been characterized by strong authoritarian and corporatist tendencies. Nonetheless, the corporatist tradition in social and political philosophy has a Roman Catholic rather than a narrowly fascist derivation. Its origins are to be found in early nineteenth century Christian socialism and in the papal encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI. Thus the existence of a corporatist common denominator of the Mexican, Argentine, and Peruvian models and military repression in Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, and Uruguay is not an argument for either a common fascist parentage or the existence of fascist political institutions common to these different countries.

In Latin America the struggle for power by rival sectors of the bureaucracy has been shaped by four principal strategies: first, an alliance with native capitalists and representatives of the multinational corporations against the forces of organized labor and the political movements of the left; second, an alliance with the multinationals at the expense of native small and medium capitalists as well as organized labor; third, an alliance with the working class and the political left against the bourgeois oligarchy and the multinational corporations; and fourth, an alliance with both organized labor and the native capitalists aimed at limiting the role of the multinationals and at securing an independent role for the intermediate forces in society, i.e., the self-styled “Third Position.”

The first strategy was followed by the military bureaucracy and techno-bureaucratic elites in Argentina between 1966 and 1973 and by most of the military repressive regimes on its frontiers—with

the exception of Brazil. The second was applied in Brazil through a strategy that effectively denationalized part of the private sector in the interest of the multinationals, while at the same time it expanded the scope of the public sector and the economic powers of the state. The third was adopted by Fidel's July 26 Movement, by the principal Guevarist organizations on the continent, by the Peronist left, and by the Popular Unity coalition of President Salvador Allende in Chile. The fourth was institutionalized with success by the Mexican Revolution and subsequently tried by the Peronist government and by the Peruvian military junta. What distinguishes the history of the Peronist movement in the contemporary struggle for a new political and social order is its evident tendency to broaden the political bases of the bureaucracy in power after the manner of the Mexican Revolution, while its left wing has simultaneously opted for the strategy of the Cuban Revolution.

Historically, only the Cuban option is consistent with the economic as well as political hegemony of the "new class." Although the "Third Position" has been successful in raising the bureaucracy to a position of control over the government, it has yet to issue in a major transfer of the economic surplus from the proprietary to the professional elites. In contemporary Argentina and Peru, as in Mexico after almost sixty years in power, those elites continue to play second fiddle to the bourgeoisie in economic matters. The economic surplus still takes the form predominantly of profit, interest, dividends, and capitalized rents rather than salaries for professional services. Consequently, the bourgeoisie continues to be the principal beneficiary of the economic system. Only in Cuba has a political revolution been the successful prelude to a corresponding economic revolution. Far from inaugurating an era of self-styled national socialism, the "Third Position" represents at best a half-way station on the road to a new economic order. In contrast, the Peronist left wing promises to complete the political revolution by also revolutionizing existing relations of production.

Within the context of the new governments in Latin America which have emerged in reaction to the Cuban Revolution, the instability of reformist governments rivals that of economically reactionary regimes. A curious feature of governments representing the "Third Position" is their propensity to be self-defeating. They tend, for example, to strengthen not only the industrial bourgeoisie

in relation to the large landowners and commercial bourgeoisie, but also organized labor and its potential for a future showdown with the proprietary classes. In this respect, Christian Democracy in Chile engendered the conditions for the revolutionary victory at the polls by the forces of Popular Unity—a factor considered by the Chilean armed forces in proscribing reformist as well as Marxist political parties in that country. One may anticipate a similar fate for the Peronist left in Argentina, once it begins to participate in national elections. In fact, the only alternative to the displacement of a reformist by a revolutionary government in Latin America has become its displacement by a military repressive one.

In *Perón and Justicialism*, Alberto Ciria classifies the different interpretations of Peronism into three principal groups: the nazi-fascist model; the Bonapartist or neo-Bismarckian model; and the populist model. By fascism is understood the totalitarian and repressive common denominator of Italian fascism and German national socialism, a usage that excludes such concepts as a “left-wing fascism” or “fascism of the working class.” By Bonapartist or neo-Bismarckian regimes are meant those in which the executive branch of government rules independently of the legislative branch and also of the principal social classes and corresponding political parties. And by populist regimes are understood those representing a coalition of several classes on the basis of a common program aimed at reconciling opposing class interests. In developing this classification, Ciria relied on the most exhaustive compilation of sources available, Carlos S. Fayt’s *The Nature of Peronism*. In his judgment, however, only the third model reflects Peronism as it really is.

A somewhat different classification is afforded by Ernesto Laclau’s article “Argentina: Peronism and Revolution” in the *Latin American Review of Books* (Spring 1973). Laclau does not pretend to survey the entire literature on Peronism, but only that since 1969. He distinguishes the following interpretations: the liberal view, also shared by the Argentine Communist Party, which discovered in Peronism a peculiarly Argentine brand of fascism; the Third-World view which interprets it either as a bourgeois national revolution or as a bourgeois democratic revolution typical of a semicolonial country; the view of the national left, according to which Peronism is a frustrated bourgeois national revolution capable of achieving its goal of national liberation only through the

independent organization of the working class; and the ultraleft view which interprets the conflict between Peronism and the imperialist bourgeoisie as an interbourgeois struggle without special significance for the working class. All of these interpretations are mistaken in Laclau's judgment. Instead, he offers a fifth interpretation of Peronism as an antibourgeois, anti-imperialist tendency within organized labor, tantamount to a nationalist labor movement committed to the defense of national against foreign interests in Argentina.

None of these interpretations taken separately, however, constitutes an accurate account of the many-sided and complex character of Peronism. It is a mistake to liken Peronism to a form of fascism, if only because it stopped short of imposing a totalitarian state and destroying the political parties in opposition. Its repressive legislation against the left likewise stopped short—at least during Perón's first and second administrations—of the concentration camps, mass murders, and police terrorism typical of fascist regimes. It is a mistake to identify Peronism with Bonapartist or neo-Bismarckian regimes because, even though the executive dominated the legislative branch, it did so as the instrument of the Peronist Party and the trade union bureaucracy. Although Peronism exhibited an equilibrium of classes between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, it was itself the vehicle of a special class consisting of the military, political, and trade union bureaucracies. It is a mistake to reduce Peronism to a form of populism because, as a catchall for a polyclass movement, this term does not contain information concerning which class enjoyed a hegemonic position within the government and the nation. Although Peronism was originally a polyclass movement, it developed during the resistance into a nationalist labor movement backed by special armed formations of the Peronist Youth. It is a mistake to equate Peronism with a bourgeois national revolution because the principal beneficiaries of political power were the Peronist political and trade union bureaucracies rather than the national bourgeoisie. Nor did it include a bourgeois democratic revolution because it did not aim at the participation of all sectors of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in political power, but at an authoritarian state in place of the existing liberal one. Finally, it is a mistake to reduce Peronism to a nationalist labor movement, because it consisted originally and continues to consist of a much broader populist-type coalition.

Although within such a coalition labor nationalism has had an important and even predominant place, it is not the only face of Peronism.

Efforts to reduce Peronism to any one of these interpretations mistakenly assume that it was somehow a monolithic movement, which failed to develop through specific stages or failed to change its underlying character as it developed. Actually, there is no fixed "essence" of Peronism common to the principal stages of its development: the formative stage when it most clearly exhibited the influence of "military fascism" and was manifestly on the side of the Axis powers during World War II (1943–45); the classical stage when it was a broadly polyclass and populist movement with strong Bonapartist or neo-Bismarckian features, a nationalist movement without the leadership of the national bourgeoisie, that was corporativist, if not fascist, in ideology (1946–55); the postclassical stage when it decomposed into two opposed movements, a national labor movement championed by the Vandorist trade union bureaucracy in control of the CGT and a movement for national and social liberation led by the revolutionary tendency within the unions and the Peronist youth (1956–73); and the critical stage when the official wing of the movement resorted to increasingly repressive measures in its declared war against Marxism and the movement's left wing (1974–76). It would be difficult indeed to discover any basis for continuity within Peronism other than the figure of Perón himself.

Lessons of the Argentine Resistance

The Argentine resistance made three fundamental contributions to the strategy of mass resistance to military dictatorship and pseudoconstitutional regimes in Latin America: (1) the effectiveness of a political-military vanguard depends on its integration with the politics of a mass movement; (2) the main enemy must be isolated, not the revolutionaries, by organizing a new historic bloc of the proletariat, workers on their own account, and the petty bureaucracy; (3) the political-military struggle must be an essentially defensive one linked to national traditions of patriotism and should be designed to save the country from impending disaster, arbitrary rule, and dependency on special and foreign interests.

These contributions were not unique to the Argentine experience. In retrospect these lessons, and not those listed by Che Guevara in his book on *Guerrilla Warfare*, were also fundamental to the Cuban resistance. Fidel Castro's July 26 Movement successfully integrated a political-military foco with the politics of the Cuban People's Party (PPC) of which it was originally the armed fist. It effectively isolated the main enemy, the military dictatorship and the ensuing pseudoconstitutional regime, from the intermediate forces in society, the national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and so-called intelligentsia. Finally, its expressed aim was to restore the Constitution of 1940, to call new elections, and to put an end to the illegal repression mounted by the Batista tyranny. Thus it was conceived as a national-patriotic movement in the

tradition of José Martí and Cuba's original struggle for independence.

The generalizations culled by Che from the Cuban guerrilla experience provide a distorted and misleading picture of the strategy against Batista. Besides the overly abstract manner in which they were presented, they failed to distinguish a strategy of the possible from one offering at least a reasonable prospect of success. Whatever the case in Cuba, Che's strategy proved to be a dismal and tragic failure elsewhere. Although it is possible for the popular forces to defeat the regular army, it is highly improbable that they will do so on the field of battle; Batista's army was not defeated militarily, but refused to fight from lack of political conviction and because of internal corruption and demoralization. Again, it is possible for an insurrectionary foco to create the conditions of a revolutionary situation when these are only partly present; but to foment a political crisis without having mobilized the masses, or assured the conditions of victory in advance of a major confrontation, is tantamount to anarchist irresponsibility and revolutionary adventurism. Finally, in newly industrializing societies where the bulk of the population has shifted to the cities it is possible, but unlikely, for the principal terrain of armed struggle to be in the countryside; moreover, a suitable environment for waging an armed struggle is determined less by purely military or geographical factors than by a politically favorable population.

The setbacks to urban guerrilla movements in Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile during the early 1970s were followed in November 1974 by a state of siege in Argentina modeled on the Uruguayan "internal war" against the Tupamaros. These reversals may be explained by the vast wave of repression throughout Latin America in response to the insurrectionary tide unloosed by the Cuban Revolution. But they were also the consequence of a faulty revolutionary strategy.

Before the Cuban Revolution the Marxist and Leninist left in Latin America accepted the strategy of peaceful coexistence and the so-called "peaceful road to socialism" adopted and disseminated by the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After the Cuban Revolution and in an apparent effort to overcompensate for the opportunist and "revisionist" errors of the 1950s, the left swung to the opposite extreme of voluntarism or "revolutionary adventurism." Before the Cuban Revolution the

emphasis of the left was on structural economic reforms, with little or no thought to the organization of an armed vanguard. After the revolution the emphasis shifted to military-tactical problems of the insurrectional foco or center to the comparative neglect of the day-to-day struggles of the proletariat and the building of a mass movement. Thus a lack of balance between alternative forms of struggle has been a constant feature of Marxist and Leninist movements in Latin America—a strategical defect responsible in part for the impotence of the left followed during the 1960s by a rapid succession of political-military defeats.

The coordination of the actions of military vanguards and of the political organizations of the working class has been the exception rather than the rule. Only in Cuba and more recently in Argentina was such a strategy followed systematically: first against the Batista regime, and then against a series of overt and covert military dictatorships in Argentina. The role attributed by Che to the political-military foco during the Cuban Revolution is known to have been exaggerated. The secret of the success of the July 26 Movement is to be found rather in the close ties it established between the armed struggle in the countryside and the politics of mass resistance in the cities. Under Fidel's leadership all forms of struggle were pursued simultaneously and in combination.

In Argentina, the resistance followed a similar strategy guided by Perón from exile. However, after victory Perón favored his party's right wing, whereas Fidel cultivated the left wing of the July 26 Movement. This divergence in the outcomes of the Argentine and Cuban resistance is to be explained not only by their different origins and political ideologies, but also by the comparative strength of their respective armed detachments. The Argentine military retained its autonomy through calling new elections and peacefully surrendering power, whereas Batista's mercenary forces were successfully confronted, dismantled, and replaced by the new Rebel Army.

The active union of Peronist and Guevarist tendencies during the resistance contributed to the emergence of the first political-military focos in Argentina. Initially, the Argentine resistance favored the establishment of rural focos in imitation of the Cuban model. Even before the organization of guerrilla training centers with Perón's support, Peronist cadres under Cooke's influence had launched the *Uturuncos*, a rural foco in northwest Argentina. This

aborted effort was followed by the organization with Cuban arms and money of the People's Guerrilla Army (EGP) in 1963, followed by a third rural foco in 1968 organized by the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP). Although this experiment was also a disaster, the FAP was subsequently reorganized to emerge as one of the most influential urban guerrilla movements until 1971 when it was superseded by the FAR and Montoneros.

Just as the rural foco in organic connection with the peasantry was a major strategic contribution of the Cuban Revolution, so the organization of urban guerrillas closely linked to a youth movement and to the trade union rank and file was one of the principal contributions of the Peronist resistance. Parallel with the efforts to found rural focos was the attempt early in 1963 to organize the first Peronist urban guerrillas. The first such instance in Latin America was not the Tupamaros, but rather the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Tacuara) under the notorious "Joe" Baxter, whose successful assault on the *Policlinico Bancario* of Buenos Aires in August 1963 became the prototype for subsequent bank "expropriations" not only by the Tupamaros, but also by the FAP and Montoneros.

These Peronist armed nuclei were the first urban organizations in Latin America to have successfully integrated the armed struggle with the politics of a mass movement. Thus the Montoneros became the directing nucleus of the Peronist Youth, while the FAP aligned itself with the Peronist *agrupaciones de base* in the trade unions. The Montoneros helped to move the Peronist Youth and working class in a revolutionary direction, while the FAP contributed to organizing the Peronist Bases. In charting a revolutionary course of its own, the Peronist Youth became the largest youth formation on the continent to incorporate a Marxist-Leninist tendency independently of the established Communist and Trotskyist parties. The left has much to learn from this experience of convergence of guerrilla nuclei with mass organizations—the most important sequel to the *foquista* decade in Latin America and to the misguided ventures of Weathermen and the Symbionese Liberation Army in the United States.

The ties linking the Peronist left to the politics of the Peronist rank and file distinguish it from the vanguardist tendencies prevalent during the 1960s. Although revolutionary Peronism has yet to build a majoritarian political party, a mass movement is

distinguished not only by the size of its following through the demagogic cultivation of a so-called "mass line," but also by its effectiveness in mobilizing large numbers of people around concrete political issues. Despite the minoritarian character of the Authentic Peronist Party (PPA), that party was second to none in mobilizing political activists during the Misiones elections in April.

Even under conditions of illegality, the revolutionary left qualified as a mass movement. Guevarist sectors, such as the FAR, benefited from the example of the Peronist armed formations by merging organizationally with the Montoneros. Later, the Trotskyist ERP was encouraged to develop a mass basis by breaking with the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat) and by joining in a united front with the Peronist "Independent Alternative." An indispensable condition of the merger of a sector of the FAP with the ERP in October 1974 was precisely the transformation of the ERP from a political-military elite into a fighting organization of the masses.

If there is a future for revolutionary politics in Argentina, it hinges on the formation of a people's front with a collective leadership representing the Peronist as well as Marxist left. The heroic stage when revolutionary politics could be identified with the works of a handful of revolutionary leaders—Fidel, Che, Bravo, Marighella—or with their unofficial spokesmen, such as Debray, is now a matter of history. Revolutionary theory as well as practice has become the responsibility of the collective leadership of mass organizations and their armed vanguards. The anonymous development of the politics of mass movements has replaced the work of a few gifted individuals.

With the eclipse of *foquismo*, Latin American revolutionaries shifted from a concern with military-tactical problems to a preoccupation with the strategies of mass political movements and their trade union bases. The Debrayist controversy over the comparative advantages of a vanguard party or a political-military foco was ultimately resolved in favor of their combination. By the middle 1970s this debate had been displaced by a new one concerning the merits of the alleged solution. Was a foco-party synthesis representing a revolutionary minority, for example, as consequential as a strategy integrating the revolutionary minority with the politics of a mass movement? The evidence indicated that it was less effective. Although the PRT-ERP initiated a major

breakthrough by overcoming the party/foco dichotomy, the Montoneros-JP had the additional advantage of combining the organizational features of both Peronism and Guevarism: a Peronist movement or party of the masses with a Guevarist political-military vanguard led by professional revolutionaries.

Ironically, it was not the professed Marxist-Leninist parties but the revolutionary wing of Peronism that offered a Marxist-Leninist alternative to the traditional Marxist socialist parties on the one hand, and to the new Guevarist political-military vanguards on the other. The combination of the politics of a mass movement with a political-military apparatus was first developed by Fidel's July 26 Movement and then imitated by the left wings of the Peruvian Aprista Party and of Democratic Action in Venezuela—organizations all testifying to Haya de la Torre's Latin American revision of Marxism. The first instance of a non-Marxist political movement achieving a similar synthesis was that of the revolutionary tendency within the Peronist movement.

A successful resistance struggle depends upon other factors besides the union of a political-military vanguard and a political organization of the masses. A movement of the masses can be isolated and rendered impotent. To avoid becoming isolated, it needs to be integrated into a broad front with other oppressed classes. A new historic bloc is necessary with the intermediate forces in society: independent peasants, the self-supporting petty bourgeoisie, and the petty bureaucracy or intermediate stratum of salaried employees. In underdeveloped Latin America the proletariat is likely to be outnumbered either by the peasants or the petty bourgeoisie, and almost certainly by both together. Consequently, it needs their support, if only to dissuade them from backing special interests. To isolate the enemy or to be isolated—that is the question.

Both the Argentine and Cuban resistance consisted of broad fronts that included sectors of the national bourgeoisie. In effect, they were populist movements directed not at transforming the social system but at removing a political cancer. Fidel's populism and lack of ideological coherence were not appreciably different from Perón's. The absence of sectarian objectives permitted them to unify the people and to isolate the main enemy. In volume one of *The Critique of Arms*, Régis Debray recounts the secret of Fidel's success in the Sierra Maestra through an interview between Fidel

and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez in 1958. Fidel noted that the mistake of the Communists was to have clearly defined both their revolutionary objectives and their class adversaries, which contributed to alerting their enemies and to frustrating a broad strategy of alliances. Such political ingenuousness was avoided in Argentina, as it was in Cuba. Yet it was repeated on the mainland with the result that, instead of isolating the main enemy, it contributed to isolating the revolutionaries.

Beginning with the Cuban turn toward socialism Che's strategy of armed struggle became directed not only at military dictatorships and pseudodemocratic regimes, but also at populist regimes, which included the governments of Democratic Action (AD) in Venezuela and of Popular Action (AP) in Peru. However, the Venezuelan and Peruvian masses were unable to keep pace either with the development of the Cuban Revolution or with the Guevarist leadership of the revolutionary movements in their own countries. As a result, the armed strategy in imitation of the *foquismo* of the Cuban leaders, which had replaced Fidel's earlier strategy against Batista, ended with the political and logistical isolation of the guerrillas. At least in Argentina the leaders of the revolutionary wing did not dissociate themselves from Peronism after being repudiated by the official movement, but continued to maintain close ties with the Peronist masses.

The isolation of the political-military vanguards on the mainland was in part responsible for their strategy of "polarization," which actually increased their distance from the workers. Its classic formulation was given by the Brazilian revolutionary Carlos Marighela, in an elaboration of Che's second lesson of the Cuban revolutionary war: "It is not necessary to wait for all the conditions of revolution to be given; the insurrectionary foco can create them." Once a political crisis is created, Marighela argued in "Problems and Principles of Strategy," the next step is to unleash such a volume of revolutionary activity in urban and rural areas that the political crisis is transformed into a military one. In effect, the political regime must be so discredited that the armed forces are prompted to intervene. Presumably, the population would then be forced to take sides in a struggle against the clear and evident tyranny of a military dictatorship. This strategy contrasted sharply with the strategy of the Peronist resistance, in

which the fundamental objective was to force the military to abandon politics.

Implicit in this strategy was the conviction that representative political institutions under capitalism were only a facade of an underlying social and economic dictatorship guaranteeing the exploitation of the workers. Certainly, capitalism gave no opportunity for economic democracy, but sanctioned a form of despotism within the factory or enterprise reminiscent of the absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Accordingly, the strategical problem was to unmask the character of democratic institutions in the political arena as fundamentally escape- or safety-valves for the pressures built up within the economic sphere. The strategy of polarization was designed to educate the workers in the underlying significance of these institutions. Every so-called democratic or populist regime, so the argument went, was at bottom a tyrannical one. The essential nature of capitalist democracy was thus revealed only during a political crisis. This was a far cry from the theses of the Peronist left, which insisted on the fundamental differences between capitalist democracy and dictatorship.

The Guevarist thesis was an evidently metaphysical one. Predicated as it was on a philosophical distinction between the underlying essence and superficial appearance of political institutions, it failed to appreciate both the immediate and long-run advantages of liberal-democratic reforms recognizing the right of workers to organize and to build a political movement of their own. One of the conditions of building a mass movement is the right to organize, both economically and politically, in opposition to the dominant classes. Although the oligarchies prefer to govern within the laws and without a show of force, it was a questionable strategy to make them abandon their disguise by showing their teeth. In effect, Che failed to distinguish between the different political superstructures resting upon the same capitalist base, not to mention their comparative advantages and disadvantages for the working class. He cavalierly dismissed the antagonisms between opposed sectors of the bourgeoisie, as if rule by the proimperialist monopoly bourgeoisie were equivalent to rule by the national and petty bourgeoisie. What mistakenly passed as a strategy revealing the underlying essence of dependent capitalism in Latin America

was more often than not a strategy of hostility toward the moderate wing of the bourgeoisie in power. The result was that reactionary sectors of the bourgeoisie in alliance with foreign interests were able to take advantage of the ensuing political crises by pressuring the armed forces to impose a state of siege.

As a consequence of this indifference to opposed strata within the bourgeoisie, the strategy of polarization confused the conditions making for a political crisis with those contributing to a revolutionary situation. The assassination of a president or public figure may suffice to launch a political crisis, but it is hardly enough to mobilize the masses in pursuit of revolutionary objectives. The problem is not to create a political crisis, but to benefit from one. First, the workers must be prepared in advance to transform a political crisis into a revolutionary situation; and second, they must be strongly enough allied with other sectors of the population to transform a revolutionary situation into a popular victory. Otherwise, the triumph of the reaction would tend to make the people worse off than before. As Perón cautioned in an interview with leaders of the Peronist Youth, one should not push for a head-on collision with the enemy unless one is sure of breaking his head and conserving one's own.

In practice, the strategy of polarization applied by Marighela in Brazil, by the Uruguayan Tupamaros, the Chilean MIR, the Bolivian ELN, and the ERP in Argentina was a costly failure in isolating revolutionaries from their potential allies in other classes. At the same time, the principal alternative to this strategy—that applied by the FAR and Montoneros—threatened to swallow up the vanguard in the politics of a populist movement. Granted this dilemma of revolutionary movements and the virtual impossibility of escaping between the horns—which makes every revolution a hazardous undertaking against almost insuperable odds—are the chances of victory improved by choosing one option rather than the other?

The ERP's position was unquestionably doctrinaire. Although the only successful socialist revolutions had been achieved under Marxist-Leninist leadership, the struggle for a uniquely Argentine and national road to socialism could not be effectively presented in these terms. Even in Cuba the transition to socialism had been preceded by a struggle to overthrow a Caribbean-type dictator and to restore the constitutional order. In contrast, the ERP sought to

telescope two stages into one, thus running ahead of other popular sectors intent on more modest objectives. The ERP seemingly forgot that the July 26 Movement did not have a socialist orientation and that the Cuban resistance succeeded without a Marxist-Leninist leadership. Only later, owing to the incapacity of the July 26 cadres to make the transition to socialism, was the Movement formally dissolved and replaced by the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI), to be followed by the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS).

The ERP misinterpreted not only the Cuban road to socialism, but also the Russian. Unlike the political revolutions in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, which had the support of a socialist neighbor and the advantage of a sanctuary, the Cuban and Russian revolutions lacked these special advantages. Instead of a single stage political revolution, they developed through two separate stages: first, a political revolution under populist leadership against an unpopular and tyrannical government; second, a political revolution under Marxist-Leninist leadership against the ensuing populist regime, whose new repressive legislation aimed at bringing the revolutionary process to a halt. In both Russia and Cuba revolutionaries of a socialist persuasion bided their time, thus keeping abreast of the political development of the various oppressed sectors pursuing a common goal. Moreover, following their respective political revolutions, they continued their broad alliance with other classes. In Russia they championed a soviet form of government through workers, peasants and soldiers councils, and in Cuba they organized a popular coalition of revolutionary organizations in which the official Communists played a subordinate but increasingly important role. Since the Marxist-Leninist parties in Latin America lack the advantages of their counterparts in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, the Russian and Cuban models are correspondingly more relevant in this part of the world.

The question is whether the Montoneros-JP represented the other extreme of opportunism. Actually, they were far more prone to sectarian errors. The feud between the JP and the Vandorist labor bureaucracy, dating back to the middle 1960s, effectively prevented the Montoneros from reaching an agreement with the leaders of organized labor against the movement's right wing in control of the government. A series of assassinations of labor

leaders—Vandor, Alonso—by pre-Montonero commandos who later joined the Montoneros, made any such agreement impossible. At the same time the Montoneros-JP failed to establish an independent base of their own within the working class comparable to the Peronism of the Bases or the Combative Trade Unions. They commenced hostilities against the government for reasons that were not readily understandable by the masses of Peronist workers and in the absence of a major governmental crisis. When they returned underground in September 1974 they did so without adequate preparation, under conditions in which the JP had ceased to function clandestinely and was an easy target for the paramilitary formations of the right. The Montoneros also showed signs of revolutionary impatience by not waiting for the revolutionary occasion to engage in armed operations, as in June 1975 when they might have counted on support from sectors of the official movement to repudiate the policies of López Rega. Moreover, the role of the Montoneros through their representatives at the First National Congress of the PPA in November 1975 exposed the party to unnecessary legal repression as the evident political front for an underground organization.

Owing to their insistence on preserving the original polyclass character of the movement, the Montoneros have been criticized for a policy of vacillations tantamount to a loss of initiative. But was Argentina as yet ripe for a more militant strategy? A revolutionary movement may reach a level of political awareness which no other revolutionary tendency achieves, but if its distinctions elude the masses then its political sophistication amounts to a practical zero. Since the *raison d'être* of a revolutionary movement is to change the world, history is the ultimate judge of whether the Montoneros' strategy of working within the official movement was realistic or simply unprincipled.

Still another lesson of the Argentine resistance is that it is easier to mobilize the masses in defense of arbitrarily annulled rights than in pursuit of structural reforms whose alleged benefits have yet to be experienced. The masses are more inclined to take risks in self-defense and in defense of national interests which have the character of necessities, than in pursuit of an elusive social change which may appear to many as superfluous. An assault on the established order designed to establish a new one is too ambitious a project for workers with only a limited political understanding of

modern societies. Indignation and resentment are powerful motors mainly in recovering what a people has lost, not in propelling them forward in a struggle for what they have never known. In any event, there is more ground for hope in recovering what has been lost or stolen than in charting a new course in strange or unfamiliar territory.

In *Revolution in the Revolution*? Debray made a special point of criticizing the Trotskyist and Maoist reliance on workers and peasants militias, on the ground that their defense of a fixed terrain or so-called liberated territory could never be a match for a regular army. However, a strategy of self-defense need not be tied to a definite space, but is fully consistent with the mobile tactics of a guerrilla foco. Fundamental to such a strategy is not the defense of occupied lands, mines, and factories, but the preservation or recovery of the elementary rights of a people. A resistance movement differs from the stereotype of Marxist subversion by “professional terrorists” precisely in its defense of urgent national as well as class interests.

The defensive posture of the Peronist movement during the resistance was evident in its objectives: the restoration of the political rights of the majoritarian Peronist Party and the calling of new elections. Its program of national and social liberation, which had been an integral part of the Justicialist movement in power, was directed at recovering the Argentine nation for the people. As we have seen, the fundamental issue for the “movementist” sector of the Peronist left was “Liberation or Dependency?”; for the “classist” sector, “Dependency or Socialism?” Yet in both cases, the struggle against dependency had for its target the special interests of the monopoly bourgeoisie linked to economic imperialism. Thus the struggle was presented as an anti-imperialist one and as the only viable alternative to the structural disabilities of a dependent capitalism.

For most Peronists, socialism was taken to be a condition of national greatness as well as economic independence. Far from a sectarian goal of the working class for establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat, it was the banner of a popular front including the petty bourgeoisie and entrepreneurial sectors of the national bourgeoisie. Its aim was to secure the economic and political interests not only of the workers, but also of other productive sectors against the parasitic and functionless elements in society.

An underdeveloped country aspiring to greatness, Argentina could not afford the luxury of absentee proprietors whose divided allegiance made them unfit to guide their nation's destiny. In this perspective, the struggle for socialism was neither foolish nor presumptive, but a basic necessity for the nation as a whole.

Peronist appeals to a socialist solution to Argentine problems of dependency were summarized in the slogan of a "Socialist Fatherland." This slogan contrasted sharply with the appeals of the Guevarist and Marxist-Leninist parties in Argentina, which made a fetish of "proletarian internationalism," "the continental revolution," "solidarity with the socialist camp," and so on—traditions having little in common with Argentine nationalism. The internationalist tradition within modern socialism had been responsible during World War II for efforts to align Argentina with the Anglo-French alliance against the Axis powers, in disregard of her own struggle against British imperialism. The international alliance between Russian communism and Anglo-French imperialism was repeated on a national scale in the electoral bloc between the Argentine CP and the established Conservative and Radical parties against the mass of workers organized in the Peronist movement. In effect, the FAR was right that the only viable form of socialism in Argentina had to focus on the defense of national interests. Although Marxism was a useful scientific instrument of revolutions, it was politically unsuitable for mobilizing the Argentine masses against the military dictatorship.

In response to the wave of repression launched by Perón's new government, the Peronist left applied a strategy of self-defense in calling for the abrogation or "correction" of the Social Pact, a renewed amnesty for political prisoners, effective democracy within the unions, and the suppression of parapolice and paramilitary right-wing gangs. The last item acquired increasing importance in view of the escalated terrorism by the "Triple A" and the popular horror against the rising tide of violence in Argentina. In January 1974 the AAA issued a statement in the Argentine press indicating its intention of wiping out not only all "Marxist infiltrators" within the Peronist movement, but also other revolutionaries as well. Once it began carrying out its threat directed at every last leftist in the country including fellow travelers or so-called "sympathizers," hundreds of thousands of citizens must have felt menaced by it. In addition to this informal death list there

were forty thousand Chilean exiles and several thousand Uruguayan emigrés, whom the "Triple A" had also resolved to "exterminate." By April 1975 it had surpassed its earlier record of savagery by eliminating a daily average of five Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan leftists, with the apparent complicity of a special division of the Federal Police known as the Direction of Foreign Affairs (DAE). Under these conditions, a strategy of self-defense became more urgent than ever.

This life-and-death struggle was to give a tremendous impetus to renewed resistance. In most cases, the only practical response was to go underground in self-defense. Although many feared this alternative, preferring to seek individual asylum in some foreign embassy, the consulates were overcrowded with potential exiles for whom there were not enough visas to meet the demand. Unquestionably, the most viable alternative was collective self-defense, which involved a choice between joining the ERP or Montoneros as the best form of protection.

The struggle against the AAA was both a personal affair and a matter of national concern. First, the AAA was a paramilitary arm of the government. Second, it was financed by special interests connected with the oligarchy and presumably the multinational corporations, which were replying in kind to the escalation of leftist terrorism against their executive personnel in 1972 and 1973. Third, the CIA was also suspected of intervening in Argentina's national affairs, since it was known to have subsidized similar right-wing groups in Chile. According to NACLA's *Argentina in the Hour of the Furnaces*, a gunshop owner kidnapped by the FAL confessed to providing \$120,000 worth of arms to a right-wing group, which had another \$3 million for ordering more of the same. Where did the money come from? It did not come from bank robberies and abductions of wealthy members of the oligarchy and foreign executives—sources of upkeep peculiar to left-wing guerrillas. Presumably, it took the form of voluntary contributions by those sectors, which gave the struggle against the AAA a definitely patriotic character.

One of the questions considered by the left was whether to reply in kind to the provocations by the "Triple A." There were evidently many fewer representatives of the oligarchy and foreign interests in Argentina than there were leftists and leftist-sympathizers. Should the ERP and Montoneros adopt, then, a

tactic of reprisals by executing a member of the establishment for every leftist assassinated? A similar tactic had been applied by the ERP in response to the Catamarca massacre in August 1974, but to no apparent advantage. On the contrary, the ERP lost in popularity because of its indiscriminate killing of army officers, which was both militarily pointless and politically ineffective in mobilizing support for the resistance. Nor was anything to be gained by waging a vendetta or private war against the AAA. It was costly enough to maintain an organization of urban guerrillas—estimated by Debray in *The Critique of Arms* at \$1,000 monthly for each guerrilla or \$50,000 for a team of fifty in 1974—without wasting their energies on unearthing an equally clandestine and elusive organization of the right. Actually, the “Triple A” was scarcely a threat to the ERP, whose cadres were generally invisible both to the police and its paramilitary formations. The greatest danger was to leftists active in the trade unions and to other visible opponents of the regime. And their best means of defense was not to resort to the same terrorist methods, but to win popular support for the resistance from intermediate sectors of the population.

These principal lessons of the resistance had a bearing on similar resistance movements in neighboring Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay. Precisely because the professional military enjoyed a monopoly of political power in those countries, it could be combated effectively only through a popular front of all the discontented classes and politically disfranchised parties. At the same time, it was a mistake to enter into a headlong confrontation with the military. As Lenin noted in 1917, the socialist revolution can be made without the armed forces, but only if the military is divided or neutralized. It cannot be made against a highly motivated and united professional army.

Against military repressive regimes the most effective strategy is one that frankly recognizes their ambivalent character. Despite their repressive and barbaric features, the transfer of both legislative and executive powers from the bourgeoisie to a military bureaucracy is tantamount to a political revolution. A discriminating assessment of those regimes provides the basis for a double-edged strategy of both resisting military repression against the popular sectors and supporting the military for breaking the political back of the bourgeoisie. It is virtually impossible to divide and neutralize sectors of the military without acknowledging their

revolutionary contributions. At the same time the nationalist wing of the military must be persuaded that the best defense of the revolution is to broaden its base of support. In Argentina from 1966 to 1973, repression of the revolutionary forces did more to undermine than strengthen the military in power. Only under pressure from the Peronist resistance did it eventually admit to the wisdom of sharing political power with other sectors of the bureaucracy. Ironically, the return of the Peronist Party to power in May 1973 was continuous rather than discontinuous with the self-styled "Argentine Revolution" of June 1966.

Once that goal was achieved, the most effective revolutionary strategy was to democratize the trade unions and to increase the weight of popular sectors in the government rather than to push forward prematurely to the establishment of a "Socialist Fatherland." In view of the offensive by sectors of the government loyal to López Rega, it was foolish to escalate the objectives of the left by focusing on the fundamental issue of "Socialism or Dependency?" To provide a revolutionary opening on the left it was enough to recover the original program of the resistance and to insist on implementing it. Although national liberation is impossible without the prior establishment of socialism, the best guarantee of socialism is a struggle for national liberation pursued to its ultimate consequences. In this perspective, the bath of purity advocated by the "classist" sector of Peronism was ill adapted to the realities of Argentine politics.

These are the most important general lessons to be derived from the resistance. But there are also a number of special lessons directly relevant to the conduct of the armed struggle in Latin America. First, armed struggle is viable provided that the guerrilla nucleus is able to reproduce itself on an expanded scale, which requires that its cadres be continuously recruited from the ranks of a mass political organization. Second, in order to reproduce itself on an expanded scale the guerrilla nucleus must be able to persuade people by its example, which it cannot do without appealing to their subjective or personal interests even more than to their objective interests. Third, for the guerrilla nucleus to reproduce itself on an expanded scale it must serve the people in ways immediately evident to all; actions that require post mortem justifications or explanations, or can be readily distorted through the established media, should be rejected as politically unwise.

Fourth, to acquire popular support the guerrillas must apply fire power in defense of the immediate demands of the workers in situations where the masses are already mobilized, e.g., during strikes, demonstrations, and occupations of factories and work places. Fifth, there is a distinct advantage in waging an armed struggle in defense of the constitution and the democratic traditions of a people. Sixth, popular support also depends on defending the elementary rules of justice and morality which have become ingrained in the mores of a people; this implies resistance to repressive legislation, police terrorism, and the use of torture by the armed forces. Seventh, vendettas between the guerrillas and the police or armed forces have been invariably counterproductive for the guerrillas. Eighth, the guerrillas must do everything in their power to prevent the physical decimation of the vanguard by the repressive forces and paramilitary right-wing groups; although there can be no vanguard without a mass following, the masses are impotent without specially trained cadres to lead them. Ninth, since the guerrillas must arm themselves and secure the logistics for their survival, there is no alternative to periodic bank "expropriations" and other assaults for that purpose; at the same time, the guerrillas must avoid the appearance of being self-serving by giving a full public account of their expenditures. Finally, granted that the struggle for national and social liberation must be directed against the military, political, and trade union bureaucracies in addition to the economically dominant classes, it does not follow that certain sectors of the bureaucracy cannot be "neutralized" or that other sectors must be confronted with the same strategy used against the oligarchy; on the contrary, the principal target should be the fundamental enemy—imperialism and the native oligarchy.

9

International Significance of the Resistance

With the onset of a new era of military repressive regimes in Latin America, the systematic repression of the left and the imposition of military rule over virtually all areas of society, the Peronist resistance acquired an international dimension. Beginning with General Onganía's coup in Argentina in June 1966 followed by the coup-within-a-coup in Brazil in December 1968, and then by similar coups in Bolivia (1971), Uruguay (1973), and Chile (1973), the Argentine and earlier Brazilian models of quasi-liberal military dictatorships were replaced by regimes which reorganized their societies along bureaucratic lines. Unlike the earlier Argentine and Brazilian models limiting mass participation in politics through restrictions on populist as well as communist parties, the new military regimes of the 1970s favored the abolition of liberal-democratic institutions altogether and their replacement by a repressive "new order."

Without question, the Peronist resistance is the most important example of a successful struggle to overcome the proscription of a majoritarian and populist party by the armed forces in Latin America. The only other examples of its kind are the Mexican Revolution, the Bolivian Revolution, and the Cuban Revolution against Batista. However, these movements of resistance were directed not so much against collegiate rule by the professional military as against personal dictators and ambitious semicriminal cliques in power who had turned their countries into private fiefs.

Such dictatorships were maintained in power through personal favors, nepotism, fraud, and large-scale corruption, to the advantage of *caciques* or local bosses combining economic and political power. Whereas the Cuban resistance was directed against a hated individual and his gangster-like associates, the Peronist resistance defined the enemy in much broader terms—that included the collective leadership of the various armed services. If the Cuban resistance stopped short of being a protracted one, it was because it attracted the support of virtually all social classes against crime in high places, thus precluding negotiations with the criminals to be brought to justice. With respect to its outcome, the Argentine resistance resembled the Mexican and Bolivian revolutions in the victory of their reformist wings. But as the immediate successor to the Cuban Revolution, it too developed a revolutionary perspective that included a socialist transformation.

Peronism was a living example of the integration of an armed resistance with the politics of a mass movement. After six years of uninterrupted dictatorship in Argentina, the military junta was pressured to abdicate under the threat of new *Cordobazos* and *Rosariazos* combined with the escalation of military operations by Peronist and Guevarist urban guerrillas. In view of the success of the Peronist resistance, it was to be expected that resistance movements in neighboring countries would avail themselves of the Argentine experience.

Among the first resistance movements in Latin America to apply directly the lessons of the Peronist resistance were the Bolivian and Chilean. A sector of the Bolivian resistance led by ex-President Juan José Torres and Major Rubén Sánchez shifted in 1973 from a popular front strategy, involving a coalition with the established Communist, Trotskyist, and Marxist-Leninist parties, to a national front strategy under the immediate influence of the Peronist movement. This development took place even before Allende's downfall and was accompanied by a relocation of Bolivian exiles from Santiago to Buenos Aires in the aftermath of the Peronist electoral victory of March 1973. The lessons of Peronism were also evident in Chile in the months following the military coup against Allende, mainly in the form of local Committees of Resistance and the organization in 1974 of a nationwide Movement of Popular Resistance. Meanwhile, the Chilean MIR had shifted from a

basically *foquista* line of armed confrontation with the military junta to a strategy of mass political resistance involving the tactics employed by Peronist workers in Argentina. That Uruguayan militants had also begun to downgrade the role of military tactics in favor of mass political and economic resistance was evident from a September 1973 statement to the Argentine press by members of the Central Committee of the Movement of National Liberation (Tupamaros). And in Brazil the physical extinction of the main forces of the urban guerrillas during 1970 and 1971 led to a similar reassessment of *foquismo* and its replacement by a new strategy subordinating military actions to the day-by-day struggles of the masses. Most of these movements confronted tremendous obstacles. Nonetheless, after eighteen years of resistance to the Argentine military, the revolutionary lessons of Peronism afforded new hope and were of more than merely national interest.

Testimony to the influence of Peronism on the Bolivian resistance is not hard to find. Until roughly the middle of 1973 the Bolivian resistance represented a continuation of the Popular Assembly inaugurated on May Day 1971, later declared illegal by the military forces that overthrew the popular government of General Juan José Torres in August. In exile in Chile, the leaders of the principal parties and organizations active in the Popular Assembly organized the Anti-Imperialist Revolutionary Front (FRA) for the purpose of resisting the military dictatorship. This front included the established Communist Party, the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) of a Maoist persuasion, the independent Trotskyist Revolutionary Labor Party (POR) of Guillermo Lora, a second Trotskyist Revolutionary Labor Party (POR) affiliated to the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat), the principal Guevarist and Camilist insurrectionary groups organized in the Army of National Liberation (ELN) and in the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), the Revolutionary Party of the National Left (PRIN) led by Juan Lechín, the powerful and influential Bolivian Labor Central (COB) also headed by Lechín, the newly founded Socialist Party which coincided with the politics of the deposed president, and Major Rubén Sánchez' Revolutionary Armed Forces loyal to the ex-president. Although the left-populist COB had dominated the Popular Assembly, the meetings of the FRA executive committee in exile were hampered by factional squab-

bles between representatives of rival Marxist and Leninist groups. In effect, the mass character of the Popular Assembly had all but vanished, to be replaced by a predominantly sectarian leadership.

In an effort to reintegrate the Bolivian resistance with the concrete struggles of the Bolivian masses, ex-President Torres and Major Rubén Sánchez, with the support of the COB, organized a new movement of national resistance patterned on the Argentine experience. With its headquarters in Buenos Aires rather than Santiago, this new movement or Alliance of the National Left (ALIN) reached an agreement in January 1974 with the powerful National Confederation of Peasant Workers (CNTCB). The ALIN promised to give the peasants a greater role in the management of Bolivia's economic and political affairs, in return for peasant support of the ALIN's program of national liberation and peasant recognition of ex-President Torres as the supreme conductor of the Bolivian resistance.

Parallel with the formation of the ALIN a new national democratic front was in the process of gestation as a result of the informal accords between Lechín, ex-President Hernán Siles Suazo, representing a dissident sector within the MNR, Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, founder of the Socialist Party (PSB) and former minister of mines in General Alfredo Ovando's government, and Ovando himself who had traveled to Buenos Aires at Perón's personal request. General Ovando was evidently Perón's choice to head a new popular and nationalist government in Bolivia corresponding to those in power in Argentina, Chile, and Peru. Although Perón dissociated himself from the Bolivian resistance beginning with Allende's fall in September 1973, this new and broad front was tantamount to a Bolivian version of Argentina's "Hour of the People," which had pressured General Lanusse to abdicate in May 1973.

The resistance received a shot in the arm in 1974 with the February peasant rebellion in the Valley of Cochabamba followed by the abortive military putsch by young nationalist officers in June. In a "Message to the Bolivian People" by the self-styled Nationalist Armed Forces, representing 1,500 officials and cadets, the alternative to General Hugo Banzer's dictatorship was identified with a national democratic revolution opposed equally to capitalism and communism. Republished in *Chasqui* (September-October 1974) by the Mexican branch of the Bolivian Peace

Committee, the document declared in favor of a socialism that would be both Christian and humanist. In effect, it opted for a Peronist-style revolution and for a new form of social property—the direct ownership and management of the means of production by the workers—alongside the traditional public and private sectors. This objective was to be achieved under the leadership of nationalist officers organized as the revolutionary vanguard of the people, through the mobilization of the masses and an alliance with the popular sectors: peasants, workers, students, and so-called “middle class.” Although there was little evidence of any overt Peronist influence, the commitment to a “Third Force” was a decidedly Peronist legacy.

In Chile the principal parties constituting the Popular Unity coalition under the late Salvador Allende agreed in July 1974 to constitute a broad alliance based on the Communist and Socialist parties, but including the United Movement of Popular Action (MAPU), the MAPU of Workers and Peasants, and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). Following a secret interview with Lautaro Rojas, leader of the MAPU of Workers and Peasants, it was reported that these organizations had agreed to reject guerrilla warfare as an effective strategy against the Chilean military junta, in favor of a mass resistance movement of workers and peasants (*Excelsior*, 11 August 1974). Experience had shown that guerrilla actions were the work of a revolutionary minority without organic links to the masses, and that in a highly politicized country like Chile the workers should be regarded as the principal force of resistance to the military repressive regime. This report was confirmed in an interview with Hortensia Allende, widow of the ex-president, who declared that from Arica to Magallanes there had been a reactivation of the organizations of the Chilean masses in the form principally of slowdowns, industrial sabotage, civil disobedience, and the editing of a clandestine press—the kind of opposition applied with success by the Argentine resistance (*Excelsior*, 24 September 1974).

In response to the military coup of September 1973 the Chilean MIR also underwent a change of strategy, reminiscent of the FAR's convergence on the Peronist resistance. In a major political document prepared by the MIR's Political Commission in December 1973, a new strategy of alliances was proposed aimed at incorporating the masses in a broad front of popular resistance

(*Correo de la Resistencia*, September 1974). This revolutionary front was to be constructed on the basis of clandestine committees of popular resistance supported by a formal alliance of all the political parties and movements on the left, including the petty-bourgeois Radical Party and the left wing of the Christian Democratic Party. Whereas the MIR had not belonged to Allende's coalition of Popular Unity in power, it suddenly proposed to establish formal ties with the Socialist and Communist parties.

The MIR's former objective of workers' self-government corresponded to a period of advance in the workers' movement from roughly 1967 to 1973, when its military actions had been effective in mobilizing mass support for increasingly radical goals. In contrast, the period beginning in September 1973 was characterized as a period of retreat before the repressive forces, which rendered the earlier strategy obsolete. "This is not the moment to give a decisive battle or to pose to the workers unrealizable objectives," declared the document. "The forms of struggle, however heroic and attractive to sectors of the vanguard, must be adapted to the level of political awareness, determination, and receptivity of the masses." The conditions of repression imposed by the Pinochet regime called for a strategy of collective self-defense directed at restoring civil liberties and the workers' standard of living. Although the MIR reaffirmed its decision to build a revolutionary army of the people, it acknowledged that guerrilla actions should be undertaken no longer for primarily military objectives, but in defense of the elementary rights of the workers.

In Uruguay a Peronist-type resistance was organized on the heels of the military coup which dissolved congress on June 27, 1973. The Communist-dominated National Confederation of Workers (CNT) replied with an immediate political general strike that completely paralyzed the economy. The general strike was supported by the Broad Front (FA), a coalition of Communists, Socialists, Christian Democrats, and Independents which had supported the candidacy of General Liber Seregni in the presidential elections of November 1971. The Broad Front issued an appeal to all national and democratic organizations for effective and sustained popular actions against the dictatorship. This was the prelude to the organization of a Resistance Front which included, besides the Broad Front, the National Party (the principal party of the opposition), the Movement for Unity and Reform (a faction of

President Bordaberry's own Colorado Party), the CNT, and student associations. On July 5, the Resistance Front issued its program for resolving the military crisis. The program consisted of six basic points: (1) reestablishment of constitutional freedoms and guarantees; (2) reestablishment of the rights of political parties and trade union organizations; (3) restoration of the purchasing power of wages; (4) agreement on a minimum platform for economic and social change; (5) establishment of a provisional government; and (6) provision for an immediate popular referendum. The military regime responded by arresting General Seregni, head of the Broad Front, the presidents of the National and Socialist parties, and members of the dissolved congress who supported the resistance. In an effort to smash the general strike, the military had already proscribed the CNT on June 30, 1973.

The Tupamaros also responded to the coup with an effective change in strategy. At issue was the question whether armed actions constituted the only viable response to military dictatorship. Within a month of the coup the Tupamaros issued a declaration outlining their new strategy of resistance. Several tactical mistakes in the use of violence were noted: first, an underestimation of the military capacity of the enemy in view of U.S. technical aid contributing to the modernization of the armed forces; second, an underestimation of the capacity of the masses to resist repression, combined with an exaggerated estimate of the role of a political-military vanguard. Not just military actions were required to overcome the dictatorship, but a combination of all forms of struggle in factories, schools, neighborhoods, villages, and farms—a thesis reiterated in a press conference by representatives of the Tupamaros' Central Committee in Argentina (*Militancia*, 20 September 1973). At the same time, the Tupamaros stressed the urgency of linking armed actions with the daily struggles of the masses toward maintaining real wages, restoring civil liberties, achieving amnesty for political prisoners, abolishing physical tortures, and rehiring fired workers. Although armed struggle was conceived as the only force capable of toppling a military regime, it was admittedly insufficient for that purpose without "the participation and leadership of the working class"—a theme of the Peronist resistance.

In Brazil the strategy of resistance practiced during the 1960s relied mainly on guerrilla warfare by Guevarist or Debrayist

political-military focus. This strategy was abandoned in 1970-71 owing to a succession of defeats and an intensification of the repression that physically liquidated most of the vanguard. A slow process of recomposition and reorganization of the left followed on the heels of these disasters, converging on a new strategy giving preeminence to the organization and mobilization of the masses in which armed resistance was to perform an auxiliary role. Political-military cadres were restructured to assist the workers in their day-to-day struggles, to defend their standard of living through partial strikes, industrial sabotage, and the boycotting of overtime work. Thus the fundamental problem of the Brazilian left was to revive the mass struggle within the limits imposed by the dictatorship. This strategy, originally applied by the Peronist resistance, was the only realistic one in view of the nationwide repression.

The shift in strategy toward mass involvement had been anticipated by five years of clandestine organizing among the peasants in the Marabá region of the state of Pará in northeastern Brazil. This project, supported by militants from a number of different revolutionary organizations, was aimed at integrating a revolutionary vanguard with the struggles of the rural population and building a mass basis of resistance to the military regime. Although in April 1972 the repressive forces discovered the existence of this work and launched a gigantic operation to destroy it, a nucleus of militants backed by several scores of peasants sought refuge in the jungles of the Amazon with the intent of continuing the resistance. Precariously armed, but counting on the support of peasants in the area, the peasants-in-arms were able to inflict severe losses on the occupying troops. Reorganized as the "Guerrilla Forces of Araguaia," they subsequently launched offensive actions against military posts where they seized modern weapons and ammunition. The Brazilian military was compelled to renounce its original objective of destroying the guerrillas in short order, in favor of a strategic encirclement of the region and the imposition of a fierce repression in neighboring areas to prevent the epidemic from spreading. The armed resistance in the southern part of Pará lasted through 1976. Although geographically isolated from the principal political and economic centers of decision making, this first successful guerrilla movement against the dictatorship illustrated a new approach to mass resistance which was also being tried in the cities.

The international significance of the Peronist resistance stemmed not only from its having an influence on other resistance movements, but also from its being a point of convergence for resistance struggles independently of the Argentine experience. In Mexico, for example, the resistance against the repressive policies of the PRI-controlled government and trade unions, brought to a head by the massacre in the Plaza of Three Cultures in October 1968, tended to develop along lines that anticipated the revived Peronist resistance. The crisis of Mexican populism corresponded in many ways to the crisis of Peronism in Argentina: first, the disillusionment with the ruling party and its political bureaucracy for failing to carry out long-promised and much needed reforms; second, the insubordination of the trade union bases in opposition to a labor bureaucracy committed to manipulating the workers in the interests of state policy; and third, the rebellion of the urban poor in search of decent housing and the satisfaction of elementary needs, frustrated by the failure of industrial growth to keep pace with demographic change and the process of urbanization.

In Mexico, as in Argentina, the populism of the ruling party aimed to satisfy the immediate demands of the masses, but on condition that they accept control by the political and trade union bureaucracies and refrain from creating obstacles to the development of the capitalist sector. This arrangement worked during the 1930s when President Cárdenas curbed the powers of the bourgeoisie by means of extensive labor and agrarian reforms, and encouraged the unionization of workers and peasants as a countervailing force under government control. Under subsequent administrations, however, the native bourgeoisie and the multinational corporations increased their share of the gross national product at the expense of the masses, with an erosion of popular support for the ruling party. At the same time, the rising tide of labor and peasant militancy, combined with the demands of the urban poor, spurred the government to rely on police repression and gangster methods to suffocate all expressions of popular discontent.

These "weak links" in the chain of repression provided the objective conditions for a strategy of political-military resistance, the kind of strategy developed and revived by the Peronist left in Argentina. This strategy, summarized in a major editorial in *Punto Crítico* entitled "Notes for the Study of the Mexican Conjuncture" (August 1973), recommended the following: first, the struggle for

union democracy and for a labor movement independent of the ruling party; second, the mobilization of poor neighborhoods to secure their elementary needs for water, sanitation, etc; third, the organization of a political and electoral opposition to the PRI. The organization of a "revolutionary tendency," the editors concluded, is possible only through the close coordination of each of these opposition movements, with precedence given to the struggle within the trade unions as the weakest link in the system. Since the struggle for an independent labor movement is possible only through a direct confrontation with the ruling party and the government, this strategy of the Mexican left paralleled that of the Peronist left in identifying the immediate enemy with the trade union and political bureaucracies.

That resistance movements have tended to converge on the Peronist model, whether or not they have been shaped by it, testifies to its importance and to its potential significance for future resistance struggles. The international significance of the Peronist resistance may be attributed in no small part to the fact that the Uruguayan and Brazilian resistance movements, independently of the Peronist example, abandoned their former exclusive reliance on armed struggle in favor of subordinating it to the politics of a mass movement. Furthermore, the Argentine model is relevant not only to resistance movements against military dictatorship and pseudo-constitutional regimes, but also against freely elected governments including those with a populist cast. The Peronist resistance did not end with the calling of elections and the formal abdication of the armed forces, but continued even after the election of General Perón. Although this model of a Peronist resistance without Perón is a new phenomenon in resistance politics, it is paralleled by the Mexican experience of opposition to a ruling party likewise accused of betraying its revolutionary legacy.

10

The Return of the Military

The basic conditions underlying the military's return to power are to be found, first, in the political crisis and divisions within Peronism and, second, in the Peronist mismanagement of the economy which became evident in the runaway inflation and negative rate of growth during 1975. The economic crisis compounded the political crisis, thus resulting in Isabel Perón's inability to rule. Confronted with a weak and unstable government and a rapidly deteriorating economy, the military felt compelled to intervene. It did so not all at once, but piecemeal. Like the series of minidevaluations of the peso in late 1975 and the beginning of 1976, the military *golpe* that overthrew the Peronist government on March 24, 1976, followed a series of small interventions that were hardly frightening at the time. The intervention in March was simply the final act in a coup by quotas.

One of the motives behind the coup was the escalation of guerrilla warfare against the armed forces. The Peronist government was blamed for a deteriorating political situation that was providing sustenance not only to the guerrillas, but also to a generalized climate of mass subversion. The question was how to intervene successfully against a government which had received more than sixty percent of the national vote in the elections of September 1973 and represented the first clear-cut majority in eighteen years of past interventions that had ended in a blind alley for the military. With good reason the armed forces believed that the Justicialist movement and the FREJULI could not be effectively opposed short of an internal crisis and decomposition. Accordingly, they chose to

intervene by quotas and to wait for a political crisis to develop before making a decisive move.

Although the political crisis of Peronism did not reach staggering proportions until after Perón's death on July 1, 1974, the movement had already begun to decompose prior to that date. By February 1974 a split had occurred between the classist FAP-PB, supported by the ERP-22, and the rest of the Peronist movement. This division came in response to the escalation of repression because of the ERP's attack on the army base at Azul, and Perón's efforts to compel the governor of Buenos Aires to resign because of alleged sympathies for the guerrillas. A far more consequential schism followed between the reformist labor bureaucracy, supported by the political branch of the movement, and other left-of-center governors. Beginning with the federal intervention in the province of Córdoba in February, the government then deposed the governors in the provinces of Mendoza and Santa Cruz who were also closely identified with ex-President Cámpora. Thus the movement ceased to represent an unstable balance between its left and right wings to become increasingly dominated by the Peronist right in a coalition with the centrist labor bureaucracy.

Shortly after Perón's death another major cleavage occurred when the Peronist left, led by the Montoneros, followed in the footsteps of the FAP by denouncing the "illegitimacy" of Isabel's "inner circle" and then returning underground in September to wage war on the government. The virtual elimination of the left from the official movement contributed to sharpening the tensions between the two remaining factions. Thus in June and July 1975 a new split emerged between the Peronist center in control of the CGT and the Peronist right in control of the government. Once again the relation of social forces within the movement was upset, this time at the expense of the president's "inner circle."

In December 1975 the final split occurred between the "verticalists" in the CGT bureaucracy, backed by labor supporters in congress, and an emerging force of "antiverticalists" within both the labor and political branches of the movement. The "verticalists" supported Isabel as head of the government, whereas the "antiverticalists" accepted only her role as head of the party and the movement. (The difference between "verticalists" and "ultraverticalists" was that the former demanded representation within the president's "entourage" or "inner circle" of advisers, whereas the

latter allowed her complete freedom in this matter.) Concurrently, a score or so of congressmen broke with the FREJULI on December 12 to form the self-styled "Work Group," whose "antiverticalism" deprived the government of its majority in the lower house. The "Work Group" entered into discussions with an "antiverticalist" faction led by Victorio Calabró, the Vandorist Governor of Buenos Aires, who had recently been expelled from the party for insubordination. Tensions mounted within the "62 Organizations" as its head, Lorenzo Miguel, called for the appointment of a federal intervenor to remove Calabró as governor.

This schism became more pronounced in February 1976 as a result of corresponding cleavages within both the "62 Organizations" and the National or Supreme Council of the Justicialist Party. Both Angel Robledo, first vice-president of the party, and José Báez, its second vice-president, had formed a bloc with Italo Luder, the president of the Senate, to secure Isabel's resignation or at least another extended leave of absence. As secretary-general of the Insurance Workers Union, Báez also played a key role in the "62 Organizations." However, he was opposed by Miguel on the ground that, far from averting a military coup, Isabel's resignation would so weaken the executive as to encourage military intervention. In his dual capacity as a leader of both the political and labor branches, Báez could count on strong support from the membership. But at the party's National Congress on March 6, which was packed by delegates loyal to Isabel, a renewed coalition of "verticalists" and "ultraverticalists" gave a resounding victory to the president.

By then all legal and constitutional avenues aimed at displacing the president had been closed. But the apparent unity achieved at the congress could not conceal the division within the party and between it and the government. The fissure between "verticalists" and "ultraverticalists" had not been healed, and the question of democratizing the party and the movement was still an unsettled issue. It is noteworthy that the military waited until the divisions between "antiverticalists," "verticalists," and "ultraverticalists" had widened before risking a confrontation with the president. Only when the "vertebral column" or strongest single support of the party, the "62 Organizations," showed signs of weakness did the military feel strong enough politically to hazard a coup. And, even

at that, the top army command balked at the first attempt in December in favor of letting the divisions within the movement fester.

The political crisis that brought on the military crisis was in turn aggravated by the economic crisis. Peronist mismanagement of the economy was held responsible for the runaway inflation, the worst that the country had experienced during the past quarter century. The rate of inflation—nearly three hundred and fifty percent in 1975—was attributed to the government's policy of encouraging mass consumption through concessions to organized labor, combined with an increasing fiscal deficit from subsidizing social services and welfare of various kinds. The budget of the then infamous Ministry of Social Welfare, for example, rose to approximately thirty percent of the public revenues, whereas taxes accounted for only twenty-five percent. To pay for these services the government had to borrow or print new money.

Premonitions of the coming economic disaster were expressed as early as October 1974. In a document dated October 25 distributed by ex-President Frondizi's Movement of Integration and Development (MID), the state was said to be on the border of insolvency for having increased the money supply by eighty percent during the past month, the short-term advances of the Central Bank by one hundred percent, and the amount of government indebtedness by more than four hundred percent. The fiscal deficit was used to provide not only much needed social services, but also cheap credit for small and medium enterprises. Such credit seldom found its way into increased production, but swelled instead unnecessary selling costs or was used to speculate with foreign currency.

The Peronist program of high wages and subsidized social welfare tended to generate inflation through a combination of factors that included Argentina's dependence on the international market. High wages contributed not only to disinvestment, but also to the flight of capital in search of improved investment opportunities abroad. The increase in effective demand was thus frustrated by a decrease in the volume of domestic production. High wages also tended to cut into agricultural exports, as the increase in effective demand domestically could only be satisfied in the short run by a deteriorating balance of foreign trade. The result was increased foreign indebtedness, pressures by international monetary agencies to devalue the peso as a means of covering those debts, and consequently higher import costs passed on to domestic products. By a roun-

dabout process the prices of many goods were being determined not by the free play of domestic supply and demand, but by fluctuations in the rate of exchange and by international monetary policies. Such policies were responsible for the successive devaluations of Argentina's currency. Here was another source of inflation as fewer goods had to compete for more money.

There is little doubt that inflation under conditions of stagnation, which had led the Argentine economy into its worst disaster since the Great Depression, was the rock upon which the Peronist ship of state foundered. Isabel had, in a contradictory way, followed the policies shaped by Perón during his first and second administrations, revived by President Cámpora in May 1973, continued by his "ultraverticalist" successor Raúl Lastiri in July, and then by Perón again in October. The principal differences between her economic policies and those of her late husband arose from her efforts to meet the demands of the multinational corporations and the international monetary agencies, demands resisted by the Peronist-controlled congress and by the labor branch of the movement. Isabel's marches and countermarches played havoc with the economy and she was justifiably criticized on that score. Yet Perón's own economic policies and alleged solution to the problems of labor and development in an underdeveloped country had also contributed to the deterioration and mismanagement of the Argentine economy.

Perón boasted of having discovered the most humane solution to the contradiction between the economic and political objectives of a populist regime: the economic objective of increasing investment through subsidies to production; and the political objective of subsidizing consumption as a condition of maintaining mass support. To his credit, experience has shown that an underdeveloped country cannot pursue both objectives simultaneously without increasing effective demand in relation to supply, thus contributing to inflation and generating social tensions that tend to explode and disrupt the coalition supporting a populist program. One or another class has had to pay the burden of the social costs of a development strategy, and inflation has been an indirect way of making the working class and petty bourgeoisie foot most of the bill. The populist premise of a community of interest between these two classes and the small and medium bourgeoisie collapses in the face of the realities of underdevelopment. Hence the dilemma: either a strat-

egy of development undermines a populist coalition by encouraging profits under conditions of lagging wages, or a strategy of mass consumption undermines it by cutting into profits.

Historically, there have been three main types of populist program. First, priority has been given to developing production through subsidies and special incentives for both the public and private sectors. This policy depends for its success on curtailing the consumption of the masses, tantamount to intensified political repression. It is ultimately incompatible with populist politics because labor is the principal victim. The promise of a higher standard of living projected into an uncertain future has been insufficient to retain mass support in view of present sacrifices. Second, priority has been given to developing production under conditions in which the capitalist class is expropriated and the bulk of the economic surplus is absorbed by the state. Although consumption is curtailed, the bourgeoisie is the principal loser. Political repression during the transition to a socialist economy is directed mainly at propertied interests. At least organized labor is compensated for its sacrifices by the increased stake it acquires in an economy which has come under public ownership and control. Third, priority has been given to increasing mass consumption as a condition of stimulating private investment and preparing the workers for a later stage of intensified capital accumulation. This was Perón's option in 1946 and again in 1973. As the "Third Position" in economics, it strives to harmonize the political and economic objectives of a populist coalition in the only way feasible short of a major socialist transformation. Thus, after favoring labor's demands for increased consumption, Perón shifted during his second administration to giving priority to production.

Was his strategy successful? With the advantage of hindsight one can safely say that it was doomed to failure, and that ex-President Frondizi was right in his repeated criticisms of that policy. At most it succeeded in maintaining a populist coalition alive, which cannot be said of Frondizi's own policy of giving priority to production. A strategy similar to Frondizi's had been adopted by other populist coalitions on the continent after their first disastrous experiments of trying to combine increased production and consumption. But the new strategy resulted in a political impasse like the old. As applied in Bolivia by Paz Estenssoro's Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR), it ended by dividing and ultimately destroying

the populist coalition that supported him. Although Mexico is a presumptive example of the success of such a policy, it is a far better example of Perón's own strategy for development. Thus the first two decades of the revolutionary regime saw increasing concessions to the labor and peasant movements, followed after 1940 by a policy of giving priority to capital accumulation to the benefit mainly of Mexico's new national bourgeoisie. Not until the 1970s did a kind of balance emerge between production and consumption, and only after Mexico had already experimented with an economic model that was to anticipate Perón's own policies.

On March 28, 1974, in a meeting of the representatives of the political parties belonging to the FREJULI, Frondizi had warned Perón of the tendency toward decapitalization and generalized scarcity consequent upon decreased margins of profitability. Today, he said, there is no investment; where there is no investment there can be no economic development; and where there is no economic development there can be no social justice. Perón's response was that a program of successful development hinged on a prior effort to restructure the state and to readjust its tax mechanisms as a means of generating the indispensable funds. That was being accomplished in the process of satisfying the most urgent demands of the masses. As for the next stage giving priority to investment, that would be launched toward the middle of 1975.

The shift from a consumerist to an investment strategy actually began in October 1974. Ber Gelbard was removed as minister of economics and replaced by the former president of the Central Bank, Dr. Alfredo Gómez Morales, who had resigned in protest against government policy that was exhausting the bank's reserves. The first austerity plan imposed by Gómez Morales became bogged down, however, owing to resistance from organized labor. With Perón's death there was literally nobody within the official sector of the movement with the authority to impose on its labor branch the type of austerity plan launched by him in 1952. Only Perón could do that because only he, by virtue of his deeds, had earned the confidence of organized labor.

As the crisis of Peronism went from bad to worse the military became bolder and began to intervene in government affairs. Determined not to launch a premature coup, it opted for partial interventions until the government had thoroughly discredited itself through ineptitude and mismanagement, economic and political

gangsterism, internal bickering, and the alienation of its support among the labor movement. For two years, from May 1973 to May 1975, the armed forces adopted a posture of political neutrality and stuck strictly to professional business. But in May 1975 the government, under the instigation of López Rega, replaced the liberal Commander in Chief of the Army, General Leandro Anaya, with a Peronist general, Alberto Numa Laplane, in an effort to Peronize the armed forces. Top army brass deeply resented this patently political interference designed to reduce the military to a willing rather than reluctant instrument of Peronist policy.

As long as López Rega dominated the political branch of the movement and the government, the armed forces continued to play second fiddle. The government, not the military, took the initiative in declaring a state of siege in November 1974, which gave a free hand to the Federal Police in combating the guerrillas. Again, it was the government that called for direct military intervention against the guerrillas in February 1975. Then General Anaya was replaced for reportedly resisting the government's efforts to send troops against the 25,000 striking workers at Villa Constitución, the country's principal steelworks. The eight-week-old strike, the general insisted, was a political and not a military matter. If the government was jittery, it was because it anticipated further strike outbreaks as 400 collective contracts came up for renewal in May.

At the beginning of June another López Rega appointee, Celestino Rodrigo, assumed control over the nation's economy. A week later Rodrigo's devaluation of the peso by a hundred percent resulted in a price explosion that aggravated already existing labor tensions. On June 8 the CGT and its affiliates declared a "state of alert" in response to the austerity measures imposed by the new minister of the economy. López Rega then tried to persuade Casildo Herreras, the secretary-general of the CGT, to resign in favor of one of his own appointees. At the same time he reportedly threatened Lorenzo Miguel, head of the "62 Organizations," with a settlement of accounts by the Triple A. Pressures were also being mounted within the Supreme Council of the Justicialist Party to dissolve the "62 Organizations" as part of a general plan nominally aimed at reorganizing the movement, but really designed to undermine the independence of the labor sector. During the first part of June it seemed as if López Rega might get his way, thus

virtually compelling Miguel to seek the support of the rank and file.

On June 28 Isabel Perón rejected a request by the CGT for a hundred percent across-the-board wage increase. The president not only remained firm at fifty percent, but also ordered the cancellation of all earlier collective bargaining agreements exceeding that amount, such as the hundred-and-twenty-percent increase obtained by Miguel's own union (UOM). In retaliation the CGT bureaucracy threatened a general strike, while Minister of Labor Ricardo Otero resigned in indignation from the cabinet. A mammoth but unofficially declared strike began paralyzing the country on July 1 in protest against the government's labor policy. Then, under pressure from the rank and file, the CGT declared an official general strike of forty-eight hours scheduled for July 7 and 8—the first of its kind against a Peronist government.

On the eve of the strike the entire cabinet resigned. Concurrently, against the president's wishes, the Justicialist bloc in the Senate rebelled by electing Italo Luder, a Peronist moderate or "centrist," as its provisional president. Isabel had hoped to keep this post vacant so that her legal successor in office might be Raúl Lastiri, president of the Chamber of Deputies and López Rega's son-in-law. Instead, she was confronted by a potential successor alien to the group of right-wing Peronists constituting her "inner circle."

The military waited until the first general strike ever called against a Peronist government to make its first move. Confronted by a combined rebellion by the trade union and political center of the movement, Isabel was forced to comply with some of the CGT's demands. Far from remaining neutral during this confrontation, the army joined with the opposition in routing López Rega and his friends. Thus he was not reappointed to the new cabinet formed on July 11 and also felt compelled to resign as private secretary to the president. However, the positions abandoned by him were filled by his close collaborators, while the controversial Celestino Rodrigo continued as the economy minister.

This reshuffling of the cabinet failed to satisfy either the CGT bureaucracy or the military. Spurred by the rank and file which had been staging its own general strike since July 1, the Union of Automotive Transport Workers (UTA) on July 15 declared a thirty-six-hour national strike in repudiation of Rodrigo's reappointment.

Two days later the CGT again threatened the government with a general strike if it did not sack the minister of the economy and respond favorably to labor's demand for an alternative economic plan. The government complied by accepting Rodrigo's resignation on July 19 and, on the same day, under pressure from the military, López Rega was forced into an ignominious, if gilded, exile. On July 21 his successor in the influential Ministry of Social Welfare resigned. The CGT then presented its "emergency plan" for the nationalization of the banks, heavy industry, and foreign commerce, price controls, and periodic wage adjustments to deal with inflation. Although this plan was never accepted, it marked the beginning of labor's efforts to fill the power vacuum created by the exodus of the Peronist right.

By a vote of the Peronist-controlled congress on July 23, Raúl Lastiri was removed as president of the Chamber of Deputies, following which he was also obliged to resign as first vice-president of the Justicialist Party. In fact, Lastiri came under suspicion of participating in a projected palace coup, which would have physically eliminated the enemies of López Rega within the movement and called for his return. Documentation of the proposed coup was presented to the minister of the interior by no less a personage than Italo Luder, the new president of the Senate. Finally, on August 11, a new cabinet, the seventh during the thirteen months of Isabel's government, replaced the remaining officials associated with López Rega's rule.

In retrospect, it was this major split between the Peronist center represented mainly by the CGT and "62 Organizations," and the Peronist right wing led by López Rega with Isabel's support, that encouraged the military to impose its own terms on the government. Although in May López Rega had prevailed in his first confrontation with the army, in July the tables were turned as the army, for the first time, got the upper hand in opposing his re-appointment and then forcing him to quit the country. At the same time the armed forces were in no mood to allow the CGT bureaucrats to fill the shoes abandoned by his close collaborators. Although initially sympathetic to the CGT's efforts to check the advance of López Rega in his bid for total power, the military was to show still greater hostility toward the subsequent "advance of labor" within the Justicialist Party and the government.

This first major crisis, prompting the end of two years of political

neutrality by the armed forces, led to an escalating of military involvement in political affairs that culminated less than a year later in the overthrow of Isabel Perón. Following its first military intervention in July the army intervened again on August 26 to strip the newly appointed minister of the interior, Colonel Vicente Damasco, of his military post. Damasco was the first military officer to have joined the cabinet since the Peronists came to power in March 1973. He was faced with the dilemma of either keeping his cabinet position or resigning his military commission when the top anti-Peronist generals insisted on maintaining their distance from the regime and refused to allow a military man to participate in the government. Since Army Commander in Chief Numa Laplane had pushed for Damasco's appointment, on August 27 the army's top brass also forced his replacement by Army Chief of Staff Jorge Videla. In a dispatch from Buenos Aires to *The New York Times* (August 28), Jonathan Kandell described the action by the army as one of "virtual insubordination" that had brought the country "to the brink of a military coup."

On September 8 the government finally decreed the banning of the Montoneros and its many allied fronts, which included the Peronist Youth. An agency to centralize efforts by all the intelligence services and to plan an overall antiguerrilla campaign was also set up. These gestures apparently encouraged General Videla, the army's new commander in chief, to announce before congress on September 10 that he was completing the draft of another antisubversive act to be called the National Defense Law—at the initiative of the military. The draft of the new law, which later met with considerable resistance from the Peronist-dominated congress, contained provisions for organizing military tribunals to try "subversives." Some charges were to carry the death penalty.

The military intervened for the third time during the thirty-day interval from September 13 to October 16, when Isabel took an extended sick leave. Isabel was succeeded by Italo Luder, who became the fifth president of the Republic in less than three years. (Cámpora, it may be recalled, was followed in office by a provisional president, Raúl Lastiri, rather than directly by Perón.) In the tug-of-war that ensued the new minister of the interior, Vicente Damasco, led the ultraverticalist forces by trying to circumscribe Luder's powers and to restrain him from making any changes in top administration personnel. However, on September 15 Luder re-

moved Damasco, as well as Defense Minister Jorge Garrido and Press Secretary Cesáreo González, in a move that counted on the support of the military. Damasco was replaced by the "centrist" Angel Robledo, who also took over the foreign ministry and, as first vice-president of the Justicialist Party, became its de facto head in Isabel's absence.

During this interregnum and in response to the Montoneros' attack on an army base in Formosa on October 5, 1975, the Argentine army demanded a bigger role. It pressured interim President Luder to approve its proposal for a National Council of Internal Security and a National Defense Council. According to a report by Kandell in *The New York Times* (9 October 1975), the Internal Security Council would serve as a rubber stamp for all antisubversive actions deemed advisable by the military. Its policies were to be enforced by the Defense Council. Repression would be carried out in all places where subversion was present, in the trade unions, factories, and universities as well as against rural guerrillas in the mountains of Tucumán. The two councils would give the armed forces the power to coordinate and centralize all of the country's repressive forces including control over the Federal Police. Thus Luder was used by the military to step up the war against leftist elements and to lay the groundwork for intervention against the combative trade unions and so-called "factory guerrillas."

The fourth instance of military intervention occurred in December in the form of a military rebellion by disaffected sectors of the air force. By then Isabel's government had gone through ten cabinet changes and four aborted economic plans under four different ministers of the economy—Ber Gelbard's Act of National Compromise (Social Pact), Gómez Morales' monetarism, the shock treatment recommended by the International Monetary Fund ingenuously applied by Celestino Rodrigo, and the modified monetarism and revived social pact of Antonio Cafiero. With no end in sight to inflation, mounting labor tensions, and financial corruption within the government, the ultraright or Pinochetist wing of the air force finally responded to calls from discontented sectors of the bourgeoisie by launching the first coup.

The rebellion began early on December 18 with the detention and removal from office of the commander of the air force by units under the command of Brigadier General Orlando Capellini. It ended on December 22, but only after General Videla had decided

to intervene against the insurgents by bombing and strafing their headquarters. From its principal base in the 7th Airborne Division of Morón, the self-denominated "Argentine Air Force in Operations" began transmitting communiqués from radio stations occupied by the rebels. The first communiqué underlined the moral crisis of Peronism and its political and economic misgovernment, while Argentina's neighbors (Brazil, Chile, Uruguay) "prospered in peace and work." It disavowed the authority of the national government and called upon General Videla to assume control of the country in the name of the armed forces.

Almost immediately the rebellion received support from the head of the Federal Party, Francisco Manrique, and from ex-President Onganía who had joined the rebels in their headquarters in Morón. The 7th Brigade also received support from the 5th Airborne Brigade of Villa Reynolds in San Luis, and from the 4th Brigade in Mendoza. Although the bulk of the armed forces were sympathetic to the rebellion, the top command had been taken by surprise and hesitated to seize power without more careful preparation. The "Air Force in Operations" also hesitated to bomb the government house and the Plaza de Mayo as rebel air force planes had done in June 1955. As for Peronist resistance to the coup, it was not until the evening of December 21 that the CGT decreed a general strike to begin on the next and final day of the insurrection. Rank and file workers were also slow in responding to the crisis. They did not mobilize in the Plaza de Mayo nor did they ask for arms to defend the government.

On the heels of this rebellion the armed forces intervened a fifth time, also in December, in an effort to achieve the objectives of the rebels by legal and constitutional means. Supported by the opposition parties in the lower house, by the "Work Group" of dissident Peronists, and by the governor of Buenos Aires and his antiverticalist followers, the three commanders in chief called upon the president either to resign or to take a second and extended leave of absence. Since Isabel refused, they turned to the only remaining institutional solution: the encouragement of impeachment proceedings for the Watergate-style administrative and financial corruption of her entourage. What has been called the "Argentine Watergate" mushroomed in June 1975. It covered oil deals with Libya, missing funds for public construction projects, financial manipulations between the Ministry of Social Welfare and

a transport company, and the misuse of funds by the Crusade of Justicialist Solidarity. There was also the matter of a check signed by the president and transferring 740,000 dollars from the Crusade, a social welfare fund formerly administered by López Rega, to the estate of her late husband Juan Domingo Perón.

A sixth intervention by the armed forces came on February 2, 1976, when the commanders in chief succeeded in imposing an army tank commander, General Albano Harguindeguy, as chief of the Federal Police. A few days later a new minister of the economy was appointed, Emilio Mondelli, whose plan of economic austerity had been previously approved by the heads of the army, navy, and air force. Although Mondelli had to face the same irreconcilable opposition from the CGT and the "62 Organizations" that Rodrigo had to face in June 1975, it was his support by the armed forces that encouraged the president to resist popular demands for his resignation.

During the summer months of January and February 1976 the climate of social tension mounted. Hardly a week passed without rumors of a new military coup in preparation. Periodicals as far apart as *Nuevo Hombre*, the pro-ERP fortnightly which reappeared with a new series on November 5, 1975, and the Peronist daily *Mayoría* speculated that the developing coup by quotas was likely to end with the so-called "Bordaberryzation" of the government. (In June 1973 the Uruguayan armed forces had shut down congress in a palace coup supported by the legal President, Juan María Bordaberry, whose nominal continuation in office gave a quasi-legal sanction to the operation.) In an editorial in *Mayoría* (14 February 1976) Dr. Julio González, Isabel's private secretary and virtual head of the government's "inner circle," had reportedly proposed a similar venture to various high-ranking officers. Thus, without altering the legal framework, a new cabinet was to be constituted whose members would be directly chosen by the armed forces.

By the middle of February the army was still divided into two main currents. The authoritarians in favor of generalized, long-term, and violent repression were led by General Ramón Díaz Bessone, commander of the 2nd Army Corps in Rosario, by General Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, commander of the 3rd Army Corps in Córdoba, and by the newly appointed chief of the Federal Police. The liberals in favor of a partial and temporary repression of political and trade union activity were led by General Videla and Army

Chief of Staff Roberto Viola. This second current hoped not only to exhaust all legal possibilities before launching a coup, but also to divide the Peronist movement by neutralizing dissident sectors within its political and trade union branches. It counted on at least passive support from Luder's group in congress and from the backers of Victorio Calabró, the rebellious governor of Buenos Aires.

Faced with the president's refusal to resign and the failure of impeachment procedures against her in congress, the two principal currents within the army finally reached an agreement. Thus the review *Ultima Clave* (25 February 1976) reported that at a reunion of the army's top brass on February 20, at the insistence of General Videla a deadline had been set for overthrowing the government. Among other things, it was agreed that the armed forces should seize power at the earliest opportunity in order to counter the anticipated wave of strikes against Mondelli's new austerity plan and the government's refusal to grant wage increases. Determined to enforce that plan over the heads of organized labor, the military also proposed to intervene the CGT and to dissolve the "62 Organizations." At the same time it hoped to inflict a minimum of damage to the Justicialist movement and to avoid alienating the underlying population. A Pinochet-type solution to Argentina's crisis had been reputedly rejected in favor of "national reconciliation."

Mondelli spelled out the terms of his new austerity plan on March 5. Besides devaluing the peso by 82.5 percent, the plan called for a fifty- or sixty-percent hike in basic foodstuffs, an eighty-percent increase in the price of gasoline, a fifty-percent increase in subway fares and a 100–150-percent hike in taxi and rail fares. As partial compensation for this sacrifice he was asking of organized labor, wages were to be raised by twelve percent. Labor's response came as predicted. By March 10 striking industrial workers had idled seventy percent of productive capacity in the nation's principal cities, which prompted the president to make new concessions by boosting the wage increase to twenty percent and by opening a new series of collective bargaining sessions.

To add to the economic uncertainty, a twenty-four-hour shut-down for the province of Buenos Aires had been scheduled for March 18 by small shopkeepers and retailers protesting the price controls and the government's use of police to enforce them. Since the larger business associations were also considering new shut-downs, there was virtually no sector of Argentine society that had

not escalated its organized opposition to the government. Calls for the president's resignation and declarations of her unfitness to rule were heard even louder than before.

The final act in the coup by quotas began on the eve of March 24 with the detention of the president by a military junta consisting of the three commanders in chief led by the principal inspirer and accepted leader of the coup, General Videla. The army mobilized to occupy not only the federal government, but also the provincial and municipal governments. Congress and the provincial legislatures were dissolved; the justices of the Supreme Court and the higher provincial courts were removed from office; the principal leaders of the Peronist Party, the CGT, and "62 Organizations" were rounded up and imprisoned. There was virtually no resistance to these arbitrary measures.

On the first day of the coup a proclamation was issued stating that the purpose of the military take-over was to restore the essential values of the nation, to eradicate left-wing subversion, to promote economic development, and to establish subsequently a "republican, representative, and federal democracy." On the second day another proclamation by the junta assured the population that its purpose was "to put an end to misgovernment, corruption, and subversion" and that it intended to act exclusively against delinquents or persons who had committed abuses of power. Unlike the Chilean military, the Argentine armed forces had not assumed power for an indefinite period. On the contrary, five days after the coup General Videla was sworn in as the new president for a three-year term. Apparently, there was not going to be a repetition in Argentina of the Chilean bloodbath and flagrant violation of human rights.

The junta claimed to represent the interests of all Argentines, but its actions belied its words. The coup was directed not only against "delinquent" individuals, but also against a "delinquent" class and ideology. While ostensibly aimed only at extremist guerrillas and corrupt officials who had misused their power in office, the coup's principal victims consisted of labor's rank and file and the Peronist and Marxist left. Strikes were declared illegal, revision of past labor codes made it easier to fire people, collective bargaining was proscribed, the government declared that it alone would determine future wage increases, the CGT was intervened and its funds were frozen, and the "62 Organizations" were dissolved.

Concurrently, martial law was declared, the heaviest penalties were imposed for inciting violence and engaging in terrorist acts, and military courts were empowered to invoke the death penalty. Four Marxist-Leninist parties were also outlawed: the pro-Peking Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR), the Workers' Socialist Party (PST), and the Labor Party (PO), the successor to Labor Politics.

While the detention of national and provincial leaders of the Peronist movement occupied the headlines, the military also proceeded to arrest labor militants and all persons suspected of having connections with the Montoneros and Peronist Youth. This included cadres of the Authentic Peronist Party who prudently disappeared or went underground. Some 1,800 persons were arrested during the first two days of the coup. A week later this figure had reportedly doubled and by the middle of April was approaching 10,000. While the top political and labor bureaucrats were fleeing by private boats across the River Plate to Uruguay, rank and file militants in the movement were not so fortunate.

The armed forces continued to be preoccupied with their private war against the ERP and Montoneros. At the same time, they sought to break the power of organized labor in the conviction that the labor conflicts and social tensions growing out of economic disruption and the political "power vacuum" had become an obstacle to economic recovery. As part of this strategy, the military was determined to throw the Peronists out of office. For even the movement's right wing had established a pattern of concessions to the rank and file that had nullified or seriously undermined the government's austerity programs and efforts to put the economy back on its feet. The military stopped short, however, of outlawing the Peronist movement and the 150,000 member Communist Party of Argentina which had consistently opposed the guerrillas. How long might this tolerance last? In view of their interest in reaching an understanding with the armed forces, they were obliged merely to desist from political activity.

Despite the escalation of repression against the guerrillas in 1975, they were able to maintain both their fighting strength and their popularity among the Peronist masses. If anything, they were becoming more rather than less of a headache to the professional army. As Jonathan Kandell reported in *The New York Times* (24 March 1976), the guerrillas, who used to be derided as a university-

trained elite, had substantially increased their appeal among factory workers. During the past year twenty-two foreign and Argentine executives had been slain, scores kidnapped, and hundreds more intimidated by bombs or threatening letters and phone calls into granting large wage increases. In December the Montoneros kidnapped Enrique Metz, one of the executives of Mercedes-Benz in Córdoba, and compelled the company to grant an illegal twenty-three-percent wage increase for its 20,000 workers. At the same time they collected a so-called "fine" of four million dollars for labor mispractices by the company, and succeeded in reinstating a hundred workers who had been fired. By March 1976 restive trade-unionists backed by the Montoneros were asking for another forty percent. Is there any wonder that management was worried over the proliferation of so-called factory guerrillas? As Kandell quotes an executive of Fiat in the industrial city of Córdoba: "At this point, the guerrillas can count on the passive or active support of a majority of our workers." This view, he notes, was not isolated but shared by the managers of other large industrial plants including Ika-Renault and the Perkins diesel factory in Córdoba.

From its inception the military coup had the support of employers' associations. For months Argentine businessmen had been calling upon the military to intervene. Finally, their patience exhausted, representatives of the most influential business association, the Permanent Assembly of Employers' Guild Entities (APEGE), unanimously resolved to carry out a nationwide lockout on February 10 if their demands should go unheeded. These demands included the removal of legal fetters discouraging industry and commerce, the reduction of the tax burden, the curbing of inflation, the promotion of exports, and the reestablishment of a favorable business climate. To secure these demands the Permanent Assembly also resolved to suspend the payment of taxes, social insurance, compulsory union contributions, and the like. Paradoxically, these unprecedented resolutions by Argentine business called for the violation of law and order in an effort to enforce them.

What precisely was the APEGE and how did it differ from the Peronist-oriented General Economic Confederation (CGE) which was intervened by the military following the March coup? Originally dominated by employers representing small- and medium-size industries, the CGE came into conflict with the powerful Argentine Industrial Union (UIA) consisting of the biggest employers

and business sectors linked to the multinational corporations. In 1955 the CGE suffered repression with other Peronist organizations and did not reemerge as a significant force until after General Onganía's coup in 1966. At that time it began to absorb sectors that had originally belonged to the UIA. Under Gelbard's presidency, it ceased to be an organ mainly of small and medium industry to become the organization of the big bourgeoisie. However, disconcerted by the unbusinesslike results of the Social Pact, the largest industrialists left it after Perón's death to organize the APEGE. Designed to accelerate the process of monopolistic concentration, the APEGE became the principal spokesman for halting the advance of organized labor. And, since its principal concern was to increase the margin of profitability of Argentine business, it also began to call upon the armed forces to intervene in the political process.

In response to business pressures, the military junta announced on April 2 the scrapping of the highly nationalistic and state-oriented economic program of the overthrown Peronist government. In place of state controls it favored a free market economy with special emphasis on the promotion of exports and foreign investment. The junta had previously withdrawn a restrictive Peronist law that had discouraged new foreign investment for the past three years. The new economy minister, José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, who had served in the same capacity during the military intervention of 1962–63, was preparing a new austerity plan that was expected to overshadow completely those of his Peronist predecessors. Provisions were being made to return nationalized enterprises to the private sector, including the U.S. subsidiary of International Telephone & Telegraph, the First National City Bank of New York, and the Bank of Boston. The door was to be opened to foreign oil exploration and development, the government was expected to resolve compensation disputes with Exxon and Royal Dutch Shell, tax incentives were announced for increasing the amount of land under cultivation, and price controls were eliminated in the effort to boost overall production. To fight inflation the government proposed curbs on the money supply, budget cuts, a reduction in the number of government employees, tax changes aimed at increasing public revenues and reducing the fiscal deficit, and higher prices for public utilities. The austerity plan was expected to hit hardest at organized labor, currently disoriented be-

cause of the repressive laws, imprisonment, and disappearance of union officials identified with the Peronist movement. Private estimates indicated that unemployment would at least double under the new plan.

The military coup was evidently partial to the interests of Argentina's agricultural, industrial, and financial oligarchy, but it did not portray itself as such. The generals' "Process of National Reconstruction," or "Military Process" as it came to be known, aimed at putting an end to the political misrule and economic decline dating not just from the Peronist era, but from as far back as the 1930s. Whereas in 1929 Argentina ranked sixth in the world in Gross Domestic Product, ahead of Italy and Japan as well as the Soviet Union, it had degenerated to a second-class nation when the military took over in 1976. Thus the fall of Isabel Perón supposedly signified the beginning of a new era pointing toward the recovery of Argentina's greatness.

The nation's long-term decline, according to the generals, had been accentuated by two decades of social and political chaos. Since the military coup that toppled Perón in September 1955, political instability had been aggravated by a mounting wave of subversion sparked by the Cuban Revolution. Unleashed by the 1969 *Cordobazo*, the armed formations of the political left had expanded their operations during the Peronist governments from 1973 to 1976. To complete the picture, the corruption of Peronist government and trade union officials under Isabel Perón had disgraced even the presidency.

Never before in the history of the Republic had so many grounds existed for justifying military intervention. It is understandable, therefore, that the military coup was initially welcomed by much of the population, including most of the middle sectors and the opposition Radical Party. Appalled by the social chaos and the factional violence between the Peronist left and right wings, they took the generals at their word. Thus they looked forward to a new regime of peace and stability that would concentrate on the country's economic development in the interest of all sectors of society.

Did the Military Process live up to these expectations? On the contrary, during the next eight years it set a new record in political instability and misrule, compounded by an economic setback and an all-out assault on organized labor.

Far from the political stability the generals had promised, the

coup of March 1976 was followed by two coups within the Military Process reminiscent of the coups within the misnamed "Argentine Revolution" of 1966–73. It was hardly evidence of political stability that between March 1981 and July 1982 the country had seven different military presidents—a national record.

After retiring in March 1981, General Videla was succeeded as president by General Roberto Viola. Owing to a heart attack, Viola was momentarily relieved of his responsibilities on November 21 with Major General Horacio Tomás Liendo becoming provisional President. Then came the coup on December 11, replacing Viola with Admiral Carlos Alberto Lacoste as provisional President until the coup's leader, General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri, could be sworn in officially on December 22. But six months later Galtieri was in turn removed in a coup led by General Cristino Nicolaides. Unable to agree on Galtieri's successor, the senior generals on June 19 picked General Alfredo Saint-Jean to serve as provisional President. Then on July 1 the seventh and last President, General Reynaldo Bignone, assumed office, installed unilaterally by the army over the objections of both the navy and air force.

Besides this rapid turnover in heads of state, three different military juntas governed Argentina from March 1976 to July 1982. Real power rested with the members of each junta—the heads respectively of the army, navy, and air force—rather than with the president appointed by these triumvirates. The first military junta lasted until January 1978, when General Videla and Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera became the last of its members to retire. The second junta survived an even shorter period, and the third junta dissolved in June 1982. The military court that passed sentence on the nine members of these juntas in December 1985 concluded that they were responsible for the illegal repression that ravaged the country during their brief terms in office.

What had General Videla and Admiral Massera done to move a military court to sentence each of them to life imprisonment? They were judged guilty of kidnapping, torture, and homicide in the course of carrying out their so-called dirty war against subversion. In their crusade against the ERP and Montoneros, the generals had set up a parallel and secret state apparatus designed to terrorize the civilian population into withholding aid and refuge from the guerrillas. The abuse of power by the Peronist government and

labor bureaucracies under Isabel Perón faded into insignificance compared to such atrocities.

Although members of the third military junta led by Galtieri were acquitted, they were indicted on other charges involving the abuse of power. The principal evidence of their misconduct in office was the irresponsible and unprovoked war with Great Britain over the Malvinas (April–June 1982). Besides grossly miscalculating British willingness to resist the invasion, the generals bungled the conduct of the war. The Argentine troops that invaded the islands consisted of ill-equipped and unprepared teenagers, hardly a match for the professional soldiers sent to dislodge them.

Instead of peace and stability, the Military Process brought political instability and war. Following the defeat in the Malvinas, the population mobilized in a series of major strikes and demonstrations aimed at pressuring the generals to resign. Political motives were not the only ones prompting these mass protests. The generals were also charged with violating human rights and with mismanaging the nation's economy. Socially and economically as well as politically, their vaunted process of national reconstruction had metamorphosed into a process of national destruction.

The crusade against subversion became notorious for its violation of human rights. Between March 1976 and the end of 1978, the Military Process was responsible for some 30,000 "disappearances," at least four times as many cases of torture, and another 10,000 assassinations carried out by the forces of repression. Detention without due process and extended imprisonment without formal charges or trial had become a matter of course. The clandestine prisons scattered throughout the country numbered several hundred. Thus the Military Process became synonymous with a system of state-sponsored terrorism.

Not satisfied with these violations of human rights, the military also transgressed on property rights. Dragnets for hunting subversives turned into a lucrative business. Since no holds were barred in the "dirty war," there was a license to rob as well as to kill. The property of so-called subversives became war booty to the benefit of the death squads that were euphemistically known as the army's and navy's "task forces." Thus "disappearances" became an excuse for pillage in a show of arrogance and contempt for the rule of law, which the generals had ostensibly tried to restore.

The generals' mismanagement of the economy was another grave offense. During Videla's tenure as President, the minister of economy, José Martínez de Hoz, had been in charge of shaping economic policy. Because he bore as much responsibility as anyone for the country's economic collapse, he too was indicted and tried for crimes against the Argentine people.

At the core of the government's new economic policy was an effort to overcome technological obsolescence and inefficiency by exposing the country to the rigors of international competition. The immediate result of ending subsidies to local firms, curbing protective tariffs, and deregulating exchange rates was predictable. The share of manufacturing in the Gross Domestic Product shrank from thirty-eight percent in 1974 to thirty-five percent in 1979. Steel output fell from some 4.5 million tons in 1974 to a little over 3 million in 1978, while employment in the manufacturing industries declined approximately ten percent. So disastrous were Martínez de Hoz's economic policies for Argentine industry that, in his contribution to Alain Rouquié's *Argentina Today*, economist Aldo Ferrer characterized them as a "preindustrial" strategy responsible for dismantling the nation's productive apparatus.

Native industry was not the only loser, as Ferrer points out. Most foreign enterprises, which were concentrated in manufacturing, operated with outworn equipment that until then had been highly profitable. In fact, few firms were spared, whether small or large, national or foreign. Fiat finally dissolved its operations in Argentina, and Ford Motor Company cut back on production. Nor did the massive influx of new private capital from abroad compensate for mounting disinvestment. Attracted by soaring interest rates, by the substantially lower peso depreciation rate, and by the removal of all restraints on convertibility, new capital was invested in banks and financial institutions rather than industry. Thus the economic measures of the Military Process culminated in the worst of all possible worlds: production without profits in manufacturing and profits without production in speculative financial ventures.

Among the consequences of these policies was an unprecedented growth of the nation's foreign debt. The overvalued peso signified cheap imports, overpriced exports, and a resulting adverse balance of trade. Foreign loans helped make up the difference. A series of bank failures and near-bankruptcies from manufacturers' defaults on loans led to desperate efforts by the banks to bail themselves

out by additional foreign borrowing. Thus the private foreign debt escalated from 3.1 billion dollars in December 1975 to 12.8 billion in December 1983—an increase of some four hundred percent.

The public foreign debt was even more ominous for the country's future. It grew from 4 billion dollars in 1975 to some 33.2 billion in December 1983—approximately three times the size of the private debt. The first big change occurred between December 1979 and December 1981, when a sudden unprogrammed devaluation was followed by massive capital flight and renewed foreign borrowing. During this two-year period the public foreign debt doubled from 10 billion dollars to 20 billion. And because of government borrowing to finance the war in the Malvinas, from December 1981 to December 1982 the public foreign debt rose to 28.3 billion dollars—almost as much as the previous jump in half the time.

When the military abdicated on December 11, 1983, the combined foreign debt had climbed to a staggering 46 billion dollars. Although this was not a world record, it placed Argentina third behind Brazil and Mexico. Moreover, as Ferrer noted in an article coauthored with J. Baintrum in the economic supplement to *Clarín* (30 August 1981), Argentina was the only country where a spectacular increase in the foreign debt coincided with a no less spectacular decline of industrial production.

Another major disaster was the economic impact of the Military Process on the working class. Deindustrialization meant an absolute reduction in the number of industrial workers, which fell from a little more than 1 million in March 1976 to some 800,000 four years later. During that period, Martínez de Hoz's policies drove a wedge into the working class by dramatically increasing wage differentials for highly skilled and technical workers. This maneuver implicitly aimed at breaking the back of trade union resistance, further crippled by the outlawing of the CGT in November 1979. The result was a marked reduction in labor's share of the national income—from forty-seven and one-half percent in 1975 to some thirty-two percent in 1983, after recovering from a low of twenty-nine percent in 1977. What did this amount to in lost wages? In *There Exists Another Possible Argentina*, Montonero authors Roberto C. Perdiá and Fernando Vaca Narvaja estimate the amount at some 78 billion dollars or approximately 10 billion annually.

Who were the principal beneficiaries of this process of national destruction? The agricultural, industrial, and financial oligarchy

benefited in a variety of ways: from the elimination of small and middle-size competitors; the removal of tariff walls for imports of much-needed accessories; and the diversion of public funds from subsidizing noncompetitive industries to promoting new growth industries and developing the economic infrastructure. The military also benefited. Although Martínez de Hoz's economic policies called for dismantling the state sector, its new military administrators from their well-paid positions of power vigorously opposed privatization. Subsidies to public corporations were not lifted, again owing to military opposition.

Initially the new economy minister enjoyed the generals' confidence because of his program for modernizing industry. Only when its costs became apparent did they demand a halt to falling wages and an end to the campaign against noncompetitive firms that was destroying the native economy. But the damage had already been done.

The fall of Isabel Perón turned into a national tragedy. Contrary to the generals, her removal from office did not mark the end of one era and the beginning of another. Instead, it compounded the political misrule and economic decline they had hoped originally to overcome. Although they had no special love for the oligarchy, they were duped into believing that business leadership was a guarantee of economic recovery, whereas the rule of Peronist trade union upstarts spelled disaster.

What the generals failed to comprehend was that Argentina had missed its chance of becoming another Canada or Australia, that the odds were against overcoming dependence within the structure of a world economy dominated by the multinationals and a new international division of labor. Mistaken in regarding the country's principal enemy as subversion, they turned their attention to eradicating the guerrillas instead of the oligarchy. It never occurred to them that subversion was not only a response, but also a possible solution to the country's economic ills.

Reviving the Peronist Resistance

The national tragedy known as the Military Process accentuated Argentina's decline. But Argentines increasingly refused to accept the dismantling of their Peronist Fatherland. In my interview with former Governor Ricardo Obregón Cano (March 18, 1985), who was imprisoned and awaiting trial in the former National Court of Appeals opposite the Colón theater, he distinguished four different forms of resistance to the Military Process. In the order of importance, if not of appearance, they were: first, the resistance of organized labor; second, the resistance of youth, including the principal guerrilla organizations; third, the resistance of mothers, grandmothers, and relatives of the "disappeared"; and fourth, the "opposition" of the established political parties organized in the multiparty alliance (*multipartidaria*). With the Peronist movement in shambles and the Peronist Fatherland in decomposition, the resistance was likewise disorganized. Nonetheless, the various resistances, while pursuing their separate objectives, had one aim in common: pressure the generals to abdicate.

It is true that with their political leaders and principal trade union functionaries imprisoned, the biggest unions controlled by the military, the CGT suspended and then dissolved, and their best militants "disappeared," the Peronist rank and file had to shift for themselves. But within six months of the coup they were already on the road to recovery. A new generation of trade union activists took over from the old leadership and launched what amounted to

a repeat of the Peronist resistance of 1955–73, but with one significant difference. The military's "dirty war" made any organized opposition appear subversive. In mobilizing against the government's repressive labor policies, the unions were treading on thin ice. The price they paid for resistance was the rejection of armed struggle and the virtual acceptance of the military's campaign to exterminate the guerrillas. Thus the new Peronist resistance was only a pale replica of the original.

Although slow to begin and to build momentum, the unions would eventually catch up to the armed resistance to become the principal resistance to the Military Process. Trade union resistance came in three major waves. The first, from September 1976 to November 1977, was touched off by the rash of illegal strikes launched under the direction of a newly organized "Commission of 10" representing the smaller unions. Its objectives included the end of government intervention in the trade unions and the restoration of collective bargaining along with the workers' real wages. The second wave, from November 1978 to November 1979, was initiated by an amplified "Commission of 25" led by Roberto García of the taxi-drivers union. It came in response to a provocative document read by Saúl Ubaldini of the tiny brewery workers union at a dinner attended by nearly 500 Peronist trade union representatives. Responsible for the first general strike against the military government in April 1979, the "Commission of 25" called for a restoration of democracy as well as an end to labor repression. The third wave, from November 1980 to December 1983, was led by the illegally restored CGT at the initiative of the "Commission of 25" and with Ubaldini as its general secretary. Backed by a majority of Peronist verticalists and antiverticalists united behind Deolindo Bittel, first vice-president and acting head of the Justicialist Party, the CGT launched a mounting campaign of opposition to the dictatorship that ultimately contributed to the abdication of the armed forces three years later.

This repeat of the Peronist resistance began haltingly but acquired momentum after the revival of the "CGT in the catacombs." The CGT sponsored not only a series of general strikes but also protest marches and other mass mobilizations. Once Lorenzo Miguel was freed in April 1980 after four years in prison, he joined Bittel in backing the intransigent CGT. By distancing himself from the labor bureaucrats who had collaborated with the military re-

gime Miguel rode with the tide and was subsequently able to reunify the divided labor movement. Meanwhile, organized labor continued to be split into a collaborationist and an intransigent wing, each with its own labor federation.

But with the support of Miguel and the Peronist old guard the intransigent wing ultimately prevailed. The first general strike was followed by a second in July 1981, a third in December 1982, a fourth in March 1983, and a fifth in October 1983—the last three more than ninety percent effective. The first march of protest organized by the intransigent CGT occurred in November 1981, followed by its first mass mobilization against the dictatorship in March 1982. A second labor mobilization occurred in September and another walk of protest by organized labor in March 1983. More than anything else, these strikes, marches, and mobilizations contributed to ending the Military Process.

Unlike the trade unions, a sector of the youth was already mobilized to resist the avalanche of repression. During the early years of the dictatorship youth resistance took the form mainly of armed operations or logistical and other actions in support of the guerrillas. But the armed struggle came to an end in 1979. Concurrently, the first significant split in the Montoneros occurred over the feasibility of continued armed struggle followed by the collapse of the Montoneros' long-awaited "counteroffensive" in November.

Responding to this split in February 1979, dissidents of the Peronist Youth reorganized themselves as the "Peronist Youth in the Resistance" and began publishing their first clandestine journal in August. Patricia Bullrich, leader of the dissident JP, recalled in my interview with her (April 16, 1985) that her organization had held its first underground congress on an island in the Paraná River in September 1980. But it was not prepared to confront the Military Process openly until two years later. The change came in response to the war over the Malvinas, during which both the dissident JP and the JP loyal to the Montoneros simultaneously defended the generals' war while calling upon them to abdicate. Their first major confrontation with the government occurred in April, followed by two others in June and December 1982 and a fourth in June 1983.

In March 1985 I was invited to a private showing of the Montonero film *The 16th of December*. Drawn from the Montoneros' film archives, it focused on the most important actions by the youth during 1982, culminating in their participation in the March in

Defense of Democracy on December 16. In June they had defied soldiers and police in the Plaza de Mayo by responding to repression with fire bombings and other acts of violence. Street fighting during the Military Process also erupted in 1982 in the form of wildcat neighborhood marches and demonstrations of up to 20,000, which could not be contained by the police and in which the youth played a conspicuous role.

The two JPs that led the youth resistance during 1982 were not alone. They had the active support of the Communist Youth, other youth sectors of the Marxist-Leninist left, the Intransigent Youth, and also the Radical Youth responsive to Raúl Alfonsín's intransigent current within the Radical Party. But the Peronist Youth were unquestionably the vanguard.

To these two principal forms of resistance—by trade unions and youth—was added the unusual spectacle of women between the ages of forty and sixty demonstrating against the military regime. Recognizable by their white kerchiefs, the mothers of the “disappeared” successfully defied the ban on public meetings by convening every Thursday afternoon in the Plaza de Mayo opposite the Government House to express their grief. First appearing in April 1977, they organized informally in May as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. In a show of solidarity the Mothers sought to pressure the government to investigate the thousands of cases of “disappearances,” to release those illegally detained without charges, and to bring other political prisoners to trial. With ties of blood to both the ERP and Montoneros, the Mothers were vilified by the authorities for being “bad” mothers and for playing into the hands of “subversives,” “terrorists,” and “people without a country.” But the Mothers persisted in their psychological warfare against the generals. They could not be silenced and their mere presence discredited the military regime.

The Mothers had the support of human rights groups in their call for their sons' and daughters' “reappearance.” They were backed by several organizations: the previously existing Argentine League for the Rights of Man (LADH), a Communist Party front dating from the Spanish Civil War; the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH), founded in December 1975 to protest violations of human rights during the government of Isabel Perón; the Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights (MEDH), bringing together Catholics and Protestants; and the Commission of Relatives of the

Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons that began operating in October 1976. Subsequently, the Mothers were joined by the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a spin-off group that acquired its own identity in 1978; the Center of Legal and Social Studies (CELS), founded in 1979; and the Service of Peace and Justice whose coordinator Adolfo Pérez Esquivel received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980.

Together these organizations mounted a relentless campaign of pressure on the government for information and justice concerning the victims of repression. The courts became submerged in a flood of habeas corpus and related suits and petitions against illegal privations of human freedom. Thus the resistance by the mothers, grandmothers, and relatives of the “disappeared” succeeded in exposing what the government through its systematic policy of disinformation had hoped to keep concealed—the existence of a clandestine government-sponsored network of state terrorism in Argentina.

By the end of 1977 the Mothers had compiled a list of 800 “disappearances.” The number of documented cases rose to 2,500 by May 1978 and to some 4,000 in September 1979. They were publicized in local newspapers in paid advertisements soliciting information concerning the whereabouts of the victims. The government retaliated brutally to the first published list in 1977. Twelve people—mothers, relatives, and two French nuns in a supporting role—were kidnapped and tortured in the infamous Navy Engineering School (ESMA). They have yet to reappear.

When the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) visited Argentina from September to November 1979, the Mothers organized a queue of more than 2,000 elderly women with petitions in a human wall of silence and grief extending five city blocks. They stood patiently waiting to present their cases before the investigating jurists, who had assembled in the headquarters of the Organization of American States. The sight of so many mothers and relatives of the “disappeared” came as a shock to many Argentines, who until then had discredited the extent of human rights violations in their country.

In time the Mothers became bolder. They joined the first public marches and demonstrations against the regime and soon began organizing marches of their own. After the first major human rights demonstration in October 1982, they launched the first “March of

Resistance" in December. Their marches mushroomed from an initial 5,000 participants, to 20,000, and to 100,000 in December 1982.

Compared to the three principal forms of resistance I have considered, the resistance by the suspended political parties was virtually nonexistent during the first five years of the Military Process. Although the Peronist Party made its presence felt in September 1979, when Deolindo Bittel first denounced the existence of "state terrorism" before the jurists of the CIDH, it did not give unqualified support to the resistance until November 1980. That was the occasion on which it decided to back the illegally revived CGT.

A breakthrough came in June 1981 when the Justicialist Party joined the Radical, Intransigent, and Christian Democratic parties along with Frondizi's Movement of Integration and Development in organizing a multiparty alliance. Yet the *multipartidaria* did not back the CGT's resistance until the end of the following year. Its first consequential act of resistance began with support for organized labor's third general strike on December 6. But it refused to join the massive March of Resistance on December 10. Its major contribution was to organize the largest popular demonstration to be seen during the Military Process, the 150,000-strong March in Defense of Democracy on December 16. Supported by the trade unions and other sectors of the resistance, this last show of strength pressured the military to schedule elections for the following October. Thus the resistance was on the road to achieving its goal.

Within a year of the military coup most Argentines began to have mixed feelings about its proclaimed benefits for the country. They supported the armed forces' war against subversion, but questioned the government's institutionalization of a clandestine system of "state terrorism." This ambivalence lasted until the end of 1978, when the military announced that its war had been won. At that point state terrorism suddenly lost its *raison d'être*. In November the Peronist trade unions were already clamoring for a restoration of democracy and preparing for their first general strike against the government's repressive labor policies. And by June 1981 the political parties suspended during the Military Process had openly defied it by likewise calling for the military's abdication. Paradoxically, the resistance began to build up steam only after the collapse of the Montoneros' armed counteroffensive in 1979.

The overall picture that emerges of the resistance was its lack

of focus. From 1976 to the end of 1978 the armed resistance occupied center stage. This resistance, going back to the constitutional governments before the Military Process, was then overshadowed by a revival of the trade union resistance. But in retrospect we know that the Peronist Fatherland was not to be restored. When the *multipartidaria* entered the fray in December 1982, it managed to co-opt the resistance for its own purposes, which were those of neither the Peronist movement nor the guerrillas who had launched the struggle against the Military Process. Thus, the principal beneficiaries of the eight-year resistance were those who joined it only at the last moment and risked neither life nor liberty in challenging the dictatorship.

This second Peronist resistance, like the earlier one, came to an abrupt end with the inauguration of a new constitutional government. But unlike the outcome of the earlier resistance, the new President was not a Peronist. Although the road had been cleared for a restoration of the Peronist Fatherland, a majority of Argentines chose instead to vote the Radical ticket. Thus on balance this resistance was but an episode in the restoration of a democracy, which has yet to restore the Peronist Fatherland dismantled by the military regime.

The advent of democracy left untouched not only the fundamental causes of labor unrest but also the repressive policies and apparatus of repression for crushing armed resistance during the Military Process. Although the generals received token punishments, the heroes of the resistance are also serving terms in prison. Since there is no end to the persecution of ex-guerrillas, since there is no amnesty for political prisoners, there are grievances still to be settled. It should come as no surprise that a substantial sector of the youth, backed by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, have opted to continue the resistance.

Farewell to Arms!

The popular euphoria that greeted the inauguration of Radical President Raúl Alfonsín on December 10, 1983, has since changed to pessimism about the country's political future. For a brief period following his inauguration people were convinced that the armed forces had so discredited themselves because of "state terrorism" that the Military Era—which dated from the overthrow of Radical President Hipólito Yrigoyen on September 6, 1930—was finally over. Similarly, people believed that Argentina's urban guerrillas, who had become associated with "subversive terrorism," were likewise finished.

To be sure, the military had returned to the barracks and the guerrillas had abandoned their arms. But for how long? On assuming office, Alfonsín enacted legislation aimed at discouraging once and for all both types of "terrorism." Convinced that terrorists deserved maximum punishment under the law, the President issued two decrees. Decree number 157 demanded the detention and trial of seven subversive terrorists for criminal acts during the Military Process and the last round of constitutional governments. It was followed on the same day by decree 158, indicting the nine heads of the first three military juntas for illegal homicide, detention, and torture. Those who had led the armed resistance were thus placed in the same category as those responsible for some 30,000 "disappearances" and another 10,000 deaths.

It was not enough that the guerrillas had been decimated during the armed forces' "dirty war" against subversion, or that many ex-guerrillas had publicly testified to the self-defeating character of

armed resistance. They too had to be taught a lesson. The President's commitment to the rule of law required an evenhanded response to both groups of terrorists. But did it accomplish its aim?

Within a year of President Alfonsín's inauguration the newspapers began reporting rumors of a "subversive rebirth" (*rebrote subversivo*). A series of executive kidnappings in 1984–85 supposedly resembled the modus operandi of urban guerrillas a decade earlier. The ERP had allegedly regrouped outside the city of Córdoba for the purpose of launching a new wave of kidnappings and bank assaults. The Montoneros, it was said, were preparing armed actions in retaliation for the recent extradition and imprisonment of their leader, Mario Eduardo Firmenich. There were rumors that in the province of Tucumán links had been established between Argentine guerrillas and Peruvian terrorists belonging to *Sendero Luminoso*. The Communist Party of Argentina had sent cadres to Nicaragua apparently to receive military instruction from the Sandinistas. And so on.

It was against this background that the editors of *El Porteño* decided to interview former members of Argentina's guerrilla groups in order to find out the truth. In the April 1985 issue several prominent ex-guerrillas gave their side of the story. Amanda Peralta, one of the founders of the FAP and an exile in Stockholm, said the use of violence is counterproductive except against direct military rule when there is no other option. Miguel Bonasso, former press secretary of the Montoneros and the leader of an April 1980 split in the organization, acknowledged from Mexico that the resort to violence during the government of Isabel Perón had provoked the ultra-right and militarized an otherwise political conflict. And *El Porteño* printed an extract from a 1984 interview with Enrique Gorriarán Merlo, the ERP's former commander in exile in Colombia, in which he made absolutely clear that his organization had dissolved and that there was no point in reviving it.

The interviews in *El Porteño* confirmed the reappraisal of armed struggle by two former FAP leaders, Envar El Kadri and Jorge Rulli, whose *Dialogues in Exile* appeared in August 1984. The opening chapter defends the use of violence against repression only when there are no legal channels to bring about desired changes. At the same time it censures the violence used to gain political space and to advance the political fortunes of so-called revolutionary vanguards. When one reflects on the concept of "vanguard," ex-

plains Rulli, one begins to understand that a self-appointed elite is not qualified to represent the masses. Unlike a revolutionary vanguard, Peronist political and trade union leaders do not distinguish themselves from the “organized people”—they are not an “advance patrol.”

The authors’ rejection of “illegitimate” forms of revolutionary violence is based on a distinction between violence according to the “rules of the game” and violence that is exaggerated and unnecessarily brutal. Perón’s exhortations to violence were always selective, which was not always true of the Peronist armed formations. Some of the FAP’s guerrillas, according to El Kadri, thought of themselves as “revolutionary gods” with a right to do anything, to pull the trigger against whomever they chose including close comrades who did not share the same political line. As Rulli adds, violence was not exclusively directed against the enemy. Without conjecturing that this demented use of violence provoked the armed forces to retaliate in kind, the authors believe that it contributed to the guerrillas’ reputation as delinquents.

Those who hoped to transform the Peronist movement from within by grafting upon it a Marxist-Leninist ideology looked upon Peronism as something “folkloric.” But that, Rulli observed, is precisely what it was intended to be. Peronism became something else in assimilating such “ideological contraband.” Concerned with finding a shortcut to revolution, those who joined the Peronist movement for the purpose of changing it were trying to force the march of history. But the people have their own pace. El Kadri recalled Perón’s statement that to make a revolution one has need of either blood or time, and the Peronist movement had cast its lot with time. That, responded Rulli, is the road chosen by the people, although not the shortest one.

The authors of *Dialogues in Exile* blame the excesses of the armed struggle and its continuation after May 1973 on the “ideological contraband” of Marxism-Leninism, which under the influence of Che Guevara had infiltrated the Peronist movement and seduced the Peronist Youth. This account is accurate but misleading. It omits to mention that the Cuban Revolution, as well as Perón’s directives concerning resistance, had spawned the armed struggle during the 1960s. The principal guerrilla organizations—in order of appearance, FAL (1962), FAR (1967), FAP (1968), Montoneros (1969), and ERP (1970)—each testified to a strong Guevarist influence. Al-

though some donned the protective mantle of Peronism, only the FAP could claim a Peronist origin and an irreproachable Peronist pedigree. Yet even the FAP was prone to "vanguardist" tendencies and ended, as we have seen, by acquiring a "classist" perspective at odds with Peronist doctrine.

In response to this challenge from the left, Perón too adopted a revolutionary rhetoric. In his "Message to the Youth" sent to the Congress of Peronist Youth in Montevideo in February 1967, Perón claimed for the first time that the essence of Justicialism is a social transformation tantamount to a Christian form of "national socialism." He also called for a revolution in the revolution that would displace old leaders with new ones: "a real revolution within Peronism and a revolution that must be made by the movement's youth." His rhetoric would become even more revolutionary in a subsequent "Message to the Youth" in February 1971. But while Perón was wooing the guerrillas, the guerrillas were using the Peronist label as a cover for their socialist designs. Thus the Peronist movement became a springboard to a Guevarist revolutionary war that was to escape control by the Peronist leadership.

In an effort to distance themselves from their former comrades-in-arms, El Kadri and Rulli paint a distorted picture of an armed resistance that was allegedly effective only because it was Peronist. Contrary to official Peronist accounts of the struggle against military and pseudoconstitutional governments, the resistance was not a monopoly of Peronists. Besides the Peronist resistance there was the revolutionary war, fathered not by General Perón but by followers of that other formidable Argentine, Ernesto "Che" Guevara. This parallel resistance was intermittent until the establishment of Argentina's first National Security State in 1966 and the creation of the Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) in Havana in August 1967.

The first Argentine guerrillas to organize in response to the OLAS were cadres from a 1963 split in the Communist Party of Argentina. Like the already-existing nucleus of the FAL organized in 1962, the FAR consisted of revolutionaries with a pronounced Marxist-Leninist ideology. Later, they were joined by the FAP and Montoneros representing a fusion of Peronist and Guevarist tendencies. The last to emerge was the ERP, responding to the call by OLAS for armed struggle on a continental scale. Each in its own way aspired to become the Argentine equivalent of Che Guevara's Na-

tional Liberation Army (ELN) in Bolivia, which had regrouped after Che's death in 1967 under the leadership of Inti Peredo.

Until May 1973, the Peronist resistance overshadowed the revolutionary war brewing in its midst. The revolutionary vanguards spearheaded by the FAL and FAR shared its immediate objectives and with the exception of the ERP hoped to climb aboard the Peronist bandwagon. The resistance led by the Peronist Party's Supreme Command had the advantage of being personally orchestrated and legitimized by General Perón from exile, in his capacity as the last freely elected and constitutional President of Argentina. Its self-styled revolutionary objective was limited to restoring the "Peronist Fatherland." Only when this goal was all but achieved with the abdication of the military in 1973 did the parallel revolutionary tendency begin to distance itself from its former ally.

Beginning in 1967, the Guevarist-oriented resistance has persisted in one form or another for the past two decades, from the "Argentine Revolution" through the brief Peronist interlude to the Military Process and today the democratic government of Raúl Alfonsín. While it paralleled the Peronist resistance, however, for the most part the Guevarist resistance played a subordinate role. Only after the Peronist resistance had officially concluded in May 1973 did the surviving revolutionary vanguards take the initiative in a revived resistance no longer led by Perón. As the successor to the earlier resistance, this post-Peronist resistance would have its greatest impact under democratic rather than military governments.

The rupture became public when the Peronist resistance came to a sudden halt, while the ERP openly professed its intention of continuing the armed struggle. Momentarily abandoned by the other guerrilla organizations, it had to revive the resistance alone. Following the Ezeiza massacre and the fall of President Cámpora's left-leaning government on July 13, 1973, the ERP carried out direct assaults on military installations. Its overall objective—and that of the FAP and Montoneros after they returned underground respectively in November 1973 and September 1974—was to establish a socialist society that would go beyond the Peronist Third Position. This was to be achieved by sustaining the revolutionary momentum of mass political activism initiated by the 1969 *Cordobazo*. Otherwise, the groups differed in their choice of strategies.

Unlike the Peronist resistance, this continuing resistance was uncoordinated and split into "classist" and "movementist" wings that frequently operated at cross purposes. Nor did it have the massive labor support of the Peronist resistance. Without any clearly demarcated stages in its development other than the succession of increasingly repressive governments to which it responded, it was nonetheless pledged to continuing the armed struggle until its socialist objectives could be realized. The Peronist resistance had achieved its principal objective; the Guevarist resistance had not. Thus the momentary confluence of these two parallel but independent movements should not blind us to their fundamental differences.

Although it made a mistake in deciding to take on the Argentine military, the ERP deserves credit for developing its armed potential from 1973 to 1976 and for anticipating the military conspiracy that was to make a mockery of the 1973 elections and landslide Peronist vote. As a result, the ERP was in far better shape to contest the ensuing Military Process than if it had been compelled to start over from scratch. Armed operations such as the kidnapping of Esso executive Victor Samuelson and the 14 million dollars paid for his release in March 1974 were indispensable to continuing the resistance. Similarly, the Montoneros in June 1975 kidnapped the Born brothers and held them for 60 millions dollars' ransom. Without the funds from these two operations it is doubtful whether the ERP and Montoneros could have weathered the storm that followed, until each was obliged by a series of political mistakes and military defeats to abandon armed struggle for other forms of resistance.

The ERP continued operating until May 1977 when information extracted under torture led to the discovery and dismantling of its surviving arsenals, printing presses, and hideouts. Within a single week some 200 cadres were captured, as former *erpista* María Seoane explained to the author (25 April 1985). This left the survivors disorganized and without lines of communication. From abroad the already-exiled leadership ordered all remaining cadres to abandon the country. She was among the last contingent to leave. Two years later, at the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) Sixth Congress in La Spezia, Italy (May 1979), the ERP no longer figured in the party's proceedings. It had been gently laid to rest along with the party's "militarist" and "*foquista*" errors.

It is noteworthy that Argentina's ex-guerrillas focus on their al-

leged errors during the constitutional governments from 1973 to 1976 rather than during the Military Process that followed. Yet their most successful exploits and growth occurred precisely during the earlier period. Although their worst mistake was to engage in a military struggle against state terrorism under conditions in which the workers were not prepared to follow them, with the establishment of a military government only the guerrillas were prepared to resist it. While they had performed an auxiliary role during the Peronist resistance, this time they took the initiative of opposing an unconstitutional regime. Just as the Peronist resistance had contributed to catalyzing armed struggle, the guerrillas hoped their continuing military operations would usher in a second trade union resistance—this time under their own leadership.

With the CGT banned by the military government, the Montoneros attempted to revive it on their own account—a virtually impossible task. Formally launched on August 14, 1976, the so-called CGT in the Resistance (CGT-R) was widely suspected of replacing the original labor federation with a “parallel unionism” responsive to the Montoneros. Trade unionists shunned the new organization not only as an unrealistic and empty gesture, but also as a hindrance to efforts to rebuild the shop steward committees responsive to the bread-and-butter issues that concerned most workers. Even the PRT-ERP refused to support the CGT-R on the ground that it was sectarian. Although it was responsible for the wave of sabotage in connection with the massive strikes and first significant opposition to the labor policies of the military regime in October, the organization failed to gain adherents and was quietly laid to rest by the Montoneros in 1977.

On the eve of the coup and during the Military Process the guerrillas concentrated on demoralizing and exhausting the enemy. But did their strategy have enduring results? Already incapacitated by its defeat at Monte Chingolo in December 1975, the ERP suffered the irreparable loss of its supreme commander with two other members of its leadership on July 19, 1976. After that it limped along until its most significant and spectacular military action in February 1977, the bombing of the runway at the Jorge Newberry municipal airport that barely missed the military plane carrying President Videla.

Unlike the ERP that crested in 1975, the Montoneros maintained their offensive capacity throughout 1976. Altogether in 1976 they

claimed responsibility for the death or injury of some 300 members of the police and military forces, including members of the economic elite and several dozen business managers during the industrial conflicts in October. The Montoneros singled out the police as their prime target: they killed thirteen police and wounded another ten during the two weeks that preceded the coup. They assassinated the chief of the Federal Police in June; they demolished the roof of the Federal Police Security Branch headquarters in July, killing twenty-five and wounding another sixty-six; they bombed a police bus in Rosario killing eleven policemen in September; and in November they assaulted the Provincial Police Headquarters in La Plata, killing one police officer and injuring another eleven. And they launched a similar operation in mid-December by exploding a fragmentation bomb in the Defense Ministry that killed fourteen senior military and intelligence officers and injured another thirty.

These actions led to military reprisals. Shortly before his own "disappearance" in March 1977, Rodolfo Walsh, a journalist and novelist secretly working for the Montoneros, detailed the armed forces' use of hostages in "An Open Letter of an Argentine Writer to the Military Junta." In retaliation for the July bombing of Police Security Headquarters, seventy executions were carried out; for the assassination of a general in August, thirty executions; for the October assault on the La Plata Police Headquarters, fifty-five executions; and for the death of a colonel in December, forty executions. Evidently, the punishment for subversion far outweighed the crime. Thus the original Triple A, Walsh concluded, had become displaced by another Triple A consisting of the security forces of the three branches of the armed services.

Although the Montoneros reported some 600 armed actions in 1977, their offensive capacity actually declined. There were fewer grenade and major bombing attacks and they claimed fewer than thirty-five police, military, and business victims.

In 1978 their operations declined even more. During the World Cup football match in June, the Montoneros—using portable rocket launchers for the first time—engaged in eighteen armed operations against police stations, the Superior War School, the Army Intelligence Service Headquarters, the Army High Command, and the Navy Engineering School (ESMA), which was notorious as a torture center. They also hit an important political target, the Government

House. But because their actions were successful and they managed to withdraw without losses, the events went unreported in the news media and were of no political value in mobilizing resistance to the dictatorship. In June the Montoneros also blew up the house of Treasury Secretary Juan Alemann and in August demolished the home of Rear Admiral Lambruschini. But these actions did nothing to boost the guerrillas' public image.

Then in 1979 the armed struggle collapsed with the defeat of efforts to catalyze a popular counteroffensive. Two returning teams of Montoneros were all but wiped out, their Special Infantry Troops (TEI) commanded by Montonero military secretary Raúl Yáger, and the Special Agitational Troops (TEA), commanded by Horacio Mendizábal, secretary of agitation, press, and indoctrination. Launched in September, their vaunted counteroffensive came to an inglorious end in November.

During nearly four years of military operations the Montoneros' losses had been catastrophic and there was little to show for their pains. A year after the military coup they had placed their casualties at some 2,000, and by August 1978 at a staggering 4,500 dead, detained, or "disappeared." Then, some two years later in an interview published in the Cuban magazine *Bohemia* (9 January 1981), Firmenich acknowledged the loss of 5,000 cadres, which is to say another 500 mainly during 1979—the last year of the armed resistance. Despite the sacrifice of so many militants, he reaffirmed the political value of military actions in the conviction that the Montoneros had gained "prestige" and substantially increased the number of their supporters by such operations. But that smacked of wishful thinking. The fact remained that of the initial armed force there were few survivors, not to mention replacements—perhaps some 500 who returned to Argentina after the military abdicated in December 1983.

The Montoneros' high-tech expertise with plastic explosives, multiple grenade and portable rocket launchers had done little on balance to refuel their organization. Instead of helping them to expand, it had the opposite effect of decimating them and discouraging would-be supporters. Far more rewarding to their organization were the ransoms for some sixty businessmen held in September 1976, and the effect on business operations of the slaying of several dozen managers in connection with the major industrial disputes in October. Even more important in crippling the

regime was the massive campaign of industrial sabotage launched by the Montoneros at that time. According to government reports covering the state railways, to take only one example, in 1976 some 225 locomotives were incendiary, as were 109 diesel passenger units and 206 freight cars, while the so-called "public" destroyed 69,000 seats and broke 146,000 windows in the railways' passenger cars (*Latin America Political Report*, 4 November 1977).

It is curious that the guerrillas' self-criticism is silent concerning the most important military lesson to be learned from the related resistance in Nicaragua. In response to the February 1978 popular insurrection in Monimbó, a suburb of Masaya taken over by its 20,000 inhabitants for almost a week, the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN) switched from a strategy of organizing the masses in support of the guerrillas to a strategy of organizing the guerrillas to support the armed actions of the masses. The military lesson of this first Nicaraguan equivalent of Argentina's 1969 *Cordobazo*—which became popularly known as the *Monimbazo*—was that to win, the people had to participate directly in the armed struggle. The guerrillas might successfully assault banks, kidnap prominent figures and hold them for ransom, build up their arsenals through arms thefts, and launch campaigns of economic sabotage with impunity, but such attacks were not the way to defeat a regular army. Realizing that their only hope was to rely on the armed people, the Sandinista leaders adopted a new strategy tantamount to "Cordobizing" the resistance. That was precisely what was needed in Argentina.

The Montoneros learned this lesson too late and under conditions that made it inapplicable against the military regime. Thus in 1980 came the order "*no agruparse*" ("do not operate in groups"), the organization's last trump designed to protect the survivors. With the Montoneros' decision to stop publishing its journal *Vencer*, whose last issue appeared in February 1982, also went the expectation of a political-military victory. Finally, in December 1983 came the news that they had formally disbanded, although it escaped the public's attention that the dissolution of the Montonero Party (PM) and of its mass organization, the Montonero Peronist Movement (MPM), was far from signifying that the Montoneros also had dissolved.

Founded in exile on April 20, 1977, on the basis of an agreement known as the "Treaty of Rome," the MPM had replaced the former

Authentic Peronist Movement (MPA) formally launched in September 1975. Unlike the MPA, which had given the appearance of being organizationally independent, the MPM resulted from an open merger with the Montoneros. But it was a merger that structurally subordinated the leaders of Authentic Peronism to the dictates of the reorganized Montonero Party and Montonero Army. The new mass organization sought to boost the Montoneros' popular image by including an agrarian branch and a branch of professionals, intellectuals, and artists—the latter headed by Rodolfo Puiggrós—in addition to its political, women's, trade union, and youth branches. Its objective was to provide respectability for the Montoneros by adding to their Peronist credentials. It contributed instead to undermining the political credibility of Authentic Peronists, discrediting Bidegain and Obregón Cano as well as Puiggrós.

The so-called dissolution of the Montoneros was limited to the scrapping of their organizational structures adopted in response to the Military Process: an army that survived only on paper, a party whose members were coextensive with this army and that was not a party in the electoral sense, and a reputedly mass organization without a mass membership. Those structures had outlived their purpose and were already moribund. What, then, survived? A revolutionary vanguard and its principal appendage among the still-loyal sectors of the Peronist Youth.

What the public did not know was that the Montoneros had abandoned the armed struggle in response not only to military reverses but also to internal opposition to armed encounters that were splitting the membership as well as alienating the workers. Repudiated as ordinary delinquents by Peronists loyal to the official party, the Montoneros hoped to recover political credibility by dissolving their political-military structure. But in conversations with the Montoneros at the headquarters of their new monthly *Latino América*, both the editor Ricardo Curten and his political mentor Alicia Giraudo insisted that they had abandoned the armed struggle as a matter of strategy, not of principle. And my conversations with Patricia Bullrich and ex-Montonero dissidents in the leadership of the Unified Peronist Youth (JPU) indicated that they shared a similar position.

The general impression that Argentina's guerrillas are finished is thus not supported by the evidence. Their cadres are regrouping with the clear intention of returning to armed struggle in the event

of a new military coup. What is finished is the recourse to armed operations against semiconstitutional regimes, such as the governments of Dr. Arturo Illia (1964–66) and of Isabel Perón (1974–76). In her interview published in *El Porteño* (April 1985), Amanda Peralta notes that the preparation for armed actions during President Illia's government destroyed the unity that previously bound together the Peronist Youth and the trade unions. And as Patricia Bullrich, who broke with the Montoneros in 1979, acknowledged in my interview with her (April 16, 1985), the armed struggle against Isabel Perón's government undermined the guerrillas' credibility, which was especially needed against the military dictatorship that followed.

These and other *mea culpas* have helped Argentina's ex-guerrillas to recover their confidence. A turning point came with the Nicaraguan Revolution. Second only to the influence of the Cuban Revolution, the Sandinista victory has given new life to armed resistance in Argentina as well as the rest of Latin America.

Although the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN) was profoundly indebted to the Cuban Revolution, it eventually rejected Guevara's interpretation of that experience. Exclusive reliance on a political-military vanguard to spark a mass uprising backfired in Nicaragua as elsewhere. This strategy was supplemented during the late 1960s by a Vietnamese strategy of prolonged people's war. Then, with the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, the FSLN adopted the strategy of popular resistance in that country, centered in the major cities and modeled on the 1956–73 Peronist resistance.

Only Fidel Castro's original Moncada strategy of a people in arms backed by a prolonged general strike eventually displaced these other limited and lopsided experiences. Such was the strategy, adapted and creatively developed by the FSLN, that made the difference between victory and defeat in Nicaragua. Along with the FSLN's post-insurrectional strategy based on political pluralism and a mixed economy, it has since captured the imagination of other Latin American revolutionaries.

The war against Somoza did not come to an end with his flight to Miami in July 1979. The nucleus of today's *contras*, some 8,000 members of the National Guard, had regrouped in neighboring Honduras and Guatemala preparatory to returning to Nicaragua to overthrow the Sandinista government. International solidarity with

the Nicaraguan Revolution helped upset those plans momentarily. Led by Enrique Gorriarán Merlo, a team of former ERP cadres was responsible for Somoza's assassination in Asunción, Paraguay, on 17 September 1980. That same month Argentina's public enemy number one under the Military Junta, the Montoneros' supreme commander Mario Eduardo Firmenich, expressed regret that they had not killed Somoza (*El Socialista*, Madrid, 24–30 September 1980).

The Nicaraguan response to this slaying is also worth remembering. In a *Playboy* (September 1983) interview with Sergio Ramírez, today the country's Vice-President, he was asked: "Who did it?" He replied that if the people of Nicaragua could have killed Somoza, they would have done so. Consequently, whoever killed him did so in solidarity with the Nicaraguan people. He noted that an Argentine organization had taken responsibility for the execution and that one of its members had died. Captain Santiago [Hugo Irurzún] today has a street named after him in Managua. As might have been expected, there was a giant fiesta the day Somoza was executed.

That was not the only act of solidarity of Argentina's guerrillas with the Nicaraguan Revolution. Earlier, in January 1979, some fifty or so cadres under Gorriarán's leadership had dropped out of the PRT to become an integral part of the FSLN. From their European places of exile they made their way to Costa Rica and from there joined the FSLN's forces fighting on the Southern Front. Gorriarán's group withdrew from the PRT for two principal reasons: first, the PRT's failure to provide armed support for the Nicaraguan resistance; second, its disinterest in establishing organizational ties with the Montoneros and kindred parties in a broad front similar to the FSLN. Already, the lessons of the Nicaraguan resistance were taking effect—even before victory came six months later.

The Montoneros, who provided material assistance to the resistance, likewise benefited from its example. In 1979 they made a major financial contribution to the FSLN. This was followed by the "Adriana Haidar" Medical Brigade sent to treat wounded Sandinistas in the region of Masaya. In mid-1979 Firmenich traveled to Managua where he joined Fernando Vaca Narvaja, another member of the Montonero National Directorate, to offer further support to the Sandinistas. With the defeat of Somoza the Argentine Junta lost its most important ally in Central America to which it had sent

supplies during the civil war. Thus the fate of the Argentine resistance was linked to that of the FSLN.

What did Argentine revolutionaries learn from the Nicaraguan Revolution? How did they apply its lessons to their own country?

According to the PRT, the most important lesson was the unity of the Marxist-Leninist left. Under the influence of Che Guevara's *Message to the Tricontinental* (April 1967), the PRT had already established a working relationship with other Guevarist movements in the Southern Cone. Together they had constituted a Revolutionary Coordinating Junta (JCR) during the early 1970s. Later, in Stockholm following the military coups in Uruguay and Chile in 1973, they founded the joint monthly *Combate* that continues to provide coverage for revolutionary movements throughout Latin America. Like the PRT, the FSLN considered Guevara to be its guiding spirit. Thus the two revolutionary movements shared an ideological affinity.

A full account of the PRT's indebtedness to the FSLN is given in an extensive interview with the PRT's new post-1979 leadership published in *Combate* (January–February 1985). It is worth noting that this new leadership includes Che's brother Roberto Guevara, along with Julio and Amilcar Santucho, brothers of the PRT's founder Roberto Mario Santucho. The latter was slain after being betrayed and tracked down by the armed forces in July 1976. In an interview with Che's youngest brother, Juan Martín, I learned that he too had belonged to the PRT but, unlike Roberto, had left it after spending eight years in jail from 1975 to 1983.

The *Combate* interview raised two fundamental questions concerning the Nicaraguan Revolution: How did the Sandinista final insurrection influence the conclusions of the PRT's Sixth Congress in May 1979? And what significance did the PRT attribute to the Sandinista victory in July?

Only after the victorious revolution did the PRT initiate contacts with the FSLN, which is to say that it failed to provide active support for the Sandinistas during the armed struggle. This was judged to be a grave error. Although subsequently the PRT sent several of its cadres to aid in the tasks of reconstruction, its help to the Sandinistas did not match that of Gorriarán's splinter group that participated in the actual fighting.

The Nicaraguan Revolution was acknowledged to have supreme importance for revolutionary struggles in Latin America. In Nic-

aragua, problems were resolved for which the PRT admittedly had no solution. The *Combate* interview credited the FSLN with overcoming the PRT's deficiencies and correcting its mistakes. The Sandinistas were able to do so because they were familiar with the PRT's past errors and had learned how to avoid them.

In view of the PRT's international outlook and solidarity with other revolutionary movements, its failure to support the armed struggle in Nicaragua is something of an anomaly. As the *Combate* interview brings out, the JCR lost its bearings when it began serving the sectarian interests of the initial group in the Southern Cone, instead of including revolutionary organizations elsewhere. Although its fundamental objective was the support and interchange of different revolutionary experiences, the defeat of those who integrated the Junta contributed to weakening it and modifying its original purpose. Instead of supporting the unity of the revolutionary camp, the JCR became a pole of struggle against other conceptions of how to make a revolution. The experience of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the interview noted, helped to restore the Junta's bearings.

The failure to include the FSLN in the revolutionary Junta was especially regrettable, the interview concluded, because of the ideological affinity of the Sandinista leadership with the generation of the "sons of Che." Those favorite sons included Mario Roberto Santucho of the PRT, the founder of the Tupamaros Raúl Sendic, the MIR's founder Miguel Enríquez, the ELN's Inti Peredo, and the FSLN's Carlos Fonseca—leaders of some of the most important armed struggles in the hemisphere.

In the same issue of *Combate* there is another tribute to the importance of the Nicaraguan Revolution for Argentina. The section entitled "*Combate* Understands" claims that the unity of revolutionaries is a key to victory in the people's struggles, as the example of Nicaragua attests. But rather than being imposed by leaders from on top, unity must be forged from below among groups with differing convictions and ideologies.

In another self-criticism entitled "We Are Learning from Our Mistakes" (*El Combatiente*, August 1985), the PRT effectively repudiated all its actions against the armed forces during the constitutional governments from May 1973 to March 1976. The operations against the military installations of Sanidad (September 1973), Azul (January 1974), Catamarca and Villa María (August 1974), and Monte

Chingolo (December 1975) were faulted as politically incorrect uses of violence, because they rushed ahead instead of keeping abreast of the political development of the masses. Armed struggle was not repudiated in principle, but only its faulty timing and circumstances.

On the anniversary of Che's death, a commemorative issue of the PRT's organ *El Combatiente* (October 1985) further testified to the role of the Nicaraguan Revolution as a guide to liberation struggles. To the quietism of the Communist parties in Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s, the editors noted, Guevara responded that fruit does not ripen in time if the gardener does not water it with his sweat and sometimes with his blood. It is well known that Che highlighted the role of subjective factors during the seizure of power and the construction of the revolutionary party. The triumph of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua is a major confirmation of this approach.

The PRT's recommended corrective to its mistakes was to link up with the Communist Party of Argentina, but from a position of independence. In a PRT document entitled "Our International Line" (May 1984), Cuba and Nicaragua are cited as the only countries to have launched successful mass uprisings in Latin America, in each case from outside the established Communist parties constituting the International Communist Movement. The PRT plans to follow the examples of Fidel Castro's July 26th Movement that later fused with the pro-Moscow party of Cuba, and of the FSLN that works closely with Nicaragua's pro-Soviet party.

Once a remorseless critic of the Argentine CP, the PRT today accepts the conclusions of the Conference of Communist Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Havana in 1975. The Conference favored armed struggle and the convergence of the organizations inside and outside the Communist Movement toward a common revolutionary objective. It first bore fruit in the Sandinista Revolution of 1979.

Unlike the main body of the PRT, Gorriarán's group did not wait until after the FSLN's victory to benefit from these lessons. Nor were these the only lessons it assimilated. In an interview in Cali, Colombia, published under the title *Democracy and Liberation* (Buenos Aires, 1985), Gorriarán was asked what might be learned from the Nicaraguan Revolution. In reply, he stressed the international solidarity it received from fighting contingents from other Latin American countries and Europe. He also praised the massive

popular intervention in the solution of complex economic and social problems after victory. But he singled out two lessons as especially important: first, the participation of Christians and non-Marxist sectors both during and after the struggle against Somoza; second, the political pluralism that permitted the existence of opposition parties and encouraged a productive system based on a mixed economy—a strategy of the lowest common denominator.

A fundamental error of the PRT-ERP, Gorriarán argued, was the absence of the kind of political program that made possible the Sandinista victory. A program was needed to unite vast sectors of the population in support of armed struggle, while also promising basic reforms. Such a program would nationalize those enterprises and interests considered to be a risk to the country's independence. However, following the Nicaraguan example it would leave the bulk of agricultural and industrial production in private hands. The obvious advantage of this mode of rearranging the economy is that it helps to keep the people's camp intact. It prevents the country from becoming isolated internationally and it discourages foreign intervention aimed at propping up reactionary military regimes.

The PRT-ERP, Gorriarán conceded, made a number of other sectarian mistakes. While its line was "correct" during the Peronist resistance, he believes it should have supported Perón's return to power in 1973. The revolutionary tendency within Peronism needed all the support it could get in order to neutralize the fascist plans of the Peronist right wing. Because the constitutional government was resented by elements in the armed forces, the resort to armed operations from May 25, 1973, to March 24, 1976, was tantamount to playing into the hands of the enemy.

Going beyond the PRT's self-criticism, Gorriarán questioned the paternalism in the ERP's execution of unpopular personages and the ransoms taken in food and distributed in poor neighborhoods—none of which tended to elicit mass support. That was not the way to build a working relationship between the people and the guerrillas. The workers should have been organized to defend themselves instead of having to rely on the guerrillas to do everything for them.

Although a self-appointed vanguard, the PRT misperceived the mood of Argentine workers. It grossly underestimated, according to Gorriarán, the continuing appeal of the Peronist mystique. Its effort to incite a rupture between the mass of workers and the

Peronist trade union and political bureaucracies was doomed from the start. In March 1976 the PRT overestimated the popular will to resist the military coup and persisted in its offensive strategy under conditions in which the workers were on the defensive. Armed operations against the military should have been delayed until the workers were ready to act in unison with the vanguard. That too was a lesson of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

The PRT's narrowly "classist" perspective, Gorriarán believed, interfered with the creation of a broad front including intellectuals and other social sectors besides the workers. To compound its isolation from the Peronist masses, the PRT lacked a program of political pluralism and of a mixed economy adapted to the transitional period between the return to constitutional government and the establishment of socialism. The FSLN had not been guilty of that kind of sectarianism.

Back in Argentina during the pre-electoral struggle of 1983, Gorriarán's followers tried to chart a new course outside the two major political parties. Today's Radical President Raúl Alfonsín had launched the idea of a new populist alternative, but it received scant support from the party's established leaders. Laid to rest by the Radical Party (UCR), it was picked up by the country's third-ranking Intransigent Party (PI). Christened the "Third Historical Movement," it is a potential successor to the first and second mass political movements in Argentina: the original Radical Civic Union under Argentina's first populist *caudillo*, Hipólito Yrigoyen, and the subsequent populist movement shaped by Juan Domingo Perón.

Gorriarán seized the opportunity of making common cause with the Intransigent Party by urging his followers to adopt a policy of "entrism" or infiltration into the Intransigent Youth (JI). The effectiveness of this strategy may be judged from the fact that within two years the PI's youth had become the spearhead of a third populist alternative in Argentina. The JI had been virtually nonexistent before reorganizing in 1983; the former cadres of the PRT-ERP helped to revive and transform it into today's thriving youth organization.

The documents from the JI's Fourth National Congress, *Guidelines for Liberation* (April 1985), testify to the influence of the ERP's former cadres. The opening section, "Popular Unity for Liberation," declares that the revolutionary transformation of society cannot be the work of only one class or party, but requires the

unity of all popular sectors with recognition of the vanguard role of the workers. The following section, "The Third Historical Movement," criticizes the Radical Party for ignoring workers' interests and blames Peronism for losing the backing of intermediate strata. Concerned with overcoming these mistakes, the projected third popular movement would not be anyone's exclusive patrimony.

In *Democracy and Liberation*, Gorriarán sketched the rationale for this new political line. Asked about the feasibility of rebuilding the revolutionary organizations of the previous decade, he replied that Argentina is becoming oriented toward something new to be found neither in the traditional parties nor in the political-military vanguards of the left. The future points toward a synthesis of the progressive wings of the traditional parties, the surviving remnants of the revolutionary movement, the mass organizations that have emerged during the last few years, and the new generation disillusioned with both Radicals and Peronists.

In the past, Gorriarán noted, a too-narrow identification with a particular party interfered with unity. Following the example of the FSLN, he called for a new kind of revolutionary organization that, while allowing its members to maintain their previous political identity, also permits them to unite. Thus a Peronist, a Socialist, or a Christian would not have to renounce that identity to join the revolutionary front.

Gorriarán's approach is supported by a monthly that has adopted a similar political line and also has some of his people on its staff. *Entre Todos* is the most striking example of the effort to chart a new course in the tradition of the two original populist movements. Committed to unity as the principal lesson of the Nicaraguan Revolution, it shares Gorriarán's plan to bring together the principal forces for change within the various parties. It calls itself a journal for all those who cherish liberation and are willing to fight for it: Peronists, Radicals, Intransigents, Christians, Socialists, Communists, and Independents.

We turn next to the Montoneros, the sole surviving revolutionary vanguard in Argentina that can boast of being Guevarist in orientation and also part of the Peronist movement. In "Montonero Criticism and Self-Criticism," published in a double issue of *Vencer* (September–December 1977), the Montoneros claimed to have overcome the contradictions between the Guevarist and Peronist revolutionary traditions in Argentina. Their principal contribution,

they explained, was the synthesis of a Guevarist vanguard of cadres with the Peronist mass organizations.

It was no easy matter to maintain what the Montoneros believed was the proper balance. Until 1974 they had leaned too heavily on the Peronist or movementist pole of their synthesis. Then, after returning underground to dispute Isabel Perón's leadership of the Peronist movement, they had swung too far toward the classist or Guevarist pole. It was a mistake to conclude that Peronism had become exhausted as a revolutionary tendency, just as it had been a mistake earlier to conceive of Peronism as a form of socialism. And it was mistake to reject Peronism for an unequivocally Guevarist or socialist alternative. As the self-appraisal recognized, in overcoming their movementist or opportunist errors they had unwittingly fallen into classism or sectarianism. Such was the substance of Montonero self-criticism before the Sandinista victory of July 1979.

The Nicaraguan Revolution made the Montoneros aware that they were still prone to sectarian failings. What remained to be overcome was their isolation from the rest of the Peronist movement. The immediate effect of the Sandinista final insurrection was to reinforce the Montoneros' determination to spark a popular counteroffensive against the military regime. But lack of political support convinced them to suspend armed actions in 1980 and to reintegrate themselves into the Peronist mainstream. That was one way, self-consciously or otherwise, they began to apply the lessons of the Nicaraguan experience.

Later, in February 1985, the Montoneros publicly acknowledged other mistakes going back to September 1974. Originally published in the newspaper *La Voz*, the Montoneros' self-criticism was reprinted in the April 1985 issue of *El Porteño* under the title "Once Again, 'The International Terrorist Conspiracy.'" This piece written by Firmenich in prison presents a critique of Montonero sectarianism that goes far beyond the 1977 appraisal.

It was a strategic error, says Firmenich, to have engaged in armed actions against the regime of Isabel Perón. These did not serve the purpose of self-defense, and the Montoneros' legal fronts were declared illegal in retaliation. The Peronist Youth was driven underground and the Authentic Peronist Party banned. As a result, the Montoneros lost "political space."

In my interview with Firmenich (March 14, 1985) he listed sev-

eral other mistakes. For example, the return to clandestinity in September 1974 did not elicit the mass support the Montoneros expected. It isolated them from the Peronist mainstream, they became branded as "subversive," and their reputation for "terrorism" interfered with later efforts to mobilize the people against the Military Process. In short, they should have delayed their return to arms until the coup of March 1976, when the masses might have been disposed to follow them.

Among the principal lessons of the Nicaraguan Revolution was the need for a broad political alliance in support of armed resistance. When Montonero exiles began streaming back to Buenos Aires toward the end of 1983, their first step toward organizing a broad front was to resurrect the Authentic Peronist Party. In November, Firmenich arrived in Brazil preparatory to returning to Argentina. On December 20, Oscar Bidegain and Ricardo Obregón, both former governors linked to the Montoneros, returned and released a document calling for the party's legalization. They were not well received. Obregón was arrested on arrival and subsequently tried and sentenced to ten years in prison for "subversive terrorism." Bidegain managed to elude detention and flee the country.

On learning of the Montonero plan to relaunch the Authentic Party, other revolutionary Peronists rejected it. Nilda Garré, former congresswoman and a leading figure of the Peronist left, denounced it as divisive. In an interview in *El Porteño* (May 1984), she claimed that the plan presupposed that the Justicialist Party had exhausted itself as an electoral instrument of the masses—a conclusion with which she profoundly disagreed. The struggle of left-wing Peronists must be made from within the established movement that still has the support of the people, she argued, not in some no man's land outside it. Revolutionary Peronists had divided over this issue when the Authentic Party was founded in March 1975, and there was no call to split again over the same question.

The Montoneros did not persist. They had the political sense to shelve their project in favor of a Third Historical Movement—an alliance with other sectors of the left outside the Justicialist Party. In this about-face they were evidently influenced by the Nicaraguan example.

In February 1984 Firmenich was arrested in Rio de Janeiro at the request of the Argentine government. Imprisoned in Brazil until his extradition in October 1984, he hammered out a new

strategy with a Montonero delegation from Argentina. In an internal document, *To the Comrades of Montonero Peronism and Revolutionary Peronism* (1984), the Montoneros who conferred with Firmenich in prison called for a realignment with dissidents from other political parties. These included the Radical Youth disillusioned with their party's failure to live up to its campaign promises. The Montoneros were also urged to seek allies in the Intransigent Party, the Humanism and Liberation current within Christian Democracy, and the traditional Marxist-Leninist left. The document declared that the Montoneros no longer believe in sticking to the guidelines of General Perón.

In proposing this alternative, the Montoneros were spurred by fears of becoming politically irrelevant within a Peronist movement that had lost its revolutionary élan. Hence their concern to develop a "third political space" outside the decadent Peronism of defeat. In view of Alfonsín's failure to carry through on his promise to build a Third Historical Movement, for which he lacked support from other Radical leaders, the Montoneros decided to make that initiative their own.

The scenario of a Third Historical Movement first became news in connection with Alfonsín's Movement of Renewal and Change during his campaign for the presidency in 1983. Certainly, it did not have the same significance for him that it currently has for Argentina's ex-guerrillas who have adopted the concept. Nor did it originate with Alfonsín. As Firmenich noted in my interview with him, it dates back to the military regime of General Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–70) when the Peronist trade unions chose to collaborate with the dictatorship. In the search for an alternative means of mobilizing support for armed struggle, the then Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) arrived at the concept of a "Third Historical Movement." Later, the original concept was abandoned in view of the rejuvenation of the Peronist movement and the FAR's merger with the Montoneros in October 1973.

The point is that this scenario has a political-military origin and significance that has escaped most of the country's political commentators. Both as initially formulated and as currently understood by the Montoneros and ex-members of the ERP, it is part of a long-range political strategy for mobilizing the masses toward a final showdown with the oligarchy, a showdown that is expected to take a violent form—as the Nicaraguan experience demonstrates.

The Montoneros can no longer rely on the Peronist movement to bring about a uniquely Argentine variant of socialism. The popular fervor and revolutionary surge of the masses that supported this movement are gone, and the political and labor bureaucracies are no longer interested in implementing it. That is why the Montoneros have turned elsewhere for support.

The success of a socialist model for Argentina, according to the last issue of *Vencer* (January–February 1982), depends on the organization of a national front of all patriotic sectors opposed to the oligarchy and to imperialism. Within such a front the Montoneros and their close allies would strive for a hegemonic position. But to lead a national front they would have to downplay their socialist objectives, which have been set aside in favor of the Montoneros' pre-1976 program of political pluralism and a mixed economy. That this happened in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution further indicates that the Montoneros, like Gorriarán and his followers, have responded to its influence.

The Montoneros' indebtedness to the Nicaraguan Revolution should not be taken lightly. But unlike the PRT and its dissidents, they have been reluctant to acknowledge its influence. Having emerged as an offshoot of the Catholic nationalist and overtly fascist Tacuara, they still cannot readily admit to any foreign guidelines.

In my prison interview with Firmenich, I asked about the significance of the Nicaraguan Revolution for the Argentine resistance. He responded that the Montoneros had contacts with the FSLN going back to the late 1960s, though there was little mutual influence. As early as 1973 they had developed a program in favor of political pluralism and a mixed economy, which they evidently did not learn from the FSLN. Moreover, their insurrectional strategy had a Peronist origin that likewise antedated the strategy applied in Nicaragua.

Firmenich failed to explain why the Montoneros abandoned their program of political pluralism and a mixed economy following the military coup, reviving it only in the wake of the Sandinista victory, or why they waited until 1982 before abandoning their militarist errors, again following the example set by the Sandinistas. The timing of these fundamental shifts in strategy constitutes circumstantial evidence that the Nicaraguan experience effectively shaped the decisions of the Montonero leadership.

A dissident group split from the Montoneros in February 1979

(a second schism occurred in April 1980), only a month after the corresponding split in the PRT-ERP. At issue was the Montoneros' transformation into an almost exclusively armed vanguard isolated from the mass struggle and the trade union resistance inside Argentina. Led by the charismatic Rodolfo Galimberti, a former Peronist Youth leader, the break with the Montoneros coincided with the rapid advance of the Nicaraguan resistance. While the Sandinistas were accumulating forces, mobilizing the population, and moving from one strategic victory to the next, the Montoneros had been routed militarily and repudiated by the popular sectors.

Galimberti aimed to re-establish the mass connections the Peronist Youth had enjoyed from 1972 to 1974. To do so required breaking with the Montoneros and assuming a new political identity. Known as "Peronism in the Resistance," Galimberti's approach gave up the pretense of leading the struggle against the Military Process for the modest role of participating in it on an equal footing with everybody else.

Galimberti first spelled out his reasons in an "Open Letter" to the membership (February 22, 1979). Cosigned by the poet and essayist Juan Gelman, it called attention to earlier sectarian errors never wholly corrected by the leaders. Among these were the overreliance on military tactics, an elitist conception of a party of cadres without roots in the masses, the insistence on preserving the hegemony of the Montonero Army over the Montonero Peronist Movement, the distrust of anybody in the people's camp who was not under the Montoneros' control, the lack of internal democracy, and an "irresponsible triumphalism" worthy only of fools.

The timing of this criticism coincided not only with the Montoneros' projected return to Argentina to launch their anticipated counteroffensive, but also with the Sandinistas' final offensive against Somoza. It was not that Galimberti was opposed in principle to armed struggle; the point of his criticism was to coordinate the armed resistance with trade union mobilizations after the manner of the Peronist struggles of 1956–73 and the more recent example of Nicaragua.

The "Open Letter" was followed in June by the most trenchant criticism ever made of the Montoneros—from a position that shared their basic objectives. Known as the "Document of the Rupture," signed by Galimberti, Gelman, and seven other ex-Montoneros, it

corresponds to Gorriarán's criticism of the PRT-ERP in *Democracy and Liberation*.

To the earlier criticisms it added the Montoneros' mistaken assessment of the resistance. Led by the industrial working class, the principal struggle had taken the form not of armed actions but of strikes, work stoppages, slowdowns, and sabotage in a course parallel to and independent of the Montoneros. Instead of supporting the trade unions, the armed resistance from 1976 onwards had provoked and accentuated military repression against the workers. The Montoneros' faulty perceptions of what was happening in Argentina were responsible for the strategic errors already considered. In the vain presumption that they were the center of gravity of the revolutionary process, the Montoneros completely discredited themselves and were looked upon with hostility by workers and other sectors of the Peronist movement. Surely, that was not the way to build a patriotic front of liberation.

In *Peronist Revolution* (1983), Galimberti further criticized the Montoneros for adopting a "trans-Peronist plan" and strategy of "pseudo-revolutionary entrism." The Montoneros behaved as if Peronism were revolutionary solely because of their presence within it. On the contrary, maintained Galimberti, Peronism is revolutionary because it is a national movement that includes the workers and represents their interests. The trans-Peronist plan of the Montoneros would rupture that alliance. Unduly influenced by the revolutionary experiences of Cuba and Nicaragua, he claimed, the Montoneros had tried to graft them onto a reluctant working class. We respect the experiences of other peoples searching for their liberation, Galimberti concluded, but we ask that the Argentine people be allowed to find their own path.

Tantamount to a complete repudiation of the Guevarist "classist" heritage, this statement superficially suggests that Galimberti and his followers had little to learn from the Nicaraguan Revolution. That this is not the case was brought out in an April 12, 1985, interview with Daniel Llano, press and propaganda secretary of the Unified Peronist Youth (JPU)—the new Peronist Youth umbrella organization and successor to the youth branch of Galimberti's Peronism in the Resistance. I asked Llano the same question I had put to Firmenich: "What is the significance of the Nicaraguan Revolution for Argentine revolutionaries today?" The Nicaraguan experience teaches, he responded, that the only kind of alliance that

can succeed is one in which the revolutionary forces are backed and fronted by political moderates.

Llano did not assimilate that lesson from reading leftist literature. He spent several years in Nicaragua in the Miskito region near the Honduran border working for the Sandinista government in tasks of reconstruction.

Argentine revolutionaries must follow a different path from that in Nicaragua, Llano insisted, because of different national circumstances, traditions, and so forth. But they can still learn important lessons from kindred movements of national liberation, especially successful ones like the Nicaraguan. Although the Montoneros concur that an effective alliance must include elements from the established political parties, they insist on dominating it. That, according to Llano, has led to their repudiation by the political center. As a result, the Montoneros are being pushed into an alliance with Marxist-Leninist parties. But Llano concluded, "A united front with the Marxist-Leninist left is branded from the start and is bound to fail."

An alliance with the political center has its dangers. In order to recover the political space lost by the Peronist Youth since going underground in September 1974, Galimberti directed his efforts at reaching a rapprochement with the Peronist mainstream. But by then there was more than one central current.

Like Alfonsín's Movement of Renewal and Change, the Justicialist Party had developed a reform tendency aimed at renovating and democratizing both the party and the country. The "renovators" represent a new social democratic orthodoxy that questions the corporativism of the trade union bosses in the CGT and "62 Organizations." Going back to the anti-verticalists of 1975-76, who were disputing Isabel Perón's leadership of both the party and the government, the renovators organized their own party congress in February 1985 that effectively split the Peronist movement.

Because the anti-verticalist wing of Peronism welcomed Galimberti's followers, they have cast their lot with the renovators. The latter have not shown the same generosity toward the Montoneros. A political amnesty for those still in exile, awaiting trial, or sentenced to prison for "subversive terrorism" does not figure in the renovators' plans. The expectation that the reformers would open their ranks to the Montoneros has turned out to be illusory. Although the Montoneros have become publicly identified with ef-

forts to democratize the Peronist movement, the reformers want no part of them.

Galimberti's approach has concentrated on building a Nicaraguan-type alliance with the renovators. But in doing so it is misinterpreting the Nicaraguan experience. At least the Montoneros have learned not to take a back seat in a populist coalition dominated by the political center. Today, the Montoneros are reasserting their ideological independence in a move that is bringing them closer to the Intransigent Party. If there is any hope for revolutionary populism in Argentina, it lies in such an alliance and not with the renovators.

The Nicaraguan Revolution marked a threshold not only for the PRT, Montoneros, and ex-Montoneros who suspended their armed resistance, but also for other revolutionary organizations in the hemisphere that moved in the opposite direction, preparing for and engaging in armed struggle. Under the influence of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the principal revolutionary vanguards in El Salvador joined together in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in 1980. A year later the Chilean Communist Party, which had previously rejected armed struggle as a strategy for overthrowing the Military Junta, announced a change in its political line. Their examples have contributed to the rebirth of Argentina's revolutionary vanguards.

Since 1983 the Chilean Communist Party has developed its own guerrilla forces. The Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR) has been responsible for several kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations. Unlike the Montoneros' resort to the same tactics, these actions have added to the FPMR's strength and popularity. The attack on General Augusto Pinochet's six-car motorcade in September 1986 with bazookas and automatic weapons missed the main target, but took the lives of five Pinochet guards and wounded eleven others in an operation that recalled the successful 1980 attempt on Somoza. I mention the Salvadoran and Chilean guerrillas because of the big boost given by them, along with the Sandinistas, to the recovery of their revolutionary counterparts in Argentina.

With these models before them, independent Marxist-Leninist and Guevarist-oriented vanguards like the PRT, ex-members of the ERP, and Montoneros must either follow suit or lose political credibility as an alternative to social democratic and reformist tenden-

cies. This is the background of their efforts to chart a new political course intended to prepare the ground for future armed confrontations.

The Nicaraguan Revolution and its impact on the Latin American left have not gone unnoticed by Argentina's armed forces. As former allies of the Somoza regime, the generals have responded with apprehension to what they believe to be a new wave of "subversion." The September 1986 ambush of General Pinochet's motorcade confirmed their fears. Their principal concern is that Alfonsín's new government will permit the flowering of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which they associate with armed resistance.

Like the ex-guerrillas, the armed forces have no immediate plans for interfering in the political process. Traumatized and discredited by their defeat in the Malvinas, the generals have passively accepted the return of the Radicals to power. In the past, civilian politicians—including members of Alfonsín's party—were responsible for tempting the generals to intervene. But with memories of the recent military repression still fresh, the armed forces do not dare to act on their own. Besides, the economy is in ruins, and there would be no advantage in vainly trying to restore it.

Even so, some generals have spoken out. Perhaps the most notorious is General Ramón J. Camps, who still brags of having "disappeared" some 5,000 subversives and their sympathizers during his two and one-half years as chief of the Federal Police in the province of Buenos Aires. In an interview by Santiago Aroca published in *La Semana* (29 December 1983), Camps expressed his conviction that the military will intervene again. Although subversion was defeated militarily, he observed, the war against it was lost in the political arena. Claiming that subversion has started to spread, he said the military would know how to deal with it.

When Robert Cox, the former editor of the prestigious *Buenos Aires Herald*, returned in 1984, he expected to find a country boldly overcoming the effects of fifty years of open and concealed military rule. Instead, he discovered that democracy had no miracle cures and had yet to offer a way out of the economic impasse. Worse still, he became convinced that the generals expected to return to power and that the people would again welcome them as liberators. Interviewed by Cox, General Camps had the temerity to declare,

"On returning to power, my hand will not tremble when I sign the order of execution of Raúl Alfonsín!" (*La Gaceta de Hoy*, 25 April 1985).

For the generals of the Military Process the prospect of a continuing resistance, albeit unarmed, is cause for apprehension. In no mood to tolerate the resurgence and regrouping of the Montoneros-JP, PRT, and ex-members of the ERP, they were understandably alarmed by the continuing intransigence of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo calling for the reappearance of the "disappeared," for the indictment of those guilty of "genocide," and for the release of "political prisoners." Backed by the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and by the Commission of Relatives of the Disappeared and Detained, the Mothers had denounced the Radical government for "continuism" with the repressive policies of the Military Process. A thorn in the side of the new government, they had no intention of surrendering their recently acquired political influence. Since repression continues, they reasoned, so must the resistance.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have managed to maintain their momentum built up during the Military Process. They have been aided by the surviving revolutionary vanguards, today the Mothers' principal allies. The first "March of Resistance" was followed by two others, then by a fourth one on December 20, 1984. Within a year of the constitutional government the following grievances had yet to be resolved: "Trial and punishment of the guilty. Return of the 'disappeared.' Freedom for political prisoners. Restitution of children to their legitimate families" (*Prensa Obrera*, 18 December 1984). As the Mothers proclaimed in an editorial in their monthly *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (December 1985), "The resistance continues!"

The Mothers' grievances met with immediate support from the Montoneros, who had been campaigning for the release of Mario Eduardo Firmenich and former governor Ricardo Obregón Cano along with some fifteen other imprisoned comrades. Certainly, the Montoneros had no intention of suspending their unarmed resistance. Thus in an article submitted before the March of Resistance on December 20, which was followed by the March in Defense of Democracy the next day, Firmenich wrote: "The first point to clarify is that resistance and the defense of democracy are inseparable. Without resistance . . . democracy would not have been restored.

And without resistance it cannot be defended on the likely day that the oligarchical minority backs another gorilla coup" (*La Voz*, 23 December 1984).

The PRT also added its voice to the chorus in support of an ongoing resistance. Once again, it faced the problem of preserving the momentum of labor activism and mass mobilizations achieved in 1982, the decisive year of the resistance. While real wages continued to deteriorate and labor unrest to increase, there had also been a revival of right-wing terrorism. This led the government to decree a 60-day state of siege in October 1985. But conditions continued to worsen with a sharpening of both labor mobilizations and government harassment. Hence the editorial in *El Combatiente* (September 1986): "Advance the popular resistance! . . . The increasing attacks [on the workers] demonstrate that a democracy that does not strengthen itself economically must inevitably fall back on social and political repression."

How long will the generals put up with these affronts?

The generals responsible for violations of human rights have supposedly been punished by a civilian court. But there was no victorious army to subdue or discipline them. What is the significance, one may ask, of trying the military's top brass for war crimes, when the generals refuse to pass judgment on themselves? Certainly, the December 1985 verdicts were extraordinarily lenient. Except for General Jorge Rafael Videla and Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera who received life imprisonment, the remaining heads of the first three military juntas received only token sentences. And four were actually acquitted!

What is the meaning of punishment, when the circumstances of imprisonment are those of a luxury resort? Many Argentines are outraged that the convicted generals in the military prison of Magdalena are confined not to cells but to pleasant "bungalows" equipped with a living room, four bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, and garden. Two servants have been assigned to each so-called "prisoner" to clean, cook, and serve steak and wine on request. With private telephone, television, and freedom to receive guests, the generals are still in a position to enjoy the good life. That is hardly the way to discourage future military coups.

That the generals will again intervene in the political process is

a conclusion shared by many Argentines. Consequently, the survivors of Argentina's revolutionary vanguards are preparing for that eventuality. Today, their principal concern is to form alliances and to recover political credibility for the showdown they expect. For them, there can be no "farewell to arms."

Which National Plan?

The heroes of the resistance, to whom this book is dedicated, risked their lives not just to defend the constitution and throw out the military usurpers but also to pave the way for a socialist Argentina. But their plan of a national revolution was not the only one of its kind. Within the same political arena they faced two other major contestants: the Vandorist labor bureaucracy and the social democratic “renovators” of Peronism.

Perón’s aim was to defuse communism by stealing its thunder. His scheme of an anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical revolution based on political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice would have been a corporativist antidote to communist subversion. Akin to Italian fascism and German national socialism, it met with only partial success. As a result, the foreign-based multinationals and the local oligarchy in Argentina are today stronger than ever.

The erosion of political sovereignty was coupled with the loss of economic independence. Although the British-owned railways and utilities were bought out during Perón’s first administration, British domination of the economy merely yielded to that of U.S. economic penetration. The Military Process accentuated the country’s dependence by scrapping customs barriers and exposing Argentine industry to international competition. The outcome was disastrous for Argentina’s national entrepreneurs. The generals were responsible for the country’s decapitalization compounded by a staggering foreign debt, making Argentina increasingly dependent on foreign technology and the International Monetary Fund.

In the sphere of social justice, widespread complaints of a “financial fatherland” (*patria financiera*) also testify to the failure of the Peronist economic model. The Peronist national revolution raised the specter of expropriation, but it was never more than a token gesture. The promised agrarian reform never occurred and survives only as a platform of the Peronist left. While retaining their vast holdings, the big landowners evolved into an industrial and financial oligarchy, leaving labor with barely one-third of the national income. The workers’ standard of living eroded as a result of repressive labor legislation enacted after 1955. They have never recovered the 50 percent of the national income that they attained under Perón. As with political sovereignty and economic independence achieved during Perón’s first two administrations, the gains in social justice were not enduring. Consequently, these objectives are still part of the Peronist agenda.

To his lasting credit, Perón kept his country free of international entanglements at the beginning of the Cold War and on returning to power in 1973 made Argentina a member of the bloc of non-aligned nations. Argentina’s international standing received a boost whenever the Peronists were in power, but over a period of some forty years they controlled the government only during twelve years. Whatever they achieved during their brief moments in office was undone by military coups and pseudoconstitutional governments under conditions of restricted or no democracy. These governments reduced Argentina to a pawn in the East-West game of international politics and to the status of a satellite of the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon. Counterinsurgency warfare and the establishment of a National Security State are vivid testimony of the extent of Argentine dependence. Politically sovereign under Peronist governments, Argentina succumbed to the sphere of influence of the United States.

Perón believed that force was a weak response to subversion. Against an ideology that challenged Argentina’s traditional values and way of life, he boasted, one needs a superior ideology—his own brand of populism. In fact, it proved to be more dangerous to the communists than any bourgeois or liberal ideology. Adverse legislation directed at the communist-dominated CGT and trade unions eventually led to their dissolution and replacement by “official” unions sponsored by the government. But was the Communist Party rooted out? On the contrary, it is still active. And for

the first time in Argentine history, a united front of Marxist-Leninist parties crystallized in 1985 and promises to become the nucleus of a new popular front.

To add to the Peronist reversals, the Cuban Revolution disseminated a Latin American variant of communism that proved contagious and infected the Peronist Youth. Although Argentine labor became Peronist, Marxism-Leninism established a beach-head within the Peronist movement. The irony is that Perón encouraged it in the mistaken belief that it could be tamed and assimilated once he returned to power. But between 1973 and 1976, precisely under Peronist governments, Marxist-Leninist subversion reached a peak. Although that was not what Perón intended, with good reason Peronism was held responsible.

With Perón's death, his movement became disoriented, a body without a head. Like the Radical Party after Yrigoyen, it split into competing and antagonistic factions. The original movement gave way to new and revised versions.

In promising the least and confining their demands to a bare minimum beneficial mainly to organized labor, the Vandorists have until recently prevailed over their principal rivals in the Peronist movement. With the Justicialist Party banned and Perón in exile in Madrid, Augusto Vandor hoped to revive Peronism under his own leadership and under another label. But Vandor's Peronism reaffirmed the original, directed to the political conquest of the state as the only guarantee of a fundamental change in social structure. It was a "Peronism without Perón."

Peronist ideology represented a particular adaptation to the needs and aspirations of the working class. Perón had summarized the three pillars of Peronist trade unionism as organization, unity, and solidarity. In *Peronist Doctrine*, in the chapter on professional associations, he had emphasized: first, *organization* of the workers into trade unions for the purpose of representing their exclusive interests; second, *unity* based on a single and indivisible union of workers in each branch of industry and on a single powerful labor central to coordinate their separate struggles; third, *solidarity* to overcome the divisive role of political ideologies, interminable discussions, rancor, and antagonisms among workers.

Not all of the trade unions belonging to the CGT were controlled by Peronists, which explains why its functions were restricted to shared economic concerns. At the same time, Peronist workers

needed a political organization to represent their interests as a particular sector or branch of the Peronist movement. That was the task of the “62 Organizations.”

In the second volume of his *Ideologies of Trade Union Leading Groups* (1966–1973), chapter two, Arturo Fernández notes that the Vandorist current had two principal objectives. Economically, it aimed to strengthen the trade unions through the right to negotiate wages and conditions of work of all laborers and employees. This was to be achieved through the concentration of trade union power in the General Confederation of Labor with exclusive control over trade union funds for the workers’ security, assistance, and welfare. Politically, it aimed to strengthen the unions by guaranteeing them a role in determining national economic policy and in administering the state. The latter was their only guarantee of taming the oligarchy and overcoming the country’s dependence on foreign interests. Although Vandor might favor a military takeover and collaborate with a military regime, he would do so on the premise that labor would also benefit.

Opposed to the Vandorist approach were two other currents within the Peronist trade unions. On Vandor’s right were the “participationists” committed to business unionism—to negotiating with management and government the hours, wages, and other matters affecting the workers’ welfare. And on his left was the “combative” current, which momentarily met with Perón’s approval as a strategic counterweight to Vandor’s influence within the Peronist movement.

The “participationists,” as Fernández points out, had comparatively modest aims limited to strengthening the unions’ social services and powers of negotiation. They hoped to achieve their goals independently of whatever political party happened to be in office. In the economic interests of the workers, the “participationists” were ready to negotiate even with unconstitutional regimes and military dictatorships. For that reason they were disparagingly referred to as “collaborationists.” Rogelio Coria, general secretary of the construction workers’ union (UOCRA), personified during the late 1960s and early 1970s this current of business unionism.

Using the analogy of liberation theology, Ongaro calls the combative current “a trade unionism of liberation.” Besides the defense of workers’ wages and other social goals, it demanded the abolition of private property in the means of production and the replacement

of capitalism by a new socialist order. In the late 1960s under Ongaro's leadership, the revolutionary CGT of the Argentines condemned any form of collaboration with the military regime and supported the Peronist armed formations in their struggle for democracy. As Ongaro declared in March 1968, "We prefer honor without trade unions to trade unions without honor!"

At least the Vandorist model was Perón's. This contributed to making Vandorism the prevailing current within the Peronist movement, especially after Vandor came to terms with the "Supreme Conductor" and abandoned personal ambitions of replacing him. The CGT's Declaration of September 15, 1970, contains a complete list of the structural reforms proposed by the Vandorists. These included the nationalization of the banks, insurance companies, and foreign trade; the strengthening of state enterprises; agrarian and tax reform; workers' participation in the ownership, management, and profits of private as well as public enterprises; and the allocation of at least twenty-five percent of the national budget to social security, housing, health, and education. As the CGT's maximum objectives, they were only partially incorporated in the CGT-CGE Declaration of March 9, 1972, that became the basis of the FREJULI economic program. In practice, the Vandorists were hemmed in by the requirements of collective bargaining and a social pact with management. Thus they modified their program of nationalization and shelved their demand for worker participation.

Among the clearest statements of the Vandorist political agenda was that given by José Rucci in a two-hour television debate on February 13, 1973. Our national revolution, Rucci explained, is not aimed at taking anything from anybody. That is where it differs from the Marxist model. Its first objective is respect for human dignity and the dignity of labor in particular; its second objective, that capital be humanized by being obliged to serve a social purpose. Capital that offers the workers a decent wage does not exploit, he added. Hence the goal of socialism—the abolition of exploitation—is consistent with a reformed and humanized capitalism. National socialism, the final objective of Peronism, depends on class peace and harmony. Opposed to it is the quite different goal of the abolition of classes, which has nothing to do with Peronism. As for the Peronist program of nationalization, it would be limited mainly to the banks and credit institutions. The principal means of production would remain in private hands.

Fundamental to the Vandorist approach was Perón's concept of social justice as applied to the working class. By a new deal for labor was meant "fair wages": first, a basic or minimum wage responsive to inflation and pegged to changes in the cost of living (*salario vital móvil*); second, an equal division of the national income between labor and capital. As Perón spelled out the meaning of social justice in a key speech to leaders of the CGT (December 14, 1973), both these conditions are indispensable to social peace. But an equal division between profits and wages? That was a far cry from "socialism" in the Marxist sense.

The turning point for Vandorism came at the Justicialist Party Congress in December 1984. With the support of labor boss Herminio Iglesias in control of the party's powerful machine in the province of Buenos Aires, Lorenzo Miguel proposed a slate of candidates for the top positions that left nothing for other factions. When the bulk of the delegates deserted the Odeón Theater in disgust at this maneuver, Miguel rammed through his slate supported by a minority of 317 delegates out of a total of 662: Isabel Perón as titular president; J. M. Vernet, governor of Santa Fe, as first vice-president; Miguel as second vice-president; and Iglesias as general secretary.

The majority responded by organizing its own unofficial leadership coordinated by Oraldo Britos, the senator from San Luis. In February 1985 the "renovators," as they were called, convened an independent congress in Rio Hondo, Santiago del Estero. What drew them together was not so much a common political doctrine or an interpretation or application of Peronist ideology as a desire to rid themselves of the old leadership they held responsible for the party's electoral defeat in October 1983. Besides the prevailing social democratic current among the renovators, the group also included "participationist" labor leader Jorge Triaca and his Negotiation and Labor Commission, Vicente Leonidas Saadi at the head of Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization, and right-wing Peronist Governor Humberto Martiarena with a group responsive to his leadership. This heterogeneous group elected a new Justicialist National Council that consisted exclusively of social democrats: Oraldo Britos as first vice-president; Roberto García as second vice-president; and José Manuel De La Sota as general secretary. Although Isabel Perón was elected titular president, within days

she resigned her position on both Justicialist councils. In effect, both the movement and the party had been split.

In July a "Unity Congress" was convened in Santa Rosa, La Pampa. But fundamentally it was a repeat performance of the December Congress in the Odeón Theater. Most of the renovators representing social democracy again found themselves in the cold. Only the minoritarian currents, which had been excluded from participating in the leadership at Rio Hondo, managed to make a comeback. Thus the unity achieved was fictitious, cemented at the top through bargaining instead of by direct vote of the party's affiliates. The new leadership reflected this makeshift alliance: Saadi as first vice-president; Triaca as second vice-president; and Iglesias as general secretary.

More surprises were to come. With Saadi at the helm, the Montoneros accepted an alliance with their former arch-enemies. These included not only the Vandorist bureaucracy but also the residues of *lopezreguismo* in the Organizational Command (C de O) for whom the Montoneros were still "infiltrators" and "terrorists." Inconceivable as it was to outsiders, the Montoneros publicly acclaimed the new leadership with Iglesias in the key position of general secretary, the same Iglesias who justified the generals' "dirty war" and believes that Peronism should become a party of the right. They also supported Saadi's call for a National and Popular Front in the November congressional renewal elections, a front that would include Arturo Frondizi's right-wing Movement of Integration and Development (MID) as well as Jorge Abelardo Ramos' Popular Left Front (FIP). Thus to the reunified party was added an implausible "national front" that was at best a caricature of the Justicialist Front of Liberation (FREJULI) of 1973.

Notwithstanding the defection of Saadi and Triaca at the Santa Rosa Congress, the renovators continued intransigent. In the Federal District, Carlos Grosso headed a social democratic list of candidates that triumphed in the party's primaries, while in the province of Buenos Aires Antonio Cafiero put together a comparable slate in defiance of party authorities. Cafiero was expelled for insubordination, while Grosso's list was challenged by an extra-official one with the ostensible backing of the labor bureaucracy. But at the last minute Miguel and the "62 Organizations" withdrew their support in another switch that caught the country by surprise. Thus Grosso and Cafiero were vindicated in November 1985 when fifteen

of their candidates were elected to Congress along with only three of the "reunified" party. At the same time the only Peronist candidate for governor receiving more than fifty percent of the vote was Carlos Saúl Menem of La Rioja, also one of the renovators.

In response to this new electoral defeat in which the percentage of Peronist votes fell from forty to thirty-five percent, Saadi had the good sense to resign as first vice-president of the Justicialist Party. A few days later, following massive desertions by the membership, Frondizi also resigned as president of the MID. In an about-face in December, its renovated leadership then deserted the front with the Peronists for a rapprochement with the Radical Party. As for the renovators, a new leadership emerged consisting of the three principal victors: Grosso, Cafiero, and Menem. But by then what had begun as a movement for renovating the party had also become a movement for renovating Peronist doctrine.

Turning to the plans of the renovators, their new democratic program included a demand for direct instead of indirect elections for party positions. They also favored official recognition of the Peronist Youth as the fourth branch of the party, with a right to its own Justicialist candidates for public office. They hoped to cope with industrial pollution, and to arrive at a peaceful settlement of their country's border problems with Chile. Thus the bread-and-butter issues of the working class were not their only concern.

These new concerns, shared with the social democratic parties of Western Europe, had also received Perón's blessing. During his last years in exile he had absorbed elements of the "new age" peace and ecology movements that would shape the Green Politics of the 1970s. As early as December 10, 1969, in a letter to Juan José Hernández Arregui, Perón noted that the revolution of the twentieth century was directed not only against capitalism but also against the aberrations of industrialism and the society of consumerism. Just as the 1968 student movements in France and Germany had been forerunners of the 1969 *Cordobazo*, he predicted that the new social movements on the European continent would also find parallels in Argentina and other countries of the Third World.

When Perón returned to Argentina in June 1973, he delivered a speech on this theme to the CGT. On July 30, he called the attention of trade union leaders to a dawning age of continentalism patterned on the European Economic Community. The end of archaic and artificial territorial divisions and wars between nations

was in sight, he believed. Reaffirming his faith in a coming new world order, Perón's 1973 "Message to the Peoples and Governments of the World" dwelt on the same themes of universal peace, the ecological defense of the earth, participatory democracy, and social justice.

These four pillars of Green Politics were incorporated into Justicialist doctrine in Perón's political testament, posthumously published as *The Argentine Model*. But for the most part his message fell on deaf ears. Certainly, the Vandorist bureaucracy had little use for it. And only after the Peronist reversal in the 1983 elections did the renovators take up these social democratic issues, thus accentuating their differences with the "marshals of defeat."

In *Reflections on the Argentine Crisis*, Torcuato S. Di Tella comments on the increasing tendency for authoritarian political parties—especially the established communist organizations—to shed their monolithic character, become "Europeanized," and collaborate on important tasks with the social democratic parties. Should we not expect this tendency, he asks, to catch up with the Peronist monolith and contribute to its democratization? Published in January 1982, his research paper bordered on the prophetic. Within three years the Justicialist Party would have a full-fledged social democratic wing dedicated to unseating the ruling council of trade union bureaucrats.

Since the late 1960s when students and intellectuals began making their presence felt within the Peronist movement, Di Tella notes, there have been indications that Peronism was beginning to make its peace with the democratic left and its mixture of liberal, Social Christian, and Marxist concerns. Then, during the government of Isabel Perón, Peronists began questioning the leader cult and other semitotalitarian features of their movement. The precedent set by the anti-verticalists in 1975 would prepare the way for the renovators a decade later as a social democratic current committed to human rights, political pluralism, constitutional government, and the repudiation of secret pacts with sectors of the armed forces.

Most of the Peronist renovators are social democrats in this loose sense. Led by such party stalwarts as former economy minister Antonio Cafiero, their immediate forerunner was the Movement of Unity, Solidarity, and Organization (MUSO) during the 1983 pre-electoral campaign. Although MUSO did not win the party's en-

dorsement of its candidate for president, it acquired the backing of the "Commission of 25" led by Roberto García plus the support of the Unified Peronist Youth (JPU). At the moment of writing, the renovators constitute the numerically dominant tendency within Peronism not only in the Federal District and the Province of Buenos Aires but also in several other leading provinces.

To the left of this loose social democratic current stands Saadi's Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization. Representing the outlook of revolutionary Peronism, its plan for a national revolution is summarized in its pre-electoral "Program of Government for Advancing Toward Power." Besides the nationalization of all financial institutions and the recovery of a "fair wage," the program calls for the renationalization of all enterprises privatized during the Military Process. Going beyond the Vandorist and social democratic models, it demands the nationalization of all firms with board members who served in government positions between 1976 and 1983, and the suspension of the staggering interest payments owed on the "illegal" 30 billion dollar foreign debt contracted by the generals after March 24, 1976. Among its other demands are the release of all political prisoners and an end to repressive legislation. The program concludes with a commitment to organizing a multisectoral bloc that would pave the way toward the final expropriation of the oligarchy. Although the result would not be socialism, it would be a decisive step in that direction.

In *The Peronism of Victory*, Jorge Luis Bernetti, national press secretary of the Peronist movement in 1972 and of Héctor Cámpora's presidential campaign in 1973, defends this version of Peronism from a Marxist perspective. To meet the challenge of democracy, he notes in the final chapter, Peronists need a new national plan that would unify the competing tendencies within the Peronist movement. It would also unite with other democratic tendencies, such as the movement for the defense of human rights and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, around a common program. Is it not possible, he asks, to articulate a form of populism that creates the conditions of socialism and that is also profoundly democratic?

Peronism, Bernetti argues, provides the foundations for a new model of national revolution if the following conditions can be satisfied. The workers must be able to express their interests directly within the party's structure. Democratization of the Justi-

cialist Party must be accompanied by democratization of the trade unions and by workers' self-management in industry. Political sovereignty must be transformed into popular sovereignty in the form of participatory democracy. The oligarchy must be expropriated. And finally, the intermediate sectors must come to a political understanding with the working class.

Although the populism of the Peruvian APRA, the Bolivian MNR, and the Mexican PRI failed to generate the conditions for a transition to socialism, Bernetti claims that Peronism represents the most advanced form of populism because of its predominantly working class composition and leadership. Marxists should not give up on populist experiments, he adds, because the revolutionary processes in both Cuba and Nicaragua sprang from populist origins.

The foregoing model of national revolution is not a monopoly of Peronists. The Intransigent Party (PI), which received some six percent of the vote in October 1983 and again in November 1985, falls into the same category as these other populist movements. Although not a workers' party, the PI has a red and black emblem of anarcho-syndicalist origin, shared by both the Cuban July 26 Movement and the Nicaraguan FSLN. To its Radical heritage and insistence on democracy, the PI adds a Peronist-type commitment to social justice. Defining itself as popular, revolutionary, national, anti-imperialist, and anti-oligarchical, it is the protagonist of a Third Historical Movement aimed at completing the as-yet-unfinished revolution begun by Yrigoyen and continued by Perón.

At its last National Convention before the Military Process (December 1975), the Intransigent Party adopted its epoch-making "Program Against Dependence and for Liberation." This program contains a vigorous defense of participatory democracy and human rights. It also contains an advanced economic agenda including the nationalization of all basic and strategic industries and banking and credit institutions, an agrarian reform that would give the earth to those who cultivate it, and owner-worker co-management. As noted in the Declaration of the Convention, until the present structures of dependence are modified and until wealth along with power and culture are "socialized," there can be no solution to the Argentine question.

The document adopted by the Intransigent Youth at its Fourth National Congress in 1984 reaffirms the PI's commitment to build a Third Historical Movement. Although supporting a program that

would not be the exclusive patrimony of any one social class or political party, it insists on the hegemonic role of the working class in a national front with so-called "middle strata" and "national entrepreneurs." However, this program remains within the parameters of the parent body's theses concerning national and social liberation. Thus it too stops short of socialism.

How representative is this intransigent model? Although Intransigent Peronists and the Intransigent Party are no match for the social democratic renovators, together they represent close to twelve percent of the voters, no mean achievement. The percentage is somewhat greater if one includes the Unified Peronist Youth (JPU). For strategic reasons the JPU supports the social democratic current, while ideologically upholding the revolutionary tendency. The JPU favors a policy of "entrism" into the Peronist mainstream in an effort to achieve greater leverage and also to pressure the renovators into adopting an anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical program of real substance.

To the left of Peronist Intransigence and the JPU are the Montoneros and Peronist Youth (Regional Organizations), with a national program and strategy of their own. Outwardly, they are "left social democrats." But since they attest to a Guevarist component in their ideology, they are more accurately characterized as socialists. Unlike the JPU's policy of entrism into the social democratic mainstream of Peronism, their policy is to insert themselves into Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization. In effect, their policy of entrism corresponds to Gorriarán's policy of "infiltrating" ex-members of the ERP into the Intransigent Youth.

The Montoneros' model of national revolution is presented in their document, "For a Doctrinal Transformation of Peronism." Its fundamental points are summarized in an article bearing the same title in the Montonero monthly *Latino América* (December 1984). First, they reject the original Peronist model of class harmony for an alliance of classes under working class hegemony. Second, they abandon the vague Justicialist notion of a humanized capitalism for an antimonopolistic and anti-oligarchical capitalism under popular control. Third, they upgrade the original Justicialist goal of state direction of the economy by calling for the expropriation of the oligarchy and the nationalization of major enterprises. Fourth, they scrap the Peronist "Third Position" in favor of outright socialism and an alliance with national liberation movements and the inde-

pendent states of the Third World against U.S. imperialism. Fifth, they subordinate the strategy of peaceful national and social liberation to the violent and revolutionary approach. And finally, they reinterpret the Peronist concern for the people's welfare as the abolition of exploitation in all its forms.

Because of their Guevarist heritage, the Montoneros share common ground with the principal Marxist-Leninist models of a national revolution. Historically, the Communist Party (PC) was the breeding ground of several armed formations during the 1956–73 resistance, the principal one being the FAR. Indirectly, it was responsible for the various Trotskyist groups in Argentina, among them the PRT and its armed formation (ERP). Hugo Bressano's Workers' Socialist Party (PST), the organizing nucleus of the recent Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), also has a communist pedigree.

In the October 1983 elections, the PC and the MAS together accounted for some two percent of the congressional vote. Among the traditional parties of the left the PRT was unquestionably the principal victim of the Military Process. But it is worth recalling that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, it represented the majoritarian wing of Argentine Trotskyism. Its chief impact was political and military, which cannot be assessed by electoral criteria. And it had enough support among the population to encourage its leaders to maintain the party in exile, followed by their present efforts to rebuild it.

Defining themselves as Marxist-Leninist parties, the PC and PRT are both committed to transitional programs that only dimly reflect their ultimate objectives. Their model of an anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical revolution is shared with the Montoneros, Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization, and the Intransigent Party. But they differ from these movements in both the means and ideology of revolution. Instead of a national front or Third Historical Movement, they rely on a people's front hegemonized by Marxist-Leninists to introduce the desired social changes. Instead of a populist ideology imbedded in national traditions, they look to Marxism-Leninism to mobilize the Argentine masses.

Once the Military Process was over, the Marxist-Leninist left in Argentina set out to duplicate the Nicaraguan example. The first step was the organization of a People's Front (FREPU or FP) at the initiative of its two largest and most influential political parties, the PC and MAS. Organized with a view to the congressional

renewal elections in November 1985, the People's Front also had the backing of other "classist" groups. Because the PRT was still illegal, it could not participate officially in the front, but it supported the front in other ways.

The People's Front ran its own candidates in the 1985 elections. The results were not promising—some two percent of the vote. In response, the Communists have tried to give the front a broader basis by attracting dissidents from the Justicialist, Radical, and Intransigent parties. An editorial in the PC's official organ *Qué Pasa* (30 July 1986) spoke of attracting the combative wing of Peronism and adopting a "profile in which the Peronist component is decisive." Unlike the FAR, which inserted itself in the Peronist movement in order to push it in a "classist" direction, the PC hopes to incorporate the combative sector of Peronism into the People's Front. For the Front to become genuinely popular, according to the PC, it needs a populist component distinct from Marxism-Leninism.

The PC's position has come under fire for its concessions to Peronist ideology, on the grounds that a populist ideology of the Peronist type is incompatible with class struggle and the hegemony of a Marxist-Leninist vanguard. The Communists reply by pointing to the example of Agustín Tosco, who until his death in November 1975 was the general secretary of the light and power workers of Córdoba, the head of the Combative Trade Union Movement of Córdoba, and a key figure of the "classist" Intertrade-Union National Movement (MNI). A Marxist-Leninist, Tosco injected into Peronist ideology a "people's democratic" and "classist" interpretation of its principal tenets. As he noted in a press conference on August 16, 1973, the fundamental ideals for which he struggled were the basically Peronist ones of "social justice, popular sovereignty, and national liberation"—with priority given to "social justice."

His vision of socialism, he explained in a two-hour television debate with José Rucci (February 13, 1973), was indebted to populist as well as Marxist sources. Speaking for the Combative Trade Unions of Córdoba and for the Intertrade-Union National Movement, he said: "The heterogeneity of our socialism is that it has Peronist, Marxist, and Christian roots in the Movement of Priests of the Third World." He traced the Peronist sources of "classist" socialism to the CGT's program of Huerta Grande in 1962, reaffirmed a decade later by the CGT of the Argentines on May Day,

1968. He made a sharp distinction between this version of Peronism and that of the Peronist political and trade union bureaucracy, predicated on class harmony instead of the disappearance of classes, on the humanization of capital instead of its abolition, and on fair wages instead of the abolition of the wage system. As Rucci retorted, "That is not socialism but Marxism!"

Where does the Radical Party fit into this picture? Nowhere, according to the various approaches we have considered. Beginning with the coup of September 1930, the UCR evolved into a party of the center-right. The few efforts made to renovate it succeeded only momentarily, if at all. Thus the Radicals became the "party of the twenty-five percent," representing their share of the national vote vis-à-vis the Peronist majority. That a party of the center-right might turn into a party of the center-left, defied all expectations, given the general tendency of political parties to fossilize with age. Most Peronists believed such a reversal simply could not happen—but it did.

Ricardo Balbín, titular head of the Radical Party for more than twenty years and its presidential candidate on four separate occasions, died on September 9, 1981. With the floodgates open for the party's internal reform, Raúl Alfonsín's Movement of Renewal and Change (MRC) triumphed over the Balbinist old guard in the 1983 primaries by a margin of four to one. Founded in September 1972, the MRC had for its principal purpose the recovery of the Yrigoyenist legacy of intransigence. Alfonsín's group distinguished itself not only by participating in the struggle against the military dictatorship and in the popular upsurges sparked by the 1969 *Cordobazo*, but also by developing a model of national liberation shared with other sectors of the resistance. What distinguished his efforts from earlier ones to renew the Radical Party was precisely his assimilation of the experience of the 1966–73 resistance.

Summarized in the MRC's founding Manifesto of September 24, 1972, Alfonsín's program incorporated the Peronist trinity of political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice—to which it added an uncommon dose of democracy. As the principal guarantee of distributive justice, democracy would be boosted by extending the right to vote to the nation's factories and businesses. Otherwise, the MRC's program repeated Peronist demands aimed at restructuring the economic system of "dependency," at curbing the "penetration of monopolistic imperialism," at imposing controls

on the "oligarchy," and at humanizing capital by placing it at the "service of the people." The foreign banks would be nationalized along with the export-import trade, an Agrarian Reform would "eradicate the latifundia," the key sectors of the economy would be placed under state control, and worker-owner co-management would become the norm.

This loosely social democratic program anticipated by more than a decade the program the Peronist renovators would adopt. In the first (1980) and second (1984) editions of his book, *The Argentine Question*, Alfonsín reaffirmed and supplemented it by calling for the recovery of the workers' real wages, insisting on their right to participate in the profits of enterprise, and demanding a system of protective legislation covering health, education, housing, and welfare from the cradle to the grave.

Perhaps the most novel proposal was Alfonsín's invocation of a "National Compromise" foreshadowing what would later become identified as a Third Historical Movement. The people's forces were divided and it was imperative to unite them against their historical enemy, the oligarchy. The only effective response to their common enemy, he argued, was for Radicals and Peronists to lay aside their adversarial relationship. While retaining their separate political structures, together they might overcome their respective defects. These consisted in the Radicals' traditional disregard for working class interests and the Peronist tendency to ride roughshod over the elemental requirements of democracy. Only if they chose to cooperate might the groundwork be laid for a new mass movement combining democracy and social justice.

Alfonsín's social democratic program was responsible for the Radicals' landslide victory in the October 1983 presidential elections. It also went with a new and appealing political style. Hitherto, electoral campaigns had been charged with animosities, mutual accusations, and recriminations. But Alfonsín won over audiences by his serenity, reasonableness, and spirit of conciliation. Unlike his Peronist rivals, he offered dialogue instead of diatribe, arguments in place of emotional slogans, and a civilized mien rather than threats and bombast.

Echoing Perón, Peronists never tired of repeating that democracy is what the people want. But in 1983 it was Alfonsín who understood what they wanted. After ten years of terrorism, a virtual civil war between opposing Peronist factions, and the generals'

"dirty war" against subversion, the people wanted peace. And after five civilian presidents and their stand-ins from 1973 to 1976, followed by seven military heads of state from 1976 to 1983, they also longed for political stability. Attuned to the voters' wishes, Alfonsín promised them peace and stability.

Have Peronists learned from their debacle? In an article in *La Razón* (29 October 1985), Pablo Giussani underscored Grosso's practice of political jujitsu, the art of using the enemy's strength to unbalance him. The leader of the renovators in the metropolitan area had effectively asked the electorate not to reject Alfonsín, but rather "to vote for him in the person of Carlos Grosso." Cafiero's campaign also distinguished itself by the absence of any criticism of the President. And in the province of La Rioja, Menem triumphed over the Radical candidate in a campaign for the governorship that likewise contrasted sharply with the approach of the official party. Yet the official party responded by chiding the renovators, Grosso in particular, for using the expression "our Radical friends."

In 1983 Herminio Iglesias ended his campaign for governor of Buenos Aires by publicly burning an effigy of Alfonsín's coffin. For that, he was repudiated at the polls in a landslide vote for his Radical opponent. Yet three years later, the labor barons in control of the party appeared to have learned nothing from that episode. The walls in downtown Buenos Aires were covered with Peronist placards in a revival of anti-Semitism reminiscent of prewar Germany. Referring to Alfonsín's Jewish associates in the Radical Party, the placards decried the "*Sinagoga Alfonsín*." As reported by Amos Elon in a "Letter from Argentina" (*The New Yorker*, 21 July 1986), crowds were galvanized into shouting anti-Semitic slogans directed at Jews in the Radical Party. In an antigovernment rally at the intersection of Avenidas 9 de Julio and Independencia, close to a quarter of a million people responded to one speaker's attack on a Jewish Radical by chanting for some ten minutes "Jew, son of a whore!" And to the main speaker they responded, "The Radical Synagogue is going to end!"

The transformation of the Radical Party into a European-type social democratic party was accompanied by an even more remarkable metamorphosis of the Radical Youth. If the parent body can be characterized as a reformist version of social democracy, its youth sector can be called intransigent. This places it to the left of the Radical Party and in the same company as the Intransigent

Party, Intransigent Youth, and Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization.

Like Alfonsín's Movement of Renewal and Change, the intransigent current within the Radical Youth emerged from the resistance to the military dictatorship of 1966–73. Calling itself the National Coordinating Junta (JNC) of the Radical Youth, the group was founded toward the end of 1966 in Setúbal, Santa Fe, with two principal purposes. First, it aimed to reexamine Argentine history as the basis for a new national plan intended to reverse the country's economic and political decline. Second, it intended to play an active role in the resistance to the military dictatorship.

As the cofounder with Alfonsín of the Movement of Renewal and Change, the JNC began by adopting Alfonsín's social democratic program. But it soon aspired to something more. "The Fundamental Contradiction," its most recent statement of political objectives included in *Somos la vida* (1985), proposes a new program of national and social liberation that is strongly indebted to Marxist sources. Both the document's title and contents testify to the influence of Mao Tse-tung's 1937 essay "On Contradiction" and 1957 essay "On How to Handle Contradictions Among the People." The JNC's convergence with the program of the Intransigent Youth has its basis in this extraordinary document.

The document begins by identifying the fundamental contradiction of Argentine society as that between democracy and dictatorship. But underlying it is the contradiction between liberation and dependence, "the Argentine people on one side and the antinational oligarchical-monopolistic-imperialist complex on the other." Who are the people? They consist of the working class, students and professionals, and small and medium entrepreneurs—representing altogether some ninety-five percent of the population. Following Mao, the document views the contradictions among the people as "secondary." Thus the conflicts between political parties and the confrontations between labor and capital are depicted as marginal to the main contradiction between the people and their enemies.

This analysis of Argentine society becomes the starting point of a political strategy. Given the fundamental contradiction, "the basic objective of our strategy must be to unify all the forces constituting the people's camp, Radicals, Peronists, Socialists, Conservatives, workers, entrepreneurs, [and] middle classes." This JNC version of a Third Historical Movement focuses not on the hegemony of

the Radical Party or Radical Youth but on a common program of liberation aimed at facing the common enemy.

Specifically, the JNC's new program calls for the "destruction of the oligarchy and imperialism." The means for achieving this go beyond the more modest ones proposed by Alfonsín. To the MRC's program of agrarian reform and the nationalization of foreign banks and the export-import trade, the program of the Radical Youth adds the nationalization of all financial institutions and of basic industries. It is precisely this last demand that makes a difference. Besides the split between Balbinists and Alfonsinists, conflicting views have recently appeared among the members of Alfonsín's own camp.

Turning next to the prospects of these competing plans and their corresponding strategies, we consider several trends that may have a bearing on the outcome. Current scenarios of Argentina's political future share the belief that "Peronism is finished." The evidence supporting this opinion is impressive. But does it stand up to scrutiny?

Three principal arguments have been used to establish that Peronism is finished as the majoritarian party in Argentina: first, that it is hopelessly divided; second, that it has been systematically discredited because of its undemocratic practices; third, that it has been deserted by the youth and middle sectors.

Peronism is divided. By the same process that broke the original Radical Civic Union into the present Radical Party, ex-President Frondizi's Movement of Integration and Development (MID), and Oscar Alende's Intransigent Party (PI), the Justicialist Party has effectively split in half. Besides the official or Vandorist wing represented by the "62 Organizations," there is the new social democratic wing of the renovators with its trade union sector, the "Commission of 25." If the split becomes formalized, there will be two Peronist parties, neither one of which could compete effectively with the majoritarian Radical Party.

The "Unity Congress" in July 1985 aimed to give the different sectors of Peronism a voice in party councils roughly proportional to their numbers. But the Vandorists, or Miguelists as they are now called, formed a bloc with Triaca's Negotiation and Labor Commission on their right, and with Saadi's Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization on their left. Until then both had been aligned with the renovators. Since this maneuver was designed to undermine the labor bureaucracy's social democratic rival, the "unity"

achieved at the Congress contributed to accentuating instead of healing the fundamental rift in the party.

However, the Radical Party recovered from its several splits, and the Justicialist Party may do likewise. "Peronist Unity or Diaspora!" Either Peronists learn to put their political act together to end their ten-year-old internal feuding or they must suffer the consequences. Officialists and renovators alike have begun to heed this warning. The alternative is for them to form their own parties or to join those with similar political persuasions in other already existing political organizations.

The party is divided, but that may become the source of its strength. In an interview in *The Fundamental Renewal*, Peronist philosopher José Pablo Feinmann calls for a decisive rupture with the official party as a gesture of political clarification. To negotiate with the Vandorists in control of the party, he insists, is to accept their nefarious practices as an integral part of the Peronist movement. To negotiate implies recognition, but that "gives them a dignity they don't deserve." An audacious rupture has symbolic value in destroying the myth of unity at any price. "I believe that if the renovators take over the party apparatus, but continue to provide a place for the orthodox, archaic, folkloric, verticalist, and violent international line [identified with the figures of Saadi and Iglesias], Peronism will go on compounding chaos and, consequently, being untrustworthy." Even if Saadi and Iglesias are removed from the leadership, as long as they remain in the same party with the renovators, "nobody knows when the tricksters (*brujos*) will return!" Profoundly repelled by the generals' "dirty war," the Argentine people are not going to vote massively for a party that has not thoroughly cleansed itself of its reputation for dirty dealings.

The revival of Peronism, Feinmann argues, depends not on the reunification of political extremes but on a coherent unity. That is why he advised Cafiero not to attend the "Unity Congress" in Santa Rosa. Heeding his advice, Cafiero remained at home. Then, in response to the Saadi-Triaca-Iglesias alliance cemented at the Congress, Cafiero launched his own list of Peronist candidates in the province of Buenos Aires. The results not only astonished everybody, but also were of enormous political significance. The *Cafierazo*, as Feinmann calls it, demonstrated that the party's strength lay in breaking with its fascist heritage, the ensemble of contra-

dictions combining left, right, and center. Contrary to the former belief that victory lies in Peronist unity, he concludes, the new slogan should be "United, We All Lose!"

Peronism has been systematically discredited because of its undemocratic practices. For eight years the apologists of the Military Process mounted a campaign of vilification against the Peronist movement and its leaders that helped mold a new generation. It successfully diffused the image of Peronism as the party of chaos and internalized violence. Because of their responsibility for subversion and the civil war between the movement's left and right wings, the Peronists had allegedly forfeited their right to govern the country. Because of Peronist misrule, say their critics, the generals were obliged to intervene.

Fear of a repetition of 1973–76 prompted the political right in Argentina to cast its vote for Alfonsín. But sectors of the traditional left along with Peronists marginalized by their own party were also outraged by its reputation for violence. The Communist Party rank and file is a case in point. Directed by their leaders to vote for Luder, large numbers revolted and cast their ballots for Alfonsín. In short, it was not the Radicals' demoliberal ideology that won the elections for them, but the tarnished image of the Peronist labor bureaucracy.

In my prison interview with Firmenich, he estimated that some ten percent of Alfonsín's support had come from dissident Peronists. Although they backed their local candidates, in the crucial presidential race they voted for Alfonsín. This came in repudiation of the labor mafia (*patota*) that had imposed its candidates on the party, quashed efforts at democratic reform of the party's structure, declared allegiance to the outworn figure of Isabel Perón, and reputedly negotiated a behind-the-scenes amnesty for the generals. Alfonsín won the elections in the role of a social democrat, with the support of French President Mitterrand and other leading figures of the Socialist International. That also played a role in winning over dissidents from the Peronist fold.

But Firmenich claimed it was an illusory victory. More important than votes from dissident Peronists, he believed, was the support for Alfonsín from the political right. Alfonsín's enemies saw in Peronism a still greater evil and voted to halt it at whatever cost. The Radicals' liberal democratic ideology had little attraction for them. If party registration is an index of ideological commitment, then

Peronism outclasses its demoliberal rival by approximately two to one.

In an article published in *La Voz* (8 November 1983), Firmenich estimated the right-wing vote for Alfonsín at some twelve percent. This estimate is supported by the discrepancy in electoral returns for the presidential candidates of the principal right-wing parties and the corresponding vote for party congressmen. In the federal capital, for example, the leading right-wing Union of the Democratic Center (UCD) obtained 1.3 percent for its presidential candidate compared to 8.7 percent for its congressional candidates. The difference of 7.4 percent evidently went to Alfonsín. Altogether in the capital 10.7 percent of the vote for right-wing congressional candidates was delivered to Alfonsín in the presidential election.

It is instructive to compare the vote for right-wing parties in October 1983 with that in March 1973, also preliminary to an abdication of the military. In March 1973 the parties of the right believed they had a fair chance of winning. Together they polled twenty percent of the vote, some fifteen percent going to the Federalist Popular Alliance (APF). Without support from this and other sectors, the Radical Party polled a little over twenty-one percent. Yet in the September elections only six months later, when the Justicialist Front of Liberation faced only one right-wing party, the combined right-wing vote for the APF dwindled to twelve percent. Some three percent may have gone to boosting the Radical vote to twenty-four percent, while the rest of the political right may have abstained or cast blank ballots.

This right-wing constituency did not simply disappear. Nor is it likely that in 1983 it was appreciably smaller than it had been a decade earlier. Hence the need to explain the difference between the twenty percent it polled in 1973 and the less than two percent in 1983. What happened to the missing eighteen percent? The chances are that it went to Alfonsín.

Will the Radical Party continue to attract votes from other quarters? In the 1985 renewal elections, right-wing voters began to desert the Radicals. Left-wing supporters now have a viable social democratic option of their own. Thus Alfonsín's margin of victory in 1983 is likely to evaporate and to become absorbed by the Peronist renovators.

Peronism has been deserted by the youth and middle sectors. The congressional renewal elections in November 1985 were es-

pecially ominous. The Peronist share of the congressional vote fell from forty-four percent to thirty-five percent, thereby increasing the Radicals' lead. It was not the right-wing vote for the Radicals that made the difference. The most credible interpretation of the electoral results holds that the Peronist movement had alienated still further its erstwhile supporters among the country's independent voters, who were responsible for transforming the "party of twenty-five percent" into a party of fifty percent in the 1983 elections.

The nation's youth had been conditioned by the Military Process to believe that the Justicialist Party was the party of chaos and internalized violence. This opinion was shared by the middle sectors, who had lived through the political turmoil of 1973-76 and also blamed the Peronists for it. This was enough to turn the tables in favor of the Radical Party. The middle sectors abandoned Peronism for a new program promising peace and stability, to which the Peronists in 1983 offered no viable alternative. The youth and middle sectors rejected not just Miguel's imposed candidacies of Luder and Bittel, but also the image of violence and perpetual strife of a movement torn by irreconcilable political contradictions.

In an interview in *The Renovators Talk*, Carlos Grosso acknowledged that some 7 million new voters between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five had become so thoroughly depoliticized by the Military Process as to shun all suggestions of violence against the social order. That is what attracted them to Alfonsín's campaign promising democracy and the rule of law. In the 1983 elections Radicalism also received the support of the urban middle sectors that had backed Peronism in 1973. In a country where five urbanized provinces (Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Córdoba, Tucumán, and Mendoza) contain sixty percent of the population, Grosso observed, a Peronism that does not address itself to these sectors forfeits its claim to represent the majority. Evidently, they were turned off by the Peronist trade union bureaucracy and its bias in favor of manual workers. Although Peronism is a multiclass movement, Grosso conceded, it did not make a point of attracting educated workers who constitute an increasingly influential sector of the population.

Although in 1985 the renovators emerged with a new national plan, it was confined to the Federal District and the province of Buenos Aires. But the youth was not influenced by this change of face. And the politically sophisticated middle sectors had little rea-

son to shift allegiance from Alfonsín's new social democracy to virtually the same program under Peronist auspices.

Nonetheless, Peronists are optimistic about a political comeback. They believe the country's deteriorating economic conditions cannot be remedied by the Radicals' timid and uncoordinated measures. Today the youth and middle sectors crave peace and stability. Tomorrow they will aspire to something else. At least Peronism has a systematic and planned response to their eroding standard of living.

Peronism has been severely wounded, but it is far from finished. Peronists point out that Alfonsín's popularity is an unreliable index of the Radicals' real strength. Although in the 1983 race for Congress the Radicals elected 129 deputies compared to the PJ's 111, the senatorial returns gave them only eighteen senators compared to twenty-one for the Justicialists. Matters went even worse for them in the gubernatorial races. The Radicals won in Misiones, Entre Ríos, Mendoza, Córdoba, Buenos Aires, Río Negro, and Chubut. But the Peronists triumphed in Jujuy, Salta, Catamarca, La Rioja, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Formosa, Chaco, Santa Fe, San Luis, La Pampa, and Santa Cruz. Thus the interior of the country is still predominantly Peronist.

Peronists believe that the change in the Radical Party is only cosmetic and its new program an "electoral gimmick." As evidence they point to the discrepancy between its political program and its behavior in office since 1983. Certainly, the Radicals' new image is out of kilter with the party's record of publicly supporting military coups against its Peronist rival in 1955 and again in 1976. To its historical complicity with past military regimes must be added its complicity with the recent Military Process. The Radical Party repudiated the general strikes in 1979 and 1981, refused to back the first march of political protest in November 1980, and remained aloof from other mass mobilizations against the dictatorship—until protest became fashionable in 1982.

The extent of civilian participation in the Military Process was wider than is generally believed, and the Radicals were among the principal culprits. A report in *La Nación* (25 March 1979) indicates that in 1,697 municipalities surveyed in 1978, only ten percent of the mayors held military rank. Some forty percent came from or were sympathetic to the political parties of the right. But the Radicals followed with some thirty-five percent, compared to twenty-two

percent for the Peronists and some two percent for the Christian Democratic Party, with the Intransigent Party taking up the rear. In this perspective, Alfonsín's takeover of the party is a political anomaly unlikely to have any lasting effect.

The picture that emerges is one of political polarization around two parties, each with a strong social democratic wing. Thus it is widely believed that a two-party system of the American type, or possibly the Venezuelan or Colombian, has a fair chance in Argentina. Such a system would contribute to stabilizing Argentine democracy, while ruling out military coups. A salient feature of biparty systems is their tendency to converge on the center of the political spectrum, thereby reducing the political stakes in winning. Trivial differences between principal contestants and issues are symptomatic of political consensus and the defusing of social tensions. Under such conditions, "whoever wins, wins," since it is pointless to contest the outcome.

The presidential election of 1983 is a case in point. The Justicialist Party campaigned on a platform of social justice as a condition of democracy, and the Radical Party on a platform of democracy as a condition of social justice. While Peronists stressed the dignity of labor, Radicals made a fetish of human rights. As Italo Luder acknowledged in his first press conference after being nominated as his party's presidential candidate, what distinguished his candidacy from that of Alfonsín was the Peronist commitment to the social teachings of the Catholic Church. In fact, Alfonsín also made a point of those teachings.

It can be objected that this scenario does not fit an economically dependent country like Argentina, characterized by a high level of social tensions and a record of political stalemate dating back more than half a century. The gradual convergence of the two major parties on the political center is likely to be frustrated by the predominantly working class composition of both wings of the Justicialist Party and by the predominance of intermediate sectors in the Radical Party. Fundamental class differences make the long-range prospect of convergence implausible.

The unresolved issue of Argentine politics is still the completion of a Peronist-type national revolution in one or several of its principal variants. Recently, the Radical Party has adopted one of those variants also aimed at overcoming Argentina's economic dependency, stagnation, runaway inflation, and chronic labor unrest, along

with the dreaded specter of a social explosion accompanied by a subversive rebound. Precisely because of the 1983 and 1985 electoral returns, a national revolution today has the support of an overwhelming majority of the electorate. If to the forty percent received by Luder in 1983 one adds the fifty-two percent received by Alfonsín, it is safe to say that well over ninety percent of the Argentine people favor a national revolution of some sort.

A national revolution with such wide support, however, would stop short of nationalizing basic industries and would not resolve Argentina's problems. Thus the fundamental question is how the intransigent current stacks up with the country's electorate.

In view of a prospective Third Historical Movement supported by Intransigent Peronists, the Intransigent Party, Christian Democrats, the parties of the traditional left, and a sector of the Radical Youth, there are grounds for optimism. A conservative estimate would place support for Peronist Intransigence and Mobilization at roughly equal to that for the Intransigent Party—representing together some twelve percent of the voters. To this figure may be added three percent for the Humanism and Liberation current in Christian Democracy and another two percent for the Marxist-Leninist parties making up the People's Front. Although the figure of seventeen percent is several percentage points behind that registered by Uruguay's Broad Front in 1971, it is a sign of the future.

In any event, history has not been kind to defenders of the status quo. While the liberals of yesterday have become today's reactionaries, today's social democrats are victims of the same relentless process of political obsolescence and marginalization. As lukewarm projects of national revolution are discovered to be inadequate, stronger medicine will eventually be applied. Today it is the Vandorist model that has eroded in favor of a weak version of social democracy. Tomorrow one may expect this weak version to be displaced by some form of intransigence.

As the Peronist movement creeps to the left, the Radical Party may respond by dragging its tail in the same direction. In that event, Alfonsín's loose social democratic tendency will become stronger with time until there is virtually nothing left of the Balbinist old guard. But within the political spectrum of right and left, it will continue to lag behind its Peronist rival. That should be the main drift in coming years, possibly interrupted by military interventions in reaction to new waves of subversion, as other countries

on the continent respond to the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and other national liberation currents throughout the Third World.

Perón never tired of repeating that Argentina does not exist in a political vacuum, that it must adapt to new winds of change or perish. In assimilating the emerging Green Politics of the 1970s he discarded his original corporatist doctrine for a social democratic adaptation of Justicialist ideology. But Argentina's problems call for more than social democratic recipes. Thus the more extreme plans for national revolution also have significance for Argentina's future.

An Inconclusive Revolution

In my interview with Firmenich in the Villa Devoto Penitentiary, he noted that the problem of democracy in Argentina was “part not just of a seven-year ‘dirty war’ from 1976 to 1983 but of an intermittent 150-year war that is still inconclusive.” It was not enough to curb the armed forces; the oligarchy and multinationals also had to be shorn of their privileges. Such an outcome, he insisted, depended on carrying to completion the reforms begun by Yrigoyen and continued by Perón.

The theme of an inconclusive revolution was central to Firmenich’s manifesto “To the People of the Argentine Nation” (*Vencer*, January–February 1982). Following the war against Spain, Argentina had become involved in an intermittent civil war—sometimes open, at other times disguised—between two fundamental social forces: people and oligarchy.

This confrontation still inconclusive began at the dawn of independence in 1810. Its persistence for more than 170 years despite the profound economic, social, and political transformation in the country . . . against the same enemies—the Montoneros—and with the reiteration of the same false options, such as civilization or barbarism, can only be explained by the essence of that now almost bicentennial struggle. That is the confrontation between the forces in favor of a pseudo-progress with the assistance of imperialist capital from abroad, and the forces in favor of an independent development without

foreign tutelage or intervention, on the basis of the country's own productive forces and the expansion of the internal market.

Since World War II, the manifesto continues, this intermittent civil war has acquired new features with the eruption of the working class onto the political scene and the rapid expansion of an industrial bourgeoisie producing for the local market. At one pole stood the native oligarchy allied to foreign interests, an oligarchical-imperialist alliance favorable to the multinationals and to the financial support of the oligarchy's projects by foreign capital. At the opposite pole stood the majority of the Argentine people consisting mainly of workers. These were the principal antagonists but they were not the only ones. Firmenich also acknowledged a third group of small and medium-size capitalists in agribusiness, commerce, and finance as well as industry—the class of national entrepreneurs on the margins of the fundamental polarization between people and oligarchy.

What was the economic weight of each? The oligarchical-imperialist alliance possessed the lion's share of capital, according to Firmenich, but concentrated in a socially insignificant minority. The "people," with the working class as its backbone, possessed the next largest share in the form of state enterprises in key sectors of the economy. The national entrepreneurs possessed the smallest amount of capital, but their share could be decisive in alliance with the people's share.

Firmenich summarized the specific role of national entrepreneurs during the struggle between the two principal contestants:

The behavior of the national bourgeoisie during at least the past forty years has been ambivalent and changeable. One may say that it is responsible for the unstable balance of power according to whether it became allied to the people or to the oligarchy. On each occasion that it allied itself with the people in a national front . . . we had popular governments defending state capital and national industry. But the oligarchy was not annihilated and in time the government was buried in an economic crisis. At that moment the national entrepreneurs abandoned their alliance with the popular sectors. . . . When that happened we had military dictatorships.

This history, according to the manifesto, has repeated itself in

cycles from the beginning of Peronism to the present. The result has been economic dislocation, stagnation, regression, political instability, and periodic bloodletting. Consequently, if the country continues on its present course during the next twenty years, the end will be national disintegration.

Argentina's predicament, Firmenich explained in my interview, was a result of its not having followed the Mexican example. "The struggle against the native oligarchy has yet to be resolved in this country as it was in Mexico in 1920. In the context of Mexican politics, the Argentine situation has been described as what might have happened in Mexico if the Institutional Party of the Revolution (PRI) continued winning the elections while the conservative National Action Party (PAN) controlled the armed forces." Under such conditions instability and political stalemate would have become the norm as in Argentina, where owing to a succession of reactionary military coups since 1930 the oligarchy was still in power.

I asked Firmenich whether Perón had consciously sought to emulate the Mexican example by making a Mexican-type revolution but without the bloodshed. He replied: "Unfortunately, he did not go far enough. If Perón had succeeded, Argentina would not be faced with its current predicament." The Mexican Revolution, which awakened an entire continent, showed the way. If Argentina had followed, it might have maintained its place in the sun. As Firmenich glumly conceded, "Argentina no longer holds first place even in Latin America."

What happened to Argentina, Firmenich agreed, is what might have happened to the United States if the southern plantocracy had won the Civil War. The war would have continued intermittently with the North carrying on a resistance similar to that of the popular forces in Argentina, "an interrupted war that periodically cooled off but then heated up in the clash between rival armies, as during the military insurrection of the Radicals in 1905, the bombing of Plaza de Mayo by the naval air force in June 1955, et cetera."

But, one may ask, is the Argentine oligarchy today the same kind of semifeudal landowning class, whose domination the Mexican Revolution challenged and finally overcame at the cost of ten years of warfare? And is it really comparable to the southern plantocracy in the United States? No, it is a different class, according

to the Montoneros, but one that is organically linked to its land-holding predecessor.

In "Bases for a Constituent Alliance of the New Argentina," in the same issue of *Vencer*, the Montoneros give their analysis of more than 500 enterprises belonging to economic groups dominated by the Argentine oligarchy. The approximate breakdown is: thirty-four percent pertaining to land and cattle; twenty-four percent representing financial interests; sixteen percent industrial enterprises; thirteen percent commercial undertakings; and the remaining thirteen percent divided among other sectors. "In addition to landowning, therefore, the oligarchy is also industrial, financial, and commercial." Indeed, the landowning oligarchy represents only one-third of the total. Since today's oligarchy is preeminently financial, industrial, and commercial, it favors the modern as well as traditional sectors of the economy.

The contemporary struggle against the oligarchy is not the same kind of contest that it was formerly. The Montoneros acknowledge that today it is a struggle to overcome a dependent capitalist economy dominated by the multinationals. What has not changed is the continuing confrontation with the armed forces, the principal prop of the oligarchy's power.

The Montoneros make a special point of the armed forces' subservience to the oligarchy. Part one of the "Bases for a Constituent Alliance" opens with the statement that "the oligarchy's position in power during the many years from 1930 to the present has been possible only by means of the manipulation of the nation's armed forces in its exclusive service." How has this been accomplished? Ideologically, the oligarchy has preyed upon the armed forces' fear of subversion. Politically, it has called on the military to share in the responsibilities of government. But the decisive influence has been economic. As part two of the document points out: "Today, every superior officer knows that at the end of a career of protecting the oligarchy's interests there is a chair on the board of directors of its enterprises; along the road there are interesting 'compensations'; and in the event of refusing to take this road, the risk of not going very far."

Yet the document also acknowledges that the armed forces are divided into rival wings and that one wing favors the multinationals. In part one we read: "The struggle for hegemony between the oligarchy and the monopolies generates a power vacuum and con-

fronts the armed forces with themselves: the *colorados* in favor of oligarchical hegemony, the *azules* (who triumph) giving that role to the foreign monopolies." Such a violent confrontation took place in 1963, after which a *modus vivendi* was reached based on an imperialist-oligarchical alliance.

By the Montoneros' own admission, the major partner in this alliance is not the oligarchy but the multinationals. Part two of the "Bases" is unequivocal: "In its association with the imperialist monopolies the oligarchy is dependent; it adjusts to the demands of the diverse models that on the international plane are developed by the dominant capitalist bloc." Although the oligarchy has maintained its privileges by its ability to manipulate the armed forces, the multinational bourgeoisie dominates both the economy and the military by virtue of manipulating the oligarchy.

This document was followed by the publication of the Montoneros' economic assessment, *Oligarchical Economic Groups in Argentina* (March 1982), with a prologue by the number two Montonero, Roberto C. Perdía. On the premise that the confrontation between people and oligarchy is still inconclusive, Perdía underscored the need to be precise concerning the socio-economic enemy of the workers, the people, and the nation. To put an end to the antagonism between people and oligarchy, he claimed, it was indispensable to understand the oligarchy's dependence on the multinationals operating in Argentina. The following sketch is taken from chapter one.

Fundamental to the Montoneros' analysis is the concept of "interest group." Whereas the individual firm is the basic economic unit of small and medium-size capitalists producing for the local market, the interest group is the basic unit of the oligarchy. In general terms, this unit may be defined as a cluster of interrelated enterprises in the sphere of circulation as well as production, whose respective properties and strategies of accumulation are controlled by the same functionaries and serve the same capital. "The structure of these economic groups is neither closed nor isolated from other economically dominant units, but on the contrary possesses the necessary flexibility to incorporate other capitals and to project itself into spaces controlled by other interests." First, there is the central space defined by a controlling share of the stock. Second, there are the spaces shared with other economic units in which, without any one of them having a controlling share, strategic control

is based on agreement. In this way interest groups enter into complex and interlocking relationships that contribute to their mutual advantage.

The interest group is a phenomenon peculiar to the monopoly phase of capitalism since World War II. "During the development of the monopoly phase, in our understanding, advanced forms of capital self-expansion that take hold in central economies displace the enterprise as the economic unit of the accumulation process." The predominant mode of accumulation of these new economic units is transnational. Thus in Latin America they have displaced the traditional firm while giving rise to a new international economy under American rather than British control.

According to this analysis, the Argentine economy is dominated by two major economic blocs. The first consists of the multinational enterprises or transnationals. Although the hegemonic role of foreign corporations in Argentina dates back to the turn of the century when British interests controlled the meat industry, the former agro-export economy experienced a crisis after World War I. Several new plans were tried, until in 1976 the monopolistic oligarchical plan was imposed in the form of an agro-petroleum-industrial export model. The second bloc consists of economic groups pertaining to the oligarchy. Although the oligarchy initially consisted of big landowners from the pampas and the Patagonian South, today those landowning families are also the biggest stockholders in businesses with strong ties to the multinationals.

Typical examples of these major blocs are singled out for special discussion. The multinational bloc is supposedly typified by Ford Motor Co., which produces glass and metallurgical products linked to the manufacture of automobiles, trucks, and tractors. But Ford is not limited to automobiles and automobile-related products. Through its subsidiary Ford Aerospace, it also manufactures electronic and communications systems used in the construction of missiles and communication satellites. In Argentina, Ford Motor Co. currently controls six enterprises, four related to the production of automobiles plus two financial concerns. "The control of the capital is in the hands of the Ford family, which owns forty percent of the stock of the mother company." In short, the typical interest group in the multinational sector of the Argentine economy is an example of so-called family capitalism.

The oligarchical bloc is also typified by a family enterprise, the

Braun Menéndez-Menéndez Behety economic group. It is the outright owner of 5.5 million acres, not to mention the control it shares with other oligarchical and foreign interests over hundreds of thousands of acres in Chile as well as Argentina. Just the landholdings of which it is the sole proprietor exceed the land area of the Republic of El Salvador. Through its ownership of the Patagonian Importing and Exporting Co., this group is also one of the country's largest exporters of wool. Its diverse interests include shipbuilding, maritime transport, and shipping repair and salvage operations, as well as industrial enterprises such as veterinary products, soft drinks, book publishing, and wood flooring. It is also involved in mining, oil drilling, and finance. As a multifamily enterprise, its origins date from the marriage of Mauricio Braun and Josefina Menéndez Behety before the turn of the century, a liaison that fused the already powerful interests of the Braun and Menéndez families. Although ownership of this economic group is shared among different branches of the same family, together they control its overall operations.

In his prologue, Perdía acknowledges the influence of Rodolfo Puiggrós on the Montonero research team responsible for the research. I mention this because the research shares the faults of a conventional Marxist analysis, the kind of analysis that has endeared itself to Marxists because of its "robber baron," "industrial magnate," or "tycoon" approach. This is especially evident in later chapters in which U.S. capitalism is conceptualized as under the thumb of the Morgans, Rockefellers, Duponts, and Mellons.

A major source of the Montoneros' data is *The Structure of the Financial Oligarchy in the United States* (1974), by the Soviet economist S. Menshikov. Its conceptualization of U.S. capitalism is flawed along the same lines as the Montoneros' study. Both works contain caricatures of contemporary corporate leadership in America. In reproducing the same stereotypes as the television show "Dallas," they encourage the fiction that "J.R." is the typical corporation executive.

A methodological note in chapter two unintentionally acknowledges the limitations of the study. Two methodologies have been used to establish the structure of interest groups: "The first starts with the analysis of property in the means of production, while the second analyzes the composition of the enterprises' boards of directors." The first approach distinguishes those enterprises in which

a specific capital holds a majority of the stock from those in which it owns only a minority. The second approach distinguishes enterprises that are controlled by a specific economic group from those that are under mixed control. But both assume that control is based on ownership, that Argentina is a *patria financiera*, a financial fatherland dominated by the investment banks and corresponding family fortunes. The result is a model of capitalism that the students of business history in Harvard's Graduate School of Business Administration associate with forms that have become increasingly obsolete since World War II—at least in the central economies.

As the antithesis of the Montoneros' analysis I should like to consider two recent works in the intellectual tradition of Adolf Berle's and Gardiner Means' groundbreaking study, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1933). Reaffirming the shift in corporate power from owners to professional managers or technocrats are two books by Harvard business historian Alfred Chandler, Jr.: *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (1977) and a work co-edited with Herman Daems, *Managerial Hierarchies: Comparative Perspectives on the Rise of the Modern Industrial Enterprise* (1980). For a summary of the central thesis of both works, I turn to Chandler's opening essay in *Managerial Hierarchies* entitled "The United States: Seedbed of Managerial Capitalism."

In reviewing the history of the giant corporations, Chandler distinguishes three principal stages. In the first stage the owners and managers were the same person, their firms being entrepreneurial during the first generation and family-dominated thereafter. Such firms were concentrated in a single line of activity and were typically self-financing.

The family firm subsequently gave way to the financially dominated corporation in which bankers and other financiers provided the capital and participated in management decisions. These were the "moguls" or "tycoons" who typically controlled a cluster of enterprises in various lines of activity operated with other people's money. Unlike the traditional entrepreneur, the tycoon represented an "interest group," a number of corporations under common control whose locus of power was typically an investment or commercial banking firm, such as J. P. Morgan & Co.

Later, the power of the investment banker was displaced by that of the professional manager. "No family or financial institution was

large enough to staff the managerial hierarchies required to administer modern multiunit enterprises." Thus both family and financial capitalism proved to be mere waystations in the evolution toward what Chandler designates as contemporary managerial capitalism.

The contemporary corporation, according to Chandler, exhibits two essential characteristics. First, as a large multiple-unit enterprise in which each unit has its own administrative offices, professional managers, and set of accounts, it resembles the economic group defined by the Montoneros. Second, it employs a hierarchy of managers who not only supervise the work of the various units, but also constitute "an entirely new class of businessmen." These managers are supervised by others like themselves who in turn report to senior executives who are also salaried managers. "Because the salaried managers developed specialized knowledge and because their enterprises were able to generate the funds necessary for expansion, they ultimately took over the top-level decision making from the owners or financiers or their representatives."

Contrary to the Montoneros' assessment, the multinational corporations are for the most part dominated by professional managers who, because they are no longer functionaries of the capitalists, give first priority to their own interests as members of a new class. The enterprises are called managerial enterprises because the "top-level management decisions . . . are made by salaried managers who own little of the companies' stock."

As early as 1933 Berle and Means argued that control of the great corporations was passing into the hands of a purely neutral technocracy balancing the claims of various groups in the community, with the prospect of assigning to each a portion of the corporate income on the basis of public policy. In this account the professional managers or technocrats are public arbiters in a position between labor and capital, concerned with smoothing over class struggle in the interest of the corporation as a whole. Their full responsibility is to all who have a stake in the enterprise, to the *stakeholders*, not just to the stockholders. It follows that the major goals of the modern corporation are not only high profits but also expense accounts and large salaries, plus wages high enough to elicit the workers' best efforts while minimizing social tensions on the job. Although the authors characterize these goals as impartial, in fact they are instrumental in lining the pockets of management as well as capital. Thus cupidity is no longer the prerogative of ownership.

Admittedly, most managers are neither capitalists nor functionaries of capitalists. The days are gone when boards of directors were dominated by big stockholders. For the most part, management today is a self-perpetuating elite that is both autonomous and hegemonic within the enterprise. But despite the managers' high salaries and expense accounts, stockholders continue to pocket a substantial portion of the income. Although managers are in the saddle, they have yet to eliminate their principal rival.

That is why the capitalist label continues to be applied to a system evidently in transition. However, if the managerial enterprise is a mixture of managerial and capitalist features, then so is the corresponding economic system. As Frederick Engels depicted this transitional economic order in part three of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, it is an "invading socialistic society" in which competition yields to monopoly, unregulated production to partial planning, and capitalists to professional managers at the helm of the modern corporation. Thus "the social functions of the capitalist are now performed by salaried employees . . . [and the] capitalist has no further social function than that of pocketing dividends."

In the conventional wisdom a mixed economy includes a comparatively large public or bureaucratic sector alongside the private or capitalist sector. In addition, there is a third sector of so-called mixed enterprises. The usual example of a mixed enterprise is one in which the state shares in the ownership. But the contemporary managerial enterprise, which is privately owned but management controlled, also fits this designation. Both are transitional forms between capitalism and postcapitalist society.

Unfortunately for the Montoneros' argument, the managerial enterprise does not enter into their calculations. By monopoly capitalism the Montoneros understand what Chandler calls financial or second-stage capitalism. In their perception the multinational corporations are managed by an international group belonging to the same social class as Argentina's native oligarchy. The Montoneros include this group in the top stratum of the capitalists. But professional managers in control of the multinationals belong to Chandler's "new business class" or what the Montoneros identify as "technocrats." This poses problems for the Montoneros' assessment of imperialism and their thesis of an oligarchical restoration.

To inject a personal note into this discussion, my father was an executive of a multinational in Argentina that fits Chandler's de-

scription of a managerial enterprise. Through the 1930s he was manager of the beef department of *Compañía Swift de la Plata*, an Argentine affiliate of Swift International, subsequently International Packers, Ltd. He and others like him rose through the ranks to become presidents of the company's branches in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, and thereby vice-presidents of Swift International with its headquarters in Chicago. Fred Six, chief cattle-buyer in Buenos Aires, was promoted to president of *Compañía Swift de la Plata*; Pete James was transferred to Montevideo where he became president of the Uruguayan branch; Clarence Horton became the top executive of *Companhia Swift do Brasil*; and Joseph Hanson became president of the mother company in the United States. I mention them because they lived on their executive salaries, not on the dividends they received from their shares in the corporation. On the company's board of directors during the 1930s only C. H. Swift qualified as a representative of the original family owners. A self-perpetuating elite, the executive officers of Swift International were functionaries of the corporation rather than of the stockholders.

In the case of Swift International, the relationship of managers to the workers was not a strictly capitalist one. If Swift International accurately typifies the multinationals that still operate in Argentina, then it is safe to say that the word "capitalist" does not fit their social relations of production. Those relations are more accurately described as bureaucratic or managerial. The capitalist component of the mix is to be found elsewhere, in the form of dividends periodically paid to the stockholders.

These distinctions are crucial for understanding the international role of the multinationals, or what the Montoneros call "economic imperialism." Because foreign investment in Argentina continues to siphon off huge amounts in profits and interest along with other transfers of wealth to the major powers, the Montoneros equate imperialism with the fundamental enemy of the Argentine people. But they mistakenly identify that enemy with international capitalism rather than with a transitional new order dominated by the multinationals. This new order is hardly responsible for the perpetuation of capitalist production relations in Argentina. There the decisive role in upholding the economic status quo belongs to the oligarchy and its influence on the prevailing political culture—not the executive boards of the transnationals.

For Peronists, a major index of a postcapitalist economy is labor's share of the national income. The minimum objective of a Justicialist economic order is the so-called "fifty-fifty" distribution—fifty percent for capital and fifty percent for labor—anything less for labor being interpreted as the perpetuation of capitalist relations of production as well as distribution. As Perón defended the "Third Position" in economics in a speech to the CGT (27 December 1973): "The owners have a right to half of the total income because they pay for the labor, the raw materials, the expenses of administration and, additionally, have to earn a profit. This is completely covered by fifty percent of what is produced. The other fifty percent belongs to the workers."

Although it is possible to creep into socialism of the nondogmatic, non-Marxist variety through a process Perón identified with "national socialism," the threshold had to be high enough for workers' income to at least match that from the ownership of capital. Such an equilibrium had been an essential part of Perón's economic doctrine during his first two administrations. In the same speech to the CGT he recalled that in 1955 the equilibrium had virtually been reached: 47.7 percent for workers. "This ascending scale was being raised by us until it reached fifty-fifty, [but] the percentage declined during the eighteen years after 1955 to 33 percent."

The irony is that this objective of a fifty-fifty sharing of the national income had not only been achieved but also surpassed by the United States as early as 1929. Indeed, the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (1980) indicates that in 1929 the proportions were 60 percent for labor and 40 percent for the combined total of proprietors' income, corporate profits, rental income, and net interest (Table 734), or 1.5 times the share of capital. Following Perón's guideline, the United States had more than achieved the desired equilibrium of a Justicialist economy. Evidently, Perón had not set his sights high enough.

Not until the setback to organized labor during the Military Process did Argentine trade unionists perceive the limitations of the Peronist project. In the "Conjunctural Analysis of Wages" by the Commission of 25, published in *La Nación* (19 December 1978), labor's share in Argentina was contrasted with labor's share in such comparable countries as Canada and Australia, where it hovered between 63 and 65 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. For evidence that an increasing share of labor in the national income

was compatible with a high level of economic development, the document noted that "countries of advanced development allocate in the form of labor income some 65 to 70 percent and more of the Gross Domestic Product." As for the United States, the *Statistical Abstract* (1980) indicates that for the same year 1978 the proportions were 75 percent for labor and 25 percent for the combined total of profits, net interest, and rents (Table 734), or approximately three times the share of capital.

In this perspective, the fundamental blame for Argentina's economic impasse is not "imperialism" or the multinationals but the native oligarchy. For it was precisely the "invading socialistic society" that made possible the high ratio of earnings in favor of labor in the United States—long before World War II when American interests in Argentina began to displace the British. To be sure, the category of "employee compensation" is a catch-all. It includes not only the wages of unskilled, semiskilled, and skilled manual workers, but also the income of a "new class" of professional, scientific, and administrative employees whose salaries constitute the single most rapidly growing component of the national income. Contrary to the Peronist paradigm, income from capital is not the only income currently derived from exploitation. The salaries of professionals conceal still another kind of tribute—the difference between the market price of selling expertise and the cost of acquiring it.

This distinction is basic to understanding not only the transitional economic order between capitalism and socialism, but also the new socialist society with which Third World revolutionaries are replacing capitalism. Socialism may be an improvement on the old order, but it is hardly the panacea most Marxists would have us believe. Although the Montoneros and Argentina's other revolutionary vanguards have made a cogent case for socialism in their country, it is a socialism not entirely free from illusions.

If the multinationals have outgrown their capitalist integument through developing new social relations of production, then one also needs to reassess the thesis that the Military Process was a military-oligarchical dictatorship. Accuracy requires that the Military Process be characterized also as a military-technocratic regime. Whom did it serve? Not only those the Montoneros subsumed under the heading of an imperialist-oligarchical alliance, but also the professionals in the armed forces and their technocratic allies

in policy-making positions in the principal government agencies. Contrary to the Montoneros' assumption that the dictatorship served only the interests of foreign and native capitalists, its principal beneficiaries included the salaried executives of the multinationals and native joint-stock enterprises. The focus on an oligarchical restoration underestimates the independent role of the oligarchy's chief partners in the conspiracy against the Argentine people. If anything, the generals and technocrats of the Military Process had more in common with their professional peers in the multinationals than with functionless proprietors and absentee owners whose wealth was mainly inherited.

Of course, not all oligarchs are functionless. But the Montoneros are surely mistaken in saying that José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz is the oligarchy's most representative figure. His family founded the Argentine Rural Society (SRA), his great grandfather having been its first president and his father also a president. The owner of more than 1.5 million acres inherited from a family of landowners that had amassed a fabulous fortune as far back as 1850, he has economic interests in commercial, industrial, and financial enterprises through which he has strong ties to the multinationals. He has served as president of the Argentine Council of Businessmen (CEA) and is currently on the boards of directors of more than a dozen major industrial enterprises. Besides being a major landowner and stockholder, he has taken an active part in management.

However, this description is far from defining Martínez de Hoz's ideology. For that we turn to his influential book, *Bases for a Modern Argentina 1976–80*. A vivid testimony to his concern for economic development as well as Argentina's comparative advantages in international trade, his book also stresses the need for new technology. This mode of thought can best be described as "technocratic."

In the preface we are told that the implementation of the economic guidelines contained in the basic documents of the Process of National Reorganization was confided to a group of professionals under Martínez de Hoz in his capacity as the new minister of economy. The foreword by General Jorge Rafael Videla testifies to the armed forces' support of Martínez de Hoz's program. There is no reason to believe that professional soldiers and technocrats would have accepted that program if it were partial only to the oligarchy and did not serve their own economic interests. Indeed, a careful

examination of the book indicates that the program favored the interests of managers and professionals including the military, which is to say that it cannot be simply written off as advocacy of a *patria financiera*.

The substance of the book consists of the economic program adopted by the first military junta, implemented by Martínez de Hoz over a five-year period. Support for the interests of managers and professionals is evident in its concern to raise the salaries of managers of state enterprises to the level of their peers in private industry. Chapter six recalls one of the many reforms Martínez de Hoz introduced: "With respect to the remunerations of the personnel of state enterprises, these were made equal to those in private enterprises in such a way that, given certain limitations, they raised the hierarchical position of superior, qualified, scientific, and professional personnel." State enterprises became more efficient, but the obvious beneficiaries were not members of the oligarchy. On the contrary, the oligarchy has always favored cheap government and, wherever possible, a cutback in the salaries of government employees.

An essential ingredient in Martínez de Hoz's program was the staggering foreign debt, which jumped from a modest 8 billion dollars when the military took over in March 1976 to some 27 billion five years later and to more than 40 billion by the end of the Military Process. It too had its defenders. These included not only the foreign banks that thrived on Argentina's increasing financial dependency, but also the country's professional, scientific, and managerial elites who filled the new positions created by this largesse. Known to its native beneficiaries as the "sweet money" (*plata dulce*), it provided the wherewithal for the substantial raises in departmental budgets and professional salaries implemented by the economy minister.

Completely free of ideologically saturated terms like "capital," "capitalists," and "capitalism," Martínez de Hoz's book outlines a position self-understood to be neither left nor right but in front. Thus it defends a modern or "rationalized" economy based on the efficient allocation of scarce resources and a cost-effective division of labor between the public and private sectors. What justifies a strong public sector are not political but technical considerations, such as doing what the private sector will not or cannot do as efficiently.

Although Martínez de Hoz's policies favored the private sector, within that sector they benefited foreign managerial enterprises to the disadvantage of Argentina's small and middle-size capitalists. In canceling subsidies to enterprises that were judged noncompetitive by international standards, his policies were responsible for dismantling the least technically developed sector of Argentine industry and the socially most retrograde. That is to say, traditional capitalist and family-owned enterprises succumbed to the transitional or mixed enterprises represented by the multinationals. Not without reason, Martínez de Hoz's book ends by characterizing those reforms as part of a "program that for Argentina is truly revolutionary!"

Unquestionably, the social cost of modernizing and rationalizing the Argentine economy signified more than the dismantling of native industry. The other face of technical progress was the suffering of the people it displaced. Although the military's touted objectives were the eradication of subversion and the political corruption and economic bungling of Peronist governments since 1973, it was also concerned to smash the power of organized labor. Because the working class resisted Martínez de Hoz's policies, it became a major victim of repression. The military government repeatedly affirmed that the new regime was not aimed against any particular sector. In fact, the lid on wages and restrictions on collective bargaining constituted a serious blow against the working class.

The Military Process represented the converging interests not only of the new class of managers and professionals and the old proprietary class, but also of the two main groups of professionals within the armed forces that co-authored the 1976 coup. These were the liberals led by Jorge Rafael Videla and Roberto Viola, and the authoritarians represented by such generals as Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, Guillermo Suárez Masón, Santiago Omar Riveros, and Ramón J. Camps. This division along ideological lines became confused in the press with the quite different distinction between "moderates" or "doves" (*palomas*) and "hardliners" or "hawks" (*halcones*). As matters turned out, the liberals could be as tough as the authoritarians on the issue of how to respond to subversion.

This characterization of the principal factions within the armed forces corresponds to the rivalry between liberals and authoritarians during the so-called "Argentine Revolution" of 1966–73. Then too liberals favored the policies of the multinationals, and author-

itarians looked for support to the oligarchy. But their differences went deeper than this, because the authoritarians also had a plan of their own.

As Guillermo O'Donnell notes in *The Bureaucratic Authoritarian State 1966–1973*, the authoritarians had close ties with traditional currents in the Roman Catholic Church, were avid admirers of Franco's Spain, and entertained ideas of a corporate state based on an illusory patriarchal past. With roots in the provincial petty bourgeoisie, he says in chapter two, they were traditionalist in outlook and "wanted to construct a society that was as alien to the politics of the masses as to that of big business . . . [as was] evident in their reticence toward capitalism, profits, and big enterprise." Champions of order, social integration, and the depoliticization of the masses, they relied on a government of technocrats to settle the so-called social question through purely rational and politically "neutral" means. General Juan Carlos Onganía is cited as the typical representative of this authoritarian current.

These were not the only factions in the armed forces. The group to which Perón belonged also had a plan independent of the oligarchy and the multinationals. It too had a corporativist bias. But instead of depoliticizing the masses, it tried to mobilize them politically. Rather than traditionalist, it was populist in orientation. O'Donnell uses the term "nationalist" to distinguish it from the authoritarian or "paternalist" current represented by Onganía.

The authoritarian and nationalist factions in the armed forces converged on a common bureaucratic model. Both were committed to a position between capitalism and socialism, O'Donnell claims, but with the backing of different allies. While the authoritarians relied on the oligarchy for support, the nationalists favored an alliance with organized labor and the national bourgeoisie of small and middle-size capitalists.

The authoritarian rather than nationalist current is the one Jacobo Timerman, in *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, labeled "extremist." He also called it "fascist," identifying its crusade against Jews and Communists with survivals of Nazi ideology in Argentina. O'Donnell is more cautious: "Its corporativist vision is furrowed with organicist images, but it is far from a fascist ideology thanks to a conservatism impregnated with paternalism, hostile toward all political mobilization and deluded into recovering the 'social integration' of a mythical patriarchal past."

I have made a point of distinguishing these separate currents and of insisting on the independence of their respective approaches, because the Montoneros subsume the conflicts within the armed forces under the fundamental antagonism "people-oligarchy." Actually, there was a three-part struggle involving the oligarchy at one pole, organized labor at the other, and a third force of technocrats or military and civilian professionals in an intermediate position. This third force, rather than the principal poles of the "contradiction," is taking the decisive role in Argentine events.

The recent Military Process testifies to the preponderance of this third force. Backed by military governments staffed by professionals of the new class, managerial enterprises dominated the economy. Despite the anti-labor legislation, the Military Process also contributed to crippling the bourgeoisie. Only the financial oligarchs or top stratum of capitalists improved their position vis-à-vis the people, but they were never more than a partner of the military and its technocratic allies.

This interpretation of the Military Process challenges both the Montoneros' version and the prevailing interpretation in Argentina of a bureaucratic authoritarian state. As an interpretation of the new National Security States that appeared in the Southern Cone on the heels of the Brazilian military coup of 1964, O'Donnell's book lists their defining features at the end of chapter one. In view of the preceding discussion, it is his first and crucial class characterization that must be contested. First, the bureaucratic authoritarian state is hegemonized by the oligarchy or big bourgeoisie associated with the multinationals. Second, it is a state of political "order" and economic "normalization" favoring the private sector. Third, it entails political exclusion and deactivation of the popular forces. Fourth, it suppresses political democracy and political parties that cater to the masses. Fifth, it means economic exclusion in accentuating inequalities of wealth. Sixth, it encourages investments by the multinationals with resulting dependence upon them. Seventh, it purges the nation of so-called "sick" elements. Eighth, it depoliticizes issues in favor of a technical or problem-solving approach to social and political questions. Finally, it restricts access to top governmental positions to persons with successful careers in the armed forces, state enterprises, and the big corporations. In sum, the bureaucratic authoritarian state is a repressive oligarchical state organizing and reproducing capitalist relations of

production, but managed by a professional bureaucracy under the watchful eye of the armed forces. It is what the Montoneros call an "oligarchical-military dictatorship" in the service of an "imperialist-oligarchical project."

As a description of the actual state of affairs during the so-called "Argentine Revolution" and the Military Process, this model is flawed. First, it assumes that the military bureaucracy in control of the government from 1966 to 1973 and from 1976 to 1983 was mainly an instrument of the financial oligarchy. In fact, the bureaucracy was politically independent of the oligarchy and economically dependent on foreign banks and the multinationals. Second, it equates the country's economic dependence on the multinationals with dependence on foreign capitalism. But if the multinationals are transitional forms of business enterprise, then the country's economic dependence must increasingly be described as bureaucratic. Third, because it is only a typology and therefore essentially static, the model cannot be used to forecast. In particular, it ignores the tendency of Argentine enterprises to become bureaucratized.

It would be more accurate to say that the Military Process was hegemonized by the same professional-managerial class as the Peronist phenomenon it replaced. What distinguished the two were their beneficiaries and the class alliances that helped propel the new class into power. As we have seen, the Peronist approach hinged on an alliance of the Peronist political and labor bureaucracies with the working class and the national bourgeoisie. In sharp contrast, the military relied on an alliance with the financial oligarchy and the multinationals. In the first case labor benefited; in the second, the oligarchy and managers of foreign corporations.

These rival bureaucratic models are associated with different political regimes and corresponding types of state. The Peronist model goes hand in hand with a representative state under bureaucratic control; the Military Process and its predecessor, the self-styled Argentine Revolution, with a repressive state also bureaucratically controlled. Although distinguished by the extent of popular representation and by the level of mass repression, to focus on these particular features is to miss the common element that unites them. That fundamental element is bureaucratic rule by a professional and organizational elite.

The bureaucratic structure of the Peronist trade unions accounts

in part for their alliance with the nationalist wing of the armed forces during Perón's first two administrations, and for subsequent efforts to revive the alliance. Argentines were not exactly surprised during the 1983 presidential campaign when Alfonsín denounced the proposed military-labor pact by General Cristino Nicolaides and General Juan Carlos Trimarco, who agreed to favor Miguel's "62 Organizations" in the reorganization of the government-controlled trade unions in exchange for impunity after the Peronists returned to power. Nor were they surprised when General Adelfo Vilas, the head of "Operation Independence" against the ERP's rural guerrillas in Tucumán and an outspoken defender of the "dirty war," decided to join the Peronist Party on the eve of the elections—along with the "Butcher of Buenos Aires," the infamous General Ramón J. Camps. These switch-overs, which proved politically embarrassing for the Peronists, confirmed the Radicals' suspicion that the Peronist tradition of "verticalism" shared common ground with the authoritarianism of the armed forces.

Missing from the Montoneros' analysis of Argentine reality is an appreciation of the principal factor accounting for this convergence of the military and labor bureaucracies—the emergence of a new bureaucratic class. For the most part the Montoneros still define "class" in accordance with the Marxist intellectual legacy, as a function of ownership of the traditional factors of production. Thus the two essential classes of capitalist society are owners of the instruments and machinery of production (capitalists), and owners of mere labor power (wage-earners). It follows that government employees including members of the armed forces do not belong to any class. As for production managers and other so-called "functionaries of the capitalists," Marx misleadingly classified them in a higher-paid stratum of the proletariat.

At least the Montoneros do not make this last mistake. In a July 1976 interview republished in NACLA's *Latin America & Empire Report* (January 1977), Firmenich declared: "Contradictions exist between the working class and salaried sectors who are not workers; as well as between these two sectors and the petty bourgeoisie." Firmenich called for an alliance between the working class and "non-worker salaried employees" against their common enemy—foreign capital, small and medium-size capitalists associated with imperialism, the oligarchy, and pro-imperialist functionaries of the capitalists. However, the fundamental question is who is likely

to dominate his proposed alliance: the working class or salaried employees?

The Montoneros share two common pitfalls of the political left in Argentina: an underestimation of the oligarchy's potential to adapt successfully to what Perón called the new cycle of socialist revolutions since 1917; and an overestimation of the popular basis of the revolution of the twentieth century. Thus they discredit the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism, and they confuse socialism with the advent of a classless society in which exploitation is done away with.

If nothing else, Perón had realism on his side. In chapter two of *Peronist Philosophy* he devoted a special section to the theoretical contributions of Karl Marx that indicates a more than superficial understanding of them. Whether familiar or not with Marx's views in *Capital* concerning the peaceful evolution of capitalism into socialism, Perón shared Marx's scenario, sketched in chapter twenty-seven of volume three, of the "abolition of capital as private property within the framework of capitalism," and the "transformation of the actually functioning capitalist into a mere manager . . . and of the owner of capital into a mere owner."

Perón was also aware that a new mode of production had replaced the old division into propertied and unpropertied classes with a new hierarchical order of managers and managed, educated elites and uneducated masses—although he euphemistically described them all as workers. In chapter seven of *Peronist Philosophy* he examined the social theory of Michael Bakunin, with whom he shared the same skepticism concerning the underlying significance of a Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat. The mass of ordinary workers, Perón believed, would continue to be exploited, if not by individual capitalists, then by the state masquerading as the protector of the workers. The state would really belong to a new privileged class, alternately referred to by Bakunin as an "intellectual-managerial elite" (1866), a "fourth governing class" (1867), a "bureaucratic class" (1872), or a "political-scientific class" (1873). Thus the Russian anarchist foresaw that under a proletarian dictatorship "there will remain another proletariat which will be subject to this new rule, to this new state." With this and other passages from Bakunin's principal work, *Statism and Anarchy* (1873), Perón was in substantial agreement.

Raimundo Ongaro also owes an intellectual debt to Marx and

Bakunin, but with one significant difference. Unlike Perón, who accommodated himself to the bureaucratic current in socialism in an effort to keep pace with the times, Ongaro hopes to force the march of events by confronting two enemies at once and by moving forward to a postbureaucratic society. For Perón, Ongaro was merely another well-intentioned *apresurado*, an ultra-leftist overcome by revolutionary impatience. But one can credit Ongaro with avoiding the errors of the country's self-proclaimed revolutionary vanguards. Like Perón, he acknowledges the enemy's capacity to adapt to the new order and questions the popular basis of the Montoneros' still inconclusive revolution.

These distinctions are central to Ongaro's interpretation of Argentine reality. In his assessment of contemporary events and what is to come, Argentine workers are confronted with not one but two major class enemies, a class of "technocrats" as well as capitalists. During my interview at his home in Los Polvorines near Campo de Mayo (January 26, 1985), he claimed that the coming struggle, for which labor should begin preparing itself, will be that between the "intellectually qualified and unqualified." The old unionism with its focus on hours, wages, and benefits, he argued, no longer fits even the present situation in which "those who know, order; those who do not, obey" (*Los que saben, mandan; los que no saben, obedecen*).

To cope with this so-called "new class," a political-military *foco* or other form of armed vanguard is not enough. "The Montoneros were correct in their choice of armed struggle but mistaken in how to implement it. The Nicaraguan road of the 'people in arms' is the only effective revolutionary strategy; by itself an armed elite has been shown to be counterproductive." Likewise futile, Ongaro continued, is the old militancy epitomized by the *Cordobazo*. "A year of planning was required to take over a major city, which could be held for barely twenty four hours until retaken by the armed forces!" The crucial question, as before, is workers' power. But how to achieve it? Ongaro's answer is through the tactic of "labor *focos*."

The following is Ongaro's reformulation of Guevara's thesis concerning the *foco*, as summarized by Che in chapter one of *Guerrilla Warfare*. First, it is possible for ordinary workers to take over and manage their own industries. Second, it is not necessary to wait until all the conditions of takeover are present; the labor *foco* can create them by teaching the workers how to run a factory. Third,

the ideal terrain for waging the struggle for workers' power is the workplace. Although the ensuing struggle will involve a general insurrection as in Nicaragua, the explicit objective of the insurrection will be the takeover of industries by the workers. Thus the economic struggle is primary; political and military struggles are secondary. In this updated version of anarcho-syndicalist strategy influenced by Ongaro's close friend and mentor, Abraham Guillén, the revolutionary vanguard would consist not of disaffected intellectuals—the likes of Firmenich and Galimberti—but of the workers' organic or natural leaders of whom Ongaro is the prototype.

In exile in Madrid, Ongaro had periodically sought the advice of Guillén, who had returned to his native Spain after three decades as a political exile, most of them spent in Argentina. Together they shared the same classist commitment. Guillén's family owned a farm near Guadalajara, some fifty miles northeast of Madrid, where the two families vacationed during the summer of 1978. A strong friendship developed that further cemented their political bonds. Ongaro returned to Argentina in 1984 with Guillén's youngest son, who lives with the Ongaros in Los Polvorines and works at the Graphic Union headquarters on Paseo Colón. When I visited Ongaro at his home in January 1985 he was trying to raise money to bring Guillén back to Argentina so that, in his own words, "Abraham might assist me in the union's political work."

In Madrid, Guillén introduced Ongaro to the thought of Cornelius Castoriadis, the former editor of *Socialisme et Barbarie*, whose two-volume *Bureaucratic Society* had just been translated into Spanish. Independently of Guillén, Castoriadis had arrived at the same basic conclusions concerning the bureaucratization of contemporary society and the emergence of a new exploiting class made up of professional and managerial employees. Marx's fundamental contradiction between capitalists and wage-earners was rapidly being displaced, Castoriadis argued, by a new bureaucratic axis of contention between those with knowledge and those without—corresponding to what futurists call the "information rich" and the "information poor." Like Guillén, he believed that policies favoring nationalization and economic planning were devices by which the so-called "new class" was replacing capitalist exploitation with bureaucratic exploitation concealed in salaries for professional know-how.

What was the point of making a national revolution followed by

a so-called "socialist" transformation, Castoriadis asked, if the workers continued to be exploited and the bureaucrats reaped most of the rewards? As he notes in the opening section of his introduction to the first volume, "the socialist revolution cannot limit itself to eliminating the owners and private property in the means of production—it must also suppress the bureaucracy . . . [and] the division between managers and managed."

That, in a nutshell, is Ongaro's philosophy of the revolution, which distinguishes his classist version of revolutionary Peronism from the compromised version of the Montoneros. Ongaro may be a prophet and visionary, but his analysis of Argentine society is more realistic than that of most Peronists, although they pride themselves on their realism. The Montoneros' slogan of "Liberation or Dependence," for example, reduces the options to dependent capitalism or socialist revolution. But Ongaro is wary of what the Montoneros call "socialism." He believes that, besides capitalism and the classless society of communism, there exists what Castoriadis calls a "third historical solution"—bureaucratic society. Demystified, that was the substance of Perón's Third Position, of which a Third Historical Movement and the Montoneros' socialist revolution are at best radicalized versions.

Guillén had long ago exposed the hidden content of the Peronist national revolution. Perón's revolutionary plan had as its two principal enemies the native oligarchy and the multinational corporations. But the expropriation of big capitalists by the state principally benefits the nonworker salaried employees, who replace the capitalists in the management of nationalized industries. The nationalization of the operations of the multinationals in Argentina involves both the expropriation of foreign capital and the replacement of one set of managers by another, mainly foreign professionals by their Argentine counterparts. Thus the Montoneros' road to socialism plays into the hands of a new exploiting class. It replaces capitalism not with workers' power, but with a new bureaucratic mode of production.

That is the actual content of the much-touted national revolution, not to be confused with its ideological trappings. In effect, there are two competing revolutions in Argentina: the unplanned, inarticulate, and invisible revolution of the technocrats and other sectors of the new class; and the planned, articulate, and visible revolution associated with subversion. Both revolutions are still far

from ended. But the bureaucratic revolution has been creeping steadily ahead and does not appear to have suffered a setback during the Military Process. The same cannot be said for workers' power—Ongaro's model supported by the traditional classist left. His oft-quoted refrain, "Only the people can save the people," is further from its goal today than under the people's government of President Cámpora.

At issue is a revolution from above or from below, whose principal beneficiary in either case will be a new class. But the revolution from above is hampered by the bloc of the oligarchy with the multinationals and the armed forces, compounded by the multinationals' lack of native roots and by the military's reliance on violence. Popular resistance to such an approach has been enough to stymie it in the past and will quite likely continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

But can a Peronist-type approach or some Third Historical Movement do any better? A populist alliance has thus far failed in Argentina owing to the presence within it of the national bourgeoisie. Indeed, the Montoneros attribute the failures of Perón's second and third governments to the country's small and middle-size capitalists, who deserted the alliance when it adversely affected their profits.

Both of these approaches failed owing to an alliance with a sector of the capitalist class. Although neither the oligarchy nor the national bourgeoisie were hegemonic within their respective blocs, each was strong enough to prevent the new class from pushing forward with its political objectives and stressing its own economic interests. Thus, if the Montoneros hope to achieve their goal of a new Argentina, they must curb the ambitions of the national bourgeoisie.

In this perspective, the fundamental issue for Argentina is not only "people versus oligarchy" but also "what kind of revolution?"

The model solutions to the Argentine question range from the Military Process on the right through the Peronist center to revolutionary Peronism and the principal Marxist parties on the left. How do they compare? The Military Process moved forward at a snail's pace. The scope of its bureaucratic revolution was limited mainly to the political sphere while its elitist and genocidal character made it notoriously unpopular. The Peronist approach moved steadily ahead during Perón's first two governments but dragged

during his third. The scope of its revolution extended into the economic sphere but was hemmed in by a commitment to social equilibrium and class conciliation. The revolutionary Peronist and Marxist models have yet to take root among the masses and have suffered a major setback. Meanwhile, the new information revolution, computerization, and the restructuring of the work force to the benefit of a new class are pushing the country toward socialism independently of any political “-ism.”

The end of oligarchical hegemony is in sight, but it may be the work of these other forces rather than the political parties of the left. Although the revolution may be expected to gain ground, it will do so without the exaltation of the Peronist era. Whether the revolution will creep to victory in due measure and harmoniously or will come about through some great social cataclysm remains to be seen. In any event, it will be Perón’s revolution only in passing. Nor will it match up to Marxist expectations. The Hour of the Peoples has arrived, but it promises a new ruling minority in place of the old. Behind the “Third Position” and “Third Historical Movement” lurks what Castoriadis calls the “third historical solution”—bureaucratic society. Rather than some form of workers’ socialism, managerial socialism would seem to be the overriding prospect for Argentina in the twenty-first century.

15

The Idiosyncrasy of Peoples

Argentines are not like other peoples. I was reminded of this by my first cab driver on returning to Buenos Aires in January 1985. After learning that I was a North American, he commented: "Oh, the idiosyncrasy of peoples! Unlike you North Americans who all pull together, here we spend our energies fighting one another."

For a nation that has remained aloof from the principal wars of the twentieth century—World Wars I and II followed by the Korean War—it is understandable that the highly aggressive qualities that typify the Argentine national character are likely to find other outlets. More than one political observer has noted that the absence of belligerence internationally tends to feed social unrest at home. Thus my cabby's comment reminded me of a line from Cecil Rhodes in 1895, cited by Lenin in his tract on *Imperialism*: "If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists!"

The passage from which this sentence is taken reads in part as follows:

I was in the East End of London yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for "bread," "bread," "bread," and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism. . . . My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we, colonial statesmen, must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population.

Lebensraum! It was also Hitler's solution to the social question.

My cab driver's remarks further reminded me of a sentence from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. For those "who naturally love liberty and dominion over others," Hobbes wrote in the opening paragraph of part two, there is no other recourse than of "getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war which . . . [results] when there is no visible power to keep them in awe." By "awe" I understand Hobbes to have meant not only dread of punishment or repression of which Argentines have had their fill, but also reverence for the laws of the land inspired by religious or moral precepts. But in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America, there is no civil religion as in North America and the laws do not elicit veneration. There is an old Spanish proverb that sums up this attitude: "The law is the will of the prince." Hence its sole claim to obedience is the terror it instills, which is not enough to command obedience much less respect in Argentina.

Like other Latin Americans but to a greater extent than most, Argentines are obsessed with ideological and doctrinal matters. They tend to judge reality according to some all-encompassing theory, as if each individual were the repository of revealed truth. They also exhibit a "crusade complex" in the conviction that it is their sacred duty to save society by making it conform to their preconceptions of what is right and just. A prudent pragmatism, in the sense of tolerance for ideologies perceived as alien and a willingness to be flexible on macro- as well as micro-issues, has played a secondary role in shaping Argentine political outcomes. These socially alien and destructive barriers to a Hobbesian-type commonwealth are seemingly too deep-rooted to be eradicated. Thus in vain have North Americans lectured Argentines on the superiority of America's liberal democratic institutions.

Although President Alfonsín has made a fetish of the rule of law, he has only partially rescinded a decade of repressive legislation against organized labor. Trade union rights to collective bargaining without interference from the Ministry of Labor, to unfettered control of social welfare funds estimated at 2.5 billion dollars built from contributions by workers and employers, to workers' participation in the management of state-owned enterprises and a share in the profits, have yet to be recovered after being trampled under during the Military Process. Nor have workers regained the share of nearly fifty percent of the national income they received under

the last Peronist administration. Although the President is bent on national reconciliation, these and other grievances have undermined respect for the new government for being partial to vested interests.

The failure of organized labor to recover the privileges, power, and prominence it enjoyed when Peronists were in power explains its increasing animosity toward the Radical government. In May 1985 matters came to a head when, in a speech to a CGT mass mobilization in Formosa, Ubalдини gave an ultimatum to the government: "Either change your economic policy or get out!" A week later the CGT responded to the government's call for economic austerity by a general strike, the first really massive act of defiance against the government's labor policies.

In June the Congress adopted Alfonsín's so-called battle plan for halting the process of national decay. Because of some 1 billion dollars in arrears in the payment of the foreign debt, the country was on the verge of bankruptcy and the international banks had to be called in to bail it out. Spiraling inflation and its sequel of buying into foreign currencies graphically illustrate one aspect of Argentina's economic deterioration. When I returned to Buenos Aires in 1985 the rate of inflation was roughly twice that during the same months in 1976, high enough even then to fuel a military coup. At two percent per diem, inflation was responsible for astronomical interest rates. A six-month saving certificate, for example, earned around 450 percent. The deposit for our apartment was 40,000 pesos at an exchange rate of 200 pesos to the dollar on January 21. When the lease expired on April 30 the rate of exchange had fallen to 525 pesos, so that the deposit was no longer worth \$200 but \$75. Thus most Argentines became absorbed in the daily effort to compensate for the erosion of a radioactive peso. That was hardly the way to encourage production and the rebuilding of Argentina's industrial plant.

The Austral Plan, as Alfonsín's economic reforms were called, established wage and price controls, ended government overspending and payments on the foreign debt by the treasury's printing presses, and replaced the old currency with a new one. By then the peso had depreciated to 780 to the dollar—several zeros had already been removed to make it a credible substitute for a still earlier peso. Now three more zeros were removed to make way for the austral whose value was initially fixed at \$1.28 U.S. currency.

Understandably, the plan was denounced that same month by Ubalini for kowtowing to the bankers in the International Monetary Fund. A massive work stoppage and mobilization by the CGT in August announced to the country labor's continued opposition to the "reforms."

By September the CGT had emerged as the main popular force of opposition to the Radical government's antilabor policies. With the two political wings of the Justicialist Party at loggerheads, it was the sole remaining source of convergence for the Peronist movement and the only mass organization to take a firm stand against the Austral Plan. Its hegemonic position was further strengthened in December when it announced an alternative program of twenty-six points aimed at putting the country back on its feet. The program called for a moratorium on the foreign debt as well as its partial repudiation, the strengthening of the public sector, workers' self-management of state-owned industries, a share in the profits, and the recovery of exclusive trade union control of the workers' welfare funds.

The CGT's program was overwhelmingly accepted by virtually all the popular sectors ranging from the center of the political spectrum through the moderate to the extreme left. In January 1986 the country's major youth organizations publicly endorsed it with one conspicuous exception—the Radical Youth. A general strike that same month to protest the government's economic and labor policies testified to the CGT's growing sense of strength and newly acquired political importance.

The country had begun to polarize behind two rival programs—the government's Austral Plan and the CGT's twenty-six points. In February the National Executive Board of Revolutionary Peronism announced a six-point program that included support for the CGT's twenty-six points, in March another work stoppage mobilized workers to demonstrate their backing of the CGT's program, and in October still another general strike protested the government's economic and labor policies.

The military establishment also became bolder in its criticism of the government. In May 1986 the top army command publicly denounced the President for undermining the armed forces and pressured the government to stop further prosecutions against officers indicted for crimes during the "dirty war." When the Radical Party participated in the "March against Impunity," right-wing ter-

rorists responded with a rash of bombings of the party's locals. That same month a bomb intended for the President was uncovered within the 3rd Army Corps of Córdoba. Thus the President was beleaguered by the armed forces as well as the CGT. Not until April 1987, when the first military rebellion in Córdoba threatened the government's survival, did the CGT publicly come to Alfonsín's defense.

But the mass mobilizations in support of democracy said nothing in defense of the Austral Plan and its backing by the military. Nor was the political left happy when the President, after negotiating with the rebels, partly conceded to their demands. For the space of a week most Argentines closed ranks against the specter of a revival of the military era. But they were not about to forget their own sectoral interests. Although the military rebellion momentarily diverted attention to itself, it did not alter the fundamental polarization between the CGT and the government.

It is precisely the polarization of social forces and spirit of intransigence that makes Argentine politics so fascinating. With the noteworthy exception of the Radical Party, politics are carried on in Argentina in an almost pure state barely mixed with civic considerations. Both politics and civics are concerned with the art of the possible, with what can be done in a given historical conjuncture. But their political methods and goals are different.

Politics has been likened to a game and the same may be said of civics. While politics is a game of winners and losers, civics resembles a positive-sum game in which all promise to benefit simply by pulling together. Unlike politics, civics stresses the public interest rather than partisan loyalties. Everybody is treated in a friendly manner and there are no political enemies except those who break the rules. Nor are there life-and-death domestic issues that might threaten with intransigence the possibility of dialogue and collaboration.

In its civic dimension, the political art is concerned with the rights and duties of citizenship. These include the civil rights of life, liberty, health, education, and welfare, the right to property, and the specifically political rights to serve as electors and candidates to public office. Concerned with the arts of peace rather than war, civics encourages cooperation among citizens by providing "rules of the road" for their mutual convenience. It is the art of compromise aimed at adjusting competing claims, overcoming con-

flict, and reaching consensus. Government is cast in the role of a third party for settling disputes, while the grounds of civil obedience are found in a presumptive social contract, constitutional norms, and the rule of law. In defense of these norms, a system of checks and balances aims at restraining the use of power. In this perspective, the commonweal becomes the goal of political activity with law and justice as its ordering principles. Representing the mainstream of political philosophy in the English-speaking world, civics is concerned with lawful behavior and its moral justification.

In sharp contrast, politics is modeled on the arts of war. In *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*, Harold Lasswell identifies the field of politics as the study of influence and the influential, that is, power and the struggle for power. First published in 1936, its focus on the competition between elites and counter-elites is indebted to the works of European political thinkers, notably Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Georges Sorel. Their political thought, which had a major impact on fascist political theory, also has a special attraction for Latin Americans.

James Burnham shares with Lasswell a similar conception of the field of politics based on this same continental tradition, which he traces to Machiavelli. As he defines the scientific study of politics in the concluding part of *The Machiavellians*, its subject matter is the diverse, open and concealed ways in which power is acquired and maintained. So conceived, the ultimate goal of politics is the conquest of the state. In view of the phenomenon of Stalinism and the rise of fascism between the two world wars, it seems that contemporary politics is less than finicky about the choice of means.

War, says Karl von Clausewitz in the opening chapter of his book *On War*, is the continuation of politics with violence. He defines it as "armed conflict aimed at imposing one's will on an enemy by disarming him." How to do so requires mastery of the various techniques not only of armed struggle, but also of so-called psychological warfare. Nor would an understanding of war as a political phenomenon be complete if it were focused exclusively on the enemy. There is an old saying, "The enemies of my enemy are my friends." Success in politics requires experience at forging coalitions with social forces other than one's own. The political question *par excellence* "Who are our friends? Who are our enemies?" draws attention to both.

Politics is concerned with the state, an institution differing from

all others by its monopoly of the use of violence. Among efforts to legitimate that monopoly have been appeals to tradition, to qualities of personal leadership, and to publicly promulgated laws binding upon all. But what serves to legitimize power becomes an obstacle to acquiring power. Hence the rationale for politics carried on by illegitimate means. To complete the description of war as politics conducted by violent means, politics may be conceived as the struggle for power carried on by whatever measures are considered necessary. Its purpose is to outmaneuver and overcome the enemy, not necessarily to annihilate him.

There is a general as well as specific or technical meaning of the word *politics*. Generally speaking, politics is the science and art of government concerned with public affairs. Such affairs involve not only cooperation, but also conflict or "taking sides." *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (1983) cites the following meanings of *politic* covering both these aspects of the political: "prudent and sagacious in devising and pursuing measures; shrewd," and "crafty; unscrupulous; cunning." It is in this last or special sense that politics includes the dimension of war and its vindicating principle, "the end justifies the means."

This special sense of politics is the one North Americans find repugnant. Hence their preference for civics and their antipathy to political extremism in any form. This Anglo-Saxon aversion to politics is typified by Thomas Hobbes in his political writings. In *De Cive or the Citizen*, he shows what it means to become boiling hot over political issues that presage the approach of civil war. To take a hand in public business under such conditions, he observed in chapter ten, means "to undergo certain enmities . . . to hate and to be hated." Human appetites are insatiable, he believed, while the means of satisfying them are in short supply. Since the natural condition of mankind is war, he concluded, laws and stable governments are required to guarantee peace.

At least Hobbes' distaste for politics did not blind him to its specific character. The same cannot be said for John Locke and his liberal successors, who have reduced political life to its civic dimension. Political life in North America has had the effect of swallowing up politics in citizenship. It remained for Marxism and fascism to disseminate the interpretation of civil society as a battleground of conflicting interests. Today, only totalitarian regimes, mass political movements, and political-military vanguards exem-

plify the primacy of politics. This observation is particularly relevant to understanding Argentina.

Why are so many Argentines indifferent to civil rights and human rights abuses? Considering the proliferation of human rights organizations during the Military Process, one might be tempted to think otherwise. But the popular diffusion of the slogan “*¡Nunca más!*” (Never again!) has been a protest mainly against the horrors of the “dirty war” in the hope of avoiding a repeat performance. The issue of civil rights has no more to do with this protest than the counter slogan “*¡Mucho más!*” (Many more!) by disaffected members of the armed forces, who deplore that they did not “disappear” more of their fellow citizens. Although far from indifferent to the effects of civil rights abuses, Argentines are generally skeptical concerning the moral rationalization of these rights.

How can civil rights be taken seriously when consensus is treated as an empty abstraction, and conflict rather than cooperation is the overriding concern of so many Argentines? Like offering freedom to those who demand bread, the civic tradition in Argentina is no substitute for politics as the unbridled struggle to dominate and escape from being dominated. North Americans are conditioned by their heritage of free churches and system of public education to stress the duties of citizenship, the so-called civic virtues. Most Argentines have a different outlook. As a nation in which politics is an all-consuming passion, Argentines are conditioned to defend their class and sectoral interests come what may.

Philosophical ideas can be found at the root of these different national traditions. What Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* are to the English-speaking world, Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Rousseau’s *Social Contract* are to the Italians, French, and Hispanic peoples. The first two were concerned with the defense of civil society against chaos and subversion (Hobbes) and the arbitrary use of power (Locke). For each the rule of law was a precondition of people reconciling their differences and working together harmoniously. Thus the commonweal had priority over private or special interests, while the only recognizable enemies were those who disturbed the peace—domestic criminals and belligerent foreign states. Since crime was not a political but a civil offense, the scope of politics was limited to foreign affairs. Where such ideas prevail as in the United Kingdom, the former

British dominions, and the United States, citizens are impregnated with public-spiritedness but also thoroughly depoliticized.

In contrast to this tradition, the primacy of politics and disrespect for law is the basic message of *The Prince* and *Social Contract*, a point Bakunin stressed when he paid homage to Machiavelli in his "Critique of Rousseau's Theory of the State" (1867): "The great Italian philosopher Machiavelli was . . . the first to understand that the great and powerful states could be founded and maintained by crime alone. . . . He advocates crime, he exhorts to crime, and makes it the *sine qua non* of political intelligence." However, Bakunin misread Rousseau, thus failing to perceive that the Genevan's model of the social contract is as far removed from reality as the classless society envisioned in the *Communist Manifesto*.

As a critic of British social contract theory used to legitimize the laws of particular states, Rousseau modeled his ideal society on a nonexistent general will. The political relevance of this impossible ideal is that the gap between it and actually existing states is so great that the general will fails to legitimate obedience to any laws. Nor could his second-best society or approximation to the ideal serve this purpose, because it too had little bearing on reality. In presupposing a community of independent producers in which nobody is wealthy enough to hire another's labor, it automatically excluded landowners as well as capitalists and wage-laborers.

As the opening chapter of the *Social Contract* acknowledges Rousseau's debt to his earlier *Discourse on Inequality*: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. . . . Were I to consider only force and the effect that flows from it, I would say that so long as a people is constrained to obey and does obey, it does well . . . [but if] it can shake off the yoke and does shake it off, it does even better." What is that if not a call to revolution? Thus it provides the same vindication of rebellion as the *Communist Manifesto*: "You have only your chains to lose!"

Karl Marx belongs to the same political tradition as Machiavelli and Rousseau. Although he failed to acknowledge his debt to either one, others have acknowledged it for him. Marx, said Benedetto Croce in *Historical Materialism and the Economic Theory of Karl Marx*, is the "Machiavelli of the proletariat." As Antonio Gramsci added in *Notes on Machiavelli*, "the position of Machiavelli is repeated in Marxism."

There is also an ideological affinity between Rousseau and Marx.

This is borne out by the works of two Italian political philosophers, Galvano Della Volpe's *Rousseau and Marx* and Lucio Colletti's *From Rousseau to Lenin*. As Colletti notes in his foreword to part three, Rousseau's thought has profoundly influenced Third World revolutionaries who have ended up in Marxism. Thus Fidel Castro told a French journalist that he had fought Batista with the *Social Contract* in his pocket, but that since then he had preferred reading Marx's *Capital*.

I mention Machiavelli, Rousseau, and Marx because their influence is paramount to understanding contemporary Argentine politics. Although the Radical Party and its Conservative forerunner were profoundly indebted to the British presence in the River Plate, the mind-set of most Argentines is conditioned by the continental tradition in political philosophy. By making politics primary and politicizing the entire nation, this mind-set has undermined respect for authority and the rule of law in particular. As a result, the civic tradition is weak in Argentina along with its bulwark, liberal democracy. Nor does the presence of an authoritarian tradition in the Roman Catholic Church help in promoting the civic virtues. On the contrary, it too fuels the mood of intransigence that characterizes Argentine politics.

APPENDIX A

Timetable of the National Revolution and Resistance

- 1917 November: The Hour of the Peoples commences with the Russian Bolshevik Revolution. Known as the "October Revolution" in the Old Style Julian calendar, it took place in the first week in November according to our own Gregorian calendar.
- December: The machine-gunning of defenseless workers of Swift's La Plata branch in response to the first great frigorific strikes allegedly encouraged by the Russian Revolution.
- 1918 January: Continued attacks on frigorific strikers resulting in some fifty dead including those killed in December.
- 1919 January: The "Tragic Week." An estimated 1,000 workers are massacred and 4,000 wounded during the general strike that paralyzes the capital in the country's first "red scare" known as the *porteñazo*. The army intervenes.
- 1921–22 Rebellion in Patagonia. A general strike by rural workers beginning in October 1921 and extending through February 1922 paralyzes the province of Santa Cruz in the country's second "red scare." The army intervenes and is responsible for the greatest massacre of workers in Argentine history.
- 1922 October: Benito Mussolini's "March on Rome." The first in a series of fascist "national revolutions," precursor of the Argentine national revolution of 1943–55.
- 1930 September: Radical President Hipólito Yrigoyen overthrown by a military coup led by General José F. Uriburu, supposedly to save the country from an irresponsible democracy that threatened a repeat of the events of 1917–22.
- 1936–39 The Spanish Civil War. General Francisco Franco's "Crusade Against Communism" is supported by Argentine nationalists.
- 1939–45 World War II. Argentina remains neutral until April 1945.
- 1943 June: Military coup led by nationalist officers, including Juan Domingo Perón, ousts Conservative President Ramón S. Castillo.
- October: Perón appointed to reorganize the National Department of Labor.
- November: Perón appointed Secretary of Labor.
- 1944 February: Perón appointed Minister of War in addition to Secretary of Labor.
- July: Perón becomes Vice-President without relinquishing his cabinet positions.

- 1945 October: Perón detained and imprisoned by the military after being compelled to resign from the government. On October 17 mass demonstrations in Plaza de Mayo lead to his release.
- 1946 February: Perón elected President with the support of former Radical Party members and the new Labor Party.
- June: Labor Party dissolved and replaced by the Unified Party of the National Revolution (PURN).
- 1947 January: The PURN officially renamed the Peronist Party.
- 1952 June: Perón inaugurated as President for a second term.
- July: Death of Evita Perón.
- 1955 September: Perón exiled after a military coup led by General Eduardo Lonardi.
- November: Lonardi ousted by a military coup led by General Pedro Aramburu. The military government takes control of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and bans the Peronist Party.
- 1956 January: Secret directive from Perón officially launches the resistance. The National Command is formed; serves as the principal coordinator and center of Peronist resistance with John William Cooke as its operational head. Its objective is to destabilize the military regime through mass industrial unrest, sabotage, and preparation for armed struggle.
- June: Movement of National Recovery, led by General Juan José Valle and other Peronist officers, launches an abortive military coup. Valle and his colleagues are executed by President Pedro Aramburu.
- 1957 August: The CGT splits into the "62 Organizations" loyal to Perón and the "32" liberal trade unions opposed to Perón.
- 1958 February: Perón-Frondizi Pact. Perón trades approximately 2 million of his followers' votes for the promise from presidential candidate Arturo Frondizi of legality for the Peronist Party, a general amnesty for exiled or imprisoned leaders, and the normalization of the CGT. Amnesty is granted May Day 1958; CGT is normalized 1961; but Peronist or Justicialist Party is not returned to legal status until 1971. Perón's objective is to return to political power through an eventual electoral victory.
- 1959 January: Cuban Revolution triumphs under Fidel Castro's leadership. In Argentina the National Command calls nationwide labor strikes. The capital is paralyzed in the country's second *porteñazo*, reminiscent of the "Tragic Week" of January 1919. Conciliatory executive council of the "62 Organizations" is dissolved and more militant leaders chosen.
- December: Under Cuban influence, first guerrilla movement is launched in Tucumán Province, with the name *Uturuncos* ("tiger men" in Quechua).
- 1959–62 Guerrilla training camps established, based on Cuban model. The Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), a non-Peronist, Guevarist group, is organized by dissidents of the Communist Youth to implement Guevara's call for resistance to pseudo-democratic regimes.
- 1962 March: Military coup ousts President Arturo Frondizi for being "soft" on Peronism. Later that year, under Amado Olmos' leadership, the "62 Organizations" adopts the revolutionary program of Huerta Grande.

- 1963 Organization of two guerrilla groups: a rural *foco* under Ricardo Masetti called the People's Guerrilla Army (EGP), and the first urban *foco* under "Joe" Baxter, head of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Tacuara). Augusto Vandor replaces Amado Olmos as the principal influence in the "62." He rejects program of Huerta Grande in favor of negotiations with newly elected President Arturo Illia. From exile, Perón assumes role of moderator between Vandor's reformist faction and the revolutionary faction within the Peronist movement.
- 1964 CGT's "Battle Plan." Country is paralyzed by successive strike waves and occupations of factories. Objective is to pressure the pseudo-constitutional government of Arturo Illia into allowing Perón's return.
- April: EGP wiped out by armed forces. Major leaders of Tacuara arrested. Baxter flees to Montevideo where he works with Tupamaros until 1966.
- August: Founding of Peronist Revolutionary Movement (MRP). Program formulated by Gustavo Rearte proposes to carry on resistance under conditions of semilegality, in which the struggle would be protracted and the seizure of power a prelude to a continuing revolution. "From today forward we shall know how to use armed struggle as the principal means of political action."
- 1965 The rift between Vandor's faction in the "62" and the faction represented by the MRP widens. Vandor openly proclaims his differences with Perón. José Alonso is re-elected secretary-general of the CGT for a second two-year term.
- 1966 January: The MRP and the Confederation of Peronist Orthodox Associations (CAOP) led by Jorge Di Pasquale form the "62 on Foot with Perón," precursor of the "CGT of the Argentines" (CGT-A). Amado Olmos is among the leaders.
- February: Crisis in the CGT. Alonso is obliged to resign as secretary-general under pressure from Vandor. With Perón's support, Alonso becomes head of the "62 on Foot."
- June: President Arturo Illia ousted by a military coup for being "soft" on Peronism.
- 1967 Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) founded. First Guevarist organization on the continent to learn the lessons of Che's failure in Bolivia by adapting Guevarism to a national context and by cooperating with the revolutionary trend in Peronism. Vandorist "62" conciliatory with military government.
- 1968 Split in the CGT. The CGT-A, led by Raimundo Ongaro, reaffirms program of Huerta Grande. Its objective is to end the military dictatorship through the combined tactics of labor unrest, mass mobilizations, armed struggle, and the organization of a political front. Envar El Kadri and militants of the Peronist Youth (JP) revive rural armed resistance, which had disappeared following the defeat of the EGP in 1964. They form Peronist Armed Forces (FAP).
- September: The FAP's rural *foco* in Taco Ralo, Tucumán, wiped out by the army. Death of John William Cooke.
- 1969 Montoneros founded by Fernando Abal Medina. Named after gaucho contingents in Argentina's 1810 War of Independence, it is an urban guerrilla group influenced by both Guevarism and Peronism. Medina succeeded by Mario Firmenich in 1970.
- May: Popular resentment against the military regime results in the social explosion known as the *Cordobazo*.

- June: CGT-A placed under government control. Vador assassinated by a pre-Montonero commando.
- September: Popular takeover of the city of Rosario (*Rosarioazo*).
- October: CGT-A dissolved because military repression nullified its effectiveness.
- December: Gustavo Rearte organizes Revolutionary Movement 17th of October (MR-17): a group designed to overcome the limitations of the MRP by developing a political vanguard rooted in the trade unions, to replace the CGT-A, and to mobilize the masses for a revolutionary war.
- 1970 May: Montoneros kidnap and execute former President Pedro Aramburu.
- June: President Juan Carlos Onganía ousted by fellow military officers. He is replaced by General Roberto Marcelo Levingston.
- July: Unity Congress of CGT elects José Rucci as its new secretary-general. Fifth Congress of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT), affiliated to the Trotskyist Fourth International (Unified Secretariat), announces formation of an armed branch called the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP).
- August: Alonso assassinated by Peronist commandos who later join the Montoneros.
- November: Coalition of proscribed political parties calling itself the "Hour of the People." Includes Peronist, Radical, Popular Conservative, Progressive Democratic, and Socialist parties. Its objective is to pressure the military government into abdicating and calling new elections.
- 1971 March: Second *Cordobazo*. President Levingston ousted by fellow officers and replaced by General Alejandro Lanusse.
- July: Political parties legalized. President Lanusse announces the "Great National Accord" as an alternative to the "Hour of the People."
- November: Pressured by President Lanusse to disown the revolutionary faction in the Peronist Movement, Perón refuses, choosing left-leaning Héctor Cámpora to represent him in Argentina.
- 1972 April: Popular takeover of the city of Mendoza (*Mendozazo*).
- August: The Trelew massacre of sixteen political prisoners belonging to the ERP, FAR, and Montoneros.
- September: Founding of the Movement of Renewal and Change (MCR) by Raúl Alfonsín. Designed to support the resistance and to restore the Yrigoyenist or intransigent legacy within the Radical Party.
- December: The Justicialist Front of Liberation (FREJULI), an electoral coalition of twenty-five organizations led by the Peronist Party, replaces the earlier Civic Front of National Liberation (FRECILINA).
- 1973 March: National elections in which FREJULI receives approximately fifty percent of the vote. Héctor Cámpora elected President.
- May: ERP-22 formally breaks with the PRT-ERP over the issue of Cámpora's candidacy (he had been supported by the 22 August faction, named after the date of the Trelew massacre). Inauguration of President Cámpora on May 25. Massive assault on the Villa Devoto Penitentiary in which political prisoners are freed. The PRT-ERP announces it will continue its resistance to the multinational corporations and reactionary armed forces.

June: The PRT-ERP breaks with the Trotskyist Fourth International and rejects the "Trotskyist" label. The Ezeiza massacre victimizes the Peronist left, resulting in some thirty dead and several hundred wounded.

July: Palace coup by Peronist right wing compels President Cámpora to resign. He is replaced by provisional President Raúl Lastiri.

September: The ERP declared illegal after assaulting an army post in the capital in an effort to recover arms. Perón elected President for the third time. Rucci assassinated by Montoneros without revealing their identity. Launching of campaign of "ideological purification" against Marxist infiltrators in the Peronist movement.

October: Organizational merger of the FAR and Montoneros, retaining the name of Montoneros.

November: The FAP announces its adherence to the PRT-ERP's continuing resistance.

1974 January: The ERP assaults the army base in Azul. The left Peronist governor of Buenos Aires Province, Oscar Bidegain, obliged to resign. The bloc of left Peronists in Congress resigns to protest reforms in the criminal law directed at subversion. Founding of the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (Triple A).

February: The governor of Córdoba, Ricardo Obregón Cano, toppled by a police coup that receives Perón's blessing.

March: Esso pays the ERP 14.2 million dollars for the release of its executive Victor Samuelson. Montoneros assassinate labor bureaucrat Rogelio Coria.

May: Perón's Plaza de Mayo speech marks the definitive rupture with the Montoneros.

July: Perón dies and is succeeded by Vice-President Isabel Perón. Montoneros assassinate Arturo Mor Roig, former interior minister under President Lanusse. The Triple A claims its first victims.

August–September: ERP assaults on military installations in Villa María and Catamarca. After rejoining the armed resistance of the PRT-ERP and FAP, the Montoneros kidnap executives Juan and Jorge Born.

October: Raimundo Ongaro imprisoned.

November: Montoneros assassinate the chief of the Federal Police. Imposition of a state of siege that lasts until December 1983.

December: Launching of the ERP's rural *foco* in Tucumán covering a wide area of operations.

1975 February: The government authorizes the armed forces to intervene against the ERP's guerrillas in Tucumán.

March: Founding of the Authentic Peronist Party with Montonero support. Launching of a three-month strike of metal workers in Villa Constitución against the government's repressive policies.

June: Montoneros are paid 60 million dollars for release of Juan and Jorge Born. Confrontation between superminister José López Rega and the CGT.

July: CGT general strike against the government's labor policies obliges López Rega and his cronies to resign.

August: Coup within the armed forces leads to replacement of Peronist General Alberto Numa Laplane by new army commander, General Jorge Rafael Videla.

September–October: Isabel Perón takes a month's sick leave and is replaced by interim President Italo Argentino Luder.

October: Montoneros assault army garrison in Formosa. The government responds by authorizing the armed forces to intervene wherever necessary in the war against subversion.

December: Banning of the Authentic Peronist Party. Frustrated coup by the air force quelled by the army. In the biggest urban guerrilla operation in Argentine history, the ERP assaults an army garrison in Monte Chingolo.

1976 March: Proliferation of "factory guerrillas." Montoneros kill thirteen policemen and wound ten. Coup led by General Videla topples the government of Isabel Perón. Videla elected President by the military junta.

June: Chief of Federal Police assassinated by Montoneros.

July: PRT secretary-general and ERP commander Mario Santucho killed in an ambush. Montoneros bomb Federal Police Security Branch headquarters killing twenty-five policemen and injuring sixty-six.

August: Montoneros launch the CGT in the Resistance.

September–October: Wave of strikes against labor policies of the military government. Campaign of sabotage by the Montoneros.

December: Montoneros explode fragmentation bomb in Defense Ministry killing fourteen senior officers and injuring thirty.

1977 February: The ERP explodes a bomb on runway of municipal airport that barely misses the plane carrying President Videla.

April: "Treaty of Rome." Fusion of Montoneros and former Authentic Peronist Party. Founding of Montonero Peronist Movement (MPM) as the mass front of the Montonero Party (PM) and Montonero Army (EM).

May: Army dragnet captures 200 ERP cadres. End of the PRT-ERP's armed struggle against the Military Process. Founding of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, whose purpose is to free persons illegally detained by the government and to pressure it to investigate illegal "disappearances."

1978 June: World Cup football match in Buenos Aires. Montoneros use the occasion to attack major government and military buildings with portable rocket launchers.

November: Document read by Saúl Ubaldini to a dinner of 500 Peronist trade union officials calls for a restoration of democracy as well as an end to labor repression.

1979 January: Enrique Gorriarán and some fifty ex-members of the ERP drop out of the PRT to join the Sandinistas in the armed struggle against President Anastasio Somoza.

February: Split in the Montoneros led by former Peronist Youth leader Rodolfo Galimberti. A corresponding split in the Peronist Youth leads to the organization of a rival Peronist Youth in the Resistance headed by Patricia Bullrich.

April: First general strike against the repressive labor policies of the military government.

May: Sixth Congress of the PRT in La Spezia, Italy, results in serious self-criticism of "militarist" errors.

July: Triumph of the Nicaraguan Revolution. Montonero leaders present to give their full support.

September: The Inter-American Congress on Human Rights (CIDH) investigates alleged human rights violations by the military regime. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo provide extensive documentation of "disappearances."

September–November: The Montoneros' long awaited "popular counteroffensive" collapses as two returning teams are demolished. The Montoneros armed struggle comes to an end.

November: CGT formally dissolved by the military government.

1980 April: Second split in Montoneros led by its press secretary Miguel Bonasso. Lorenzo Miguel freed after more than four years in prison.

September: The Peronist Youth in the Resistance hold their first clandestine congress on an island in the Paraná River. A squad of ex-members of the ERP assassinate ex-President Somoza in Asunción, Paraguay.

November: Known as the "CGT in the catacombs," the central labor federation is illegally revived. Saúl Ubaldini elected secretary-general. United behind Deolindo Bittel, first vice-president of the Peronist Party since March 1976, a majority of the Peronist old guard favors intransigent opposition to the military regime.

1981 March: President Videla is succeeded by General Roberto Viola as second President of the Military Process.

July: Isabel Perón released. Organization of a multiparty alliance (*multipartidaria*) of the principal suspended parties committed to a restoration of democracy. Second general strike against the military regime.

November: First march of protest by organized labor against the military government.

December: First coup within the Military Process leads to the replacement of President Viola by General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri.

1982 March: First mass mobilization against the dictatorship organized by the CGT.

April–June: War with Great Britain over the Malvinas ends in Argentine defeat.

June: Mass demonstration against the government in the Plaza de Mayo demands that the military abdicate. Second coup within the Military Process replaces President Galtieri with General Reynaldo Bignone, who agrees to call elections.

September: Second mass mobilization by the CGT.

October: Convocation of Peronists at Atlanta Stadium. The crowd of 30,000 is the largest mobilization of Peronists since June 1975.

December: Third general strike against the government's repressive labor policies is followed by the first "March of Resistance" led by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and by the 150,000-strong March in Defense of Democracy called by the *multipartidaria*.

1983 March: Fourth general strike and second march of protest organized by the CGT.

October: Fifth general strike. National elections won by the Radical Party and its presidential candidate Raúl Alfonsín.

November: Firmenich arrives in Brazil preparatory to returning to Argentina.

December: Military Process ends with the inauguration of President Alfonsín. Montoneros announce the dissolution of the Montonero Peronist Movement, but fail in an attempt to relaunch the Authentic Peronist Party. Detention and imprisonment of ex-governor Ricardo Obregón on arrival at the Ezeiza airport.

1984 February: Detention and imprisonment of Firmenich in Rio de Janeiro at the request of the Argentine government.

March: Ongaro returns from exile.

October: Extradition of Firmenich to Argentina where he is confined to the Villa Devoto Penitentiary.

December: March of Resistance led by Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo followed by the March in Defense of Democracy in a replay of December 1982. Justicialist Party Congress elects a new national leadership after a majority of delegates walk out in protest at Miguel's efforts to push through his own candidates.

1985 February: The Peronist "renovators" who walked out of their party's congress in December, organize their own congress in Rio Hondo, Santiago del Estero. A rival national leadership is elected that signifies the disintegration of the Peronist Party.

May: Ubal dini gives an ultimatum to the Radical government: "Either change your economic policy or get out!" A general strike occurs on May 23, the CGT's most massive act of defiance to the new government's economic and labor policies.

June: In response to the rate of inflation of 2 percent per diem, financial speculation, economic deterioration, and 1 billion dollars in arrears in the payment of the foreign debt, the government adopts the Austral Plan and replaces the old currency with a new one. The plan is denounced by Ubal dini and the CGT for servility to the International Monetary Fund.

July: The "Unity Congress" convened in Santa Rosa, La Pampa, elects a new leadership that excludes the main body of the "renovators."

August: Trial and sentencing of Obregón Cano to ten years in prison. A massive work stoppage and mobilization by the CGT protests the effects of the Austral Plan.

September: The CGT emerges as the principal mass force of opposition to the Radical government, thereby displacing the increasingly fragmented Peronist Party.

October: Sixty-day state of seige decreed by President Alfonsín in response to wave of right-wing terrorism. Organization of a People's Front led by the Communist Party and Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) with the aim of participating in the November elections.

November: Renewable congressional elections won by the Radical Party. The Peronist "renovators" in the province of Buenos Aires organize an independent slate and triumph over the party's "official" candidates.

December: Verdicts and token punishments for the principal generals of the

Military Process. The CGT announces a program of twenty-six points including a moratorium on and partial repudiation of the foreign debt, the strengthening of the public sector, workers' self-management of state-owned industries, and the recovery of labor's rights that were abrogated during the Military Process.

1986

January: With the exception of the Radical Youth, all of the country's youth organizations subscribe to the CGT's twenty-six points. The CGT declares a general strike against the government's economic and labor policies.

February: The National Executive Board of Revolutionary Peronism announces a six-point program including support for the CGT's twenty-six points.

March: The CGT calls for a work stoppage and mass mobilization in support of its twenty-six points.

May: Escalating criticism of the government by top military brass aims at ending prosecutions for crimes committed by officers during the so-called "dirty war." Bombings of Radical Party locals occur in retaliation for the party's participation in the "March Against Impunity," while a bomb intended for the President is blamed on the 3rd Army Corps of Córdoba.

October: The CGT declares a general strike to protest the government's economic and labor policies.

November: The 16th Congress of the Communist Party reassesses the Military Process as "fascist" and reaffirms its support of the People's Front.

1987

April: Seventh Congress of the PRT is the first to be held in Argentina since the Fifth Congress in 1970. A military rebellion in Córdoba threatens the continuity of the constitutional process. The President negotiates with the rebels and partly concedes to their demands.

September: A Peronist rebound was evident from the results of the congressional and gubernatorial renewal elections. In a major upset the Peronists received 41.5 percent and the Radicals 37.3 percent of the congressional vote. Even more startling were the results of the gubernatorial races in which the Peronists won 17 provincial governorships compared to only two for the Radicals.

APPENDIX B

The Cooke-Guillén Guerrilla Plan of 1955

In September 1951, in response to the aborted military coup against Perón's first administration, Evita Perón called for the organization of popular militias and purchased the first shipment of arms for the CGT with funds from her Foundation. Four years later, in the wake of the aerial bombardment of the Plaza de Mayo and unsuccessful coup of June 1955, the CGT announced to the four winds its determination to organize popular militias in defense of Perón's second administration.

To forestall the arming of the workers, the armed forces pressured the Peronist leadership to call off the plans for popular militias and to surrender the pistols which Evita had purchased. Between June and September most of these weapons were turned over to military arsenals. Thus the Peronist Party negotiated its own downfall by bowing to a military veto and disarming the trade unions.

From his position as secretary of the Peronist Party in the capital city of Buenos Aires, John William Cooke supported the CGT's plans. He foresaw renewed military conspiracies and an easy victory of the armed forces against the Peronist government unless the workers were mobilized for such a contingency. At the same time his developing friendship with Abraham Guillén, the former military commissar of the 14th Division and the 4th Army Corps of the Spanish Republican Army, led him to favor Guillén's alternative of clandestine urban guerrillas.

The beginning of this friendship can be traced from the moment in 1954 when Guillén began collaborating as an economist and political commentator on Cooke's review *De Frente*. On the basis of his experience during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39, Guillén advised Cooke that any military uprising could be defeated through urban guerrilla warfare with popular support. But he warned Cooke against organizing militias openly instead of clandestinely. To do

so openly would provoke rather than avert military intervention. For Guillén secrecy was imperative to insure that military officers would not react to encroachments on their monopoly of violence. The surprise factor was also crucial: the military should be kept in the dark concerning the training, logistics, and strategy for urban guerrilla resistance. Cooke, who foresaw renewed efforts to launch a coup, was persuaded by these arguments. Thereupon he commissioned Guillén to draw up a secret political-military plan for defending the popular government.

After receiving Cooke's blessing, Guillén's plan was presented to the top Peronist command. Instead of proceeding immediately to implement it, however, the leadership submitted it to the army's general staff consisting of supposedly reliable officers. Since the proposed clandestine armed vanguard would have been independent of the regular army, the Peronist military vetoed it. Even loyal Peronist officers were displeased by the prospect of a rival military force. But how many were really loyal? In passively accepting the military's veto, the Peronist leadership was henceforth at the mercy of army generals who were shortly to betray both the party and the government.

Cooke was perfectly aware that his own political force was equal to zero without the support of urban defense groups organized politically and strategically as the people in arms. He knew that the popular government could not be defended against a military insurrection without both regular and irregular armed units working in unison. Accordingly, he instructed Guillén to go ahead with the plan's implementation behind the backs of the party's leaders.

The plan called for a clandestine armed vanguard based on the youth sector and the principal branches of the Peronist movement: the CGT, the Peronist Party, and the women's branch. In the event of a new military coup this clandestine apparatus was to become the core of a people's army of liberation. By September 1955 only small guerrilla groups, capable of moving through the streets in automobiles, had been structured. These were only a beginning and had yet to become organized in combat units at the level of the company or platoon. Without support from the party's leadership, they were unprepared for the September coup and were inconsequential in resisting it.

Ideally, the Cooke-Guillén plan should have been implemented by the party when it was strongest and still in control of the gov-

ernment. The plan would have worked best during the historic period between June and September, when Perón flexed his muscles by mobilizing hundreds of thousands of Argentine workers in repudiation of the June coup. Instead, the plan was adopted by the party only after the coup which overthrew the government in September. Actually, the Cooke-Guillén plan was accepted by the Peronist leadership only when Cooke took over control of the restructured party as Perón's personal representative and chief of operations in Argentina. Thus the plan remained mostly on paper until, in January 1956, Perón himself gave the signal for armed resistance.

In an unpublished manuscript written just after the return of the Peronist Party to power in May 1973, Guillén sketched the original guerrilla plan of 1955. That plan was summarized in the following points.

(1) *Armed Popular Vanguard*. An armed vanguard must be organized on the basis of the most politically advanced Peronist cadres. It must be rigorously clandestine, thus avoiding the trap of the much vaunted popular militias which only serve to scare the enemy. The professional army is bound to resist any encroachment on its monopoly of military power. Efforts to organize guerrillas in self-defense and with the consent of a popular government are an invitation to a military coup. The only feasible alternative is to organize guerrilla groups in secret.

(2) *Army and Guerrillas*. Although the regular army is very large and the guerrilla groups are very small, the balance of social forces may nonetheless favor the guerrillas. A great army of repression may be defeated by a popular resistance provided, first, that the armed vanguard sets in motion an insurrectional movement supported by the people and, second, engages in operations within large cities where the guerrillas have the population on their side. Although every guerrilla group stands in need of a sanctuary, jungles of cement afford the same kind of protection as the mountains and forests of rural guerrillas.

(3) *Surface versus Front Line Tactics*. When an enemy is strong in numbers and fire-power, one can defeat it only by doing the contrary of what it does. If the regular army concentrates most of its forces in one place, one must attack it in other places and in several simultaneously, where it is not prepared to do battle. In order for the guerrillas to be superior in numbers and fire-power,

they must rely on surprising the enemy and attacking it in isolated posts, where the guerrillas in fact outnumber it. In other words, the guerrillas must be stronger than the enemy in a given situation. Although the repressive army is stronger in general, it is always weaker in particular engagements in the space and time elected by the guerrillas. The resistance must be stronger than the regular army, but at one point at a time. Little does it matter that the army is stronger everywhere else; there will always be one point where the guerrillas can master it. Thus the guerrillas can defeat the army in one operation after another until they become stronger and the army becomes weaker. That is a fundamental principle of revolutionary warfare.

(4) *Space and Population.* The guerrillas must never cling to, or attempt to defend, a fixed terrain. Confronted with a powerful enemy, they must bite and disappear—the battle tactics of the flea. Since the regular army is superior in the dimension of space, the guerrillas must be superior in the dimension of time. They can become superior by winning over the population. Repressive and counterrevolutionary armies aspire to dominate not only space, but also the people who inhabit it. They will stop at nothing in this effort, including the massacre of defenseless individuals. But this exercise of force, in violation of elementary moral principles and human rights, is a sign of weakness. The guerrillas must take advantage of this weakness by assisting the victims of repression, by encouraging mass resistance, and by political and armed propaganda capable of catalyzing an insurrectional movement. To cede space but to persevere in time—that is the secret. In short, guerrilla warfare must be prolonged until the conscience and will of the people have become transformed, until the armed vanguard has also become a popular one.

(5) *Political Warfare.* Confronted with a military coup against a popular government, it is enough to have urban guerrilla groups go into action in one or several large cities to prevent the army from establishing its own law and order. If urban and rural populations are catalyzed by the guerrillas to support a resistance movement, then eventually the army will become isolated and forced to retreat. The struggle against a military coup is basically a political one. Immersed in the basic units of the Peronist Party, working-class neighborhoods, and the principal places of work, urban guer-

rillas can count on a steady stream of recruits for launching recurrent actions against the forces of repression. The political role of the guerrillas is to serve as the engine of the popular train. In this capacity they should be able to persevere in their operations and compel the army to abdicate before a hostile population.

(6) *Politics, Strategy, and Tactics.* If war is the continuation of politics by other means (Clausewitz), then a popular party must resort to it when all legal avenues are closed. When a popular government is threatened or overturned by a military coup, the only effective strategy is that of the people in arms. When peace on one's knees is worse than the risk of death through violence, people should try to overthrow their tyrants. But the violence of the oppressed cannot triumph if they lack a clear vision of their political objectives, if their strategy is improvised, and their tactics are spontaneous. A military uprising against a popular government is an occasion for transforming usurpation into civil war. The Spanish Civil War began in this way and offered multiple possibilities of victory by the popular forces. Since legality was on the side of the Peronist government, it should have been possible to divide the armed forces and police, as in Spain in 1936. One could have defeated the enemy in a few days, before the imperialist powers could intervene in support of the coup. A lightning civil war offers the best strategy: it prevents the enemy from reestablishing law and order; it takes full advantage of the momentary enthusiasm of the masses for combat; it minimizes the extent of damage to the productive forces; it saves the people from prolonged suffering. But for that, popular support is necessary on a national scale.

In the perspective of Peronism restored to power in 1973, Guillén argued that his original plan still carried force. The Montoneros agreed and kept their cadres alerted in the event of an emergency. History might repeat itself, and to some extent it did. Only this time Perón was gone; Isabel betrayed her husband's mandate; and the Montoneros ended by declaring war against the government for repressing the Peronist left wing. The CGT had no plan for organizing militias in response to the December 1975 coup and there were no leaders of the stature of John William Cooke to lead the resistance against the successful coup in March 1976. Leaders there were, like Raimundo Ongaro, but those who had not been

arbitrarily imprisoned had been either murdered or compelled to flee the country. Guillén too had to go into exile to escape assassination by the “Triple A.” And under those circumstances the government, whose popularity with the workers had reached an all-time low, was no longer worth defending.

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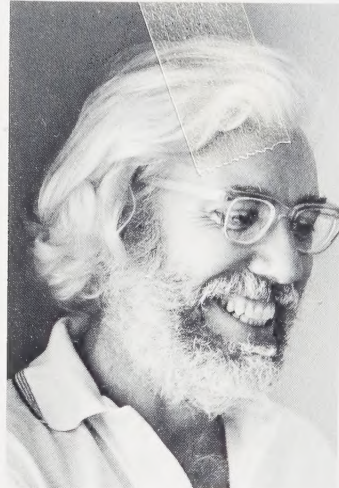
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Donald C. Hodges is professor of philosophy and affiliate professor of political science at Florida State University. He has written extensively on contemporary politics and thought in Latin America.



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