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Labor unions and regime transition in Argentina.

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LABOR UNIONS AND REGIME TRANSITION IN ARGENTINA

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To my parents, See Ying and Lan Jan Chen.
They carved a life out of a foreign and at times,
hostile land.
Their strength and perseverance are my inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

LABOR UNIONS AND REGIME TRANSITION IN ARGENTINA

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Current scholarship on regime transition in the Southern Cone has concentrated on the internal dynamics or structural contradictions of the authoritarian regime as being the fundamental reason leading to its demise. Undoubtedly, the exit of the military authoritarians in Argentina from power resulted from their own assessment that the costs of maintaining power were too high. However, it would be a mistake to solely emphasize the internal dynamics of the ruling elites without taking into consideration the role of popular civilian groups in destabilizing the authoritarian regime.

This thesis argues that during the last military authoritarian era (1976-1983), the Argentine labor movement was one of the few civilian groups capable of opposing the regime. The Argentine labor movement has a long tradition of political activism dating back to the

days of Juan Perón. During the last military intervention, the military attempted an all-out assault on labor to de-Peronize and de-politicize it. The military was initially successful at repressing labor activism through the use of force and legal statutes. In the first three years of military rule, the labor movement was divided and weakened--its political power was effectively circumscribed, despite efforts by labor to redress the dire situation.

Labor attempts to reconstitute its political pwoer base came toward the end of the most repressive period of military rule. Faced with the threat of institutional destruction, labor was able to mount a campaign against regime policy long before any other civilian group was able to do so. By relying on its ability to mobilize sectors of the population over bread and butter issues, its organized bureaucracy, and its tradition of political activism, labor was able to resist the regime, although throughout this period, much dissension existed within the movement. The ability to utilize issues of economic survival as forums for criticizing regime policies were constant problems for a regime whose raison d'etre rested on law and order, and the ability to ensure a docile labor force. They very inability of the military to contain labor activism was an important factor in the transition to democracy in Argentina in 1983.

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CHAPTER I

THE POLITICS OF TRANSITION IN AN AUTHORITARIAN SETTING

The study of Latin American politics has undergone several transformations since the World War II era. From an emphasis on legal-formalism to contemporary theories of corporatism and dependency, as a field of analysis Latin American politics has attempted to manifest itself in the prevailing political reality of the area. Theory building concerning the whys and wherefores of political change has sought to describe and explain the essential characteristics of Latin American political life in the hope of greater

understanding and predictability for the analyst. More often than not, new trends in theory building have been precipitated by unforeseen and therefore unexplained events in Latin America such as a rash of military coups or the emergence of paramilitary groups. New theory-building trends necessarily provoke a rethinking of old theories and models of analysis, leading to the rejection of some and the revision of others. It is within this tradition of theory building that an analysis of Latin American political change will be situated.

Traditional Theories of Political Development

The point of departure for this study is the period after World War II for this was the beginning of the development of theories of modernization for Latin America and the rest of the Third World. In terms of political change, the world was seeing the demise of the British and French empires and the emergence of newly independent nations in Asia and Africa. Prior to the 1950s, it was the accepted wisdom that these nations would create democratic political systems along the same lines as the United States and the countries of Western Europe, and that this democratic development was the

standard in weighing the extent of a country's modernization. Studies--mainly historical and descriptive in nature-- were made of executives, legislatures, and constitutions.

While initially, many of the newly independent nations instituted some form of democratic government, the study of formal institutions did not seem to get at the crux of what these new nations were all about. For one thing, these nations were vastly different from the nations of Europe and the United States, both culturally and philosophically. In the interest of creating value-free and objective criteria for analyzing differing political systems, many comparative theorists embraced the field of behaviorism with its emphasis on systems and functions.

The Politics of the Developing Areas by Gabriel Almond and James Coleman, published in 1960, attempted to introduce new conceptual frameworks emphasizing action and behavior into the study of developing areas. Almond and Coleman argued for replacing an analysis of formal legal institutions with an analysis of the functions performed by political systems. More elastic, fluid categories of analysis needed to be developed to promote greater comparability across diverse cultures. For example, the concept of the state connoted certain

legal and institutional models (of European style), while the political system included a diverse range of political organizations and activities. A political system, according to Almond and Coleman, was a system of interactions which performed the functions of integration and adaptation by the means of, or threat of, the use of force. It was valid, therefore, to call governments of tribal chieftains political systems so as to facilitate their comparison with other political systems.

Almond and Coleman argued that all political systems performed certain functions. Borrowing from David Easton, they called these functions inputs and outputs. Input functions were political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, and political communication. Output functions were rule - making, rule application, and rule adjudication. What separated one system from the other was the degree of specificity of the structures which performed these functions. As a general rule, developed systems were those where specialized structures existed and where the functions were universally understood. For example, in modern systems interest articulation would be diffuse, particularistic, and affective. As a result, interests were harder to aggregate in developing

countries than in modern ones.

Almond and Coleman's desire was to break the notion that there was a dichotomy between developed and developing areas. All societies had both modern and traditional tendencies -- they were dual by nature. Development then, was a process whereby a society moved from traditional(particularist, ascriptive, hierarchical) toward modern (universal, achievement-oriented, egalitarian). Societies could be plotted on a time line with progress representing the increasing pace toward modernity. Of course, vestiges of traditionality existed, but they became subordinate in the political system rather than dominant as the system moved along the continuum.[1]

Although Almond and Coleman sought to develop a neutral analytic framework for studying developing areas, their structural-functional categories had embedded in them a northern European democratic bias. The categorization of inputs assumed a system where demands were made from the bottom up; i.e., the people made demands upon the government which reacted to these demands in its outputs. By giving equal weight to inputs and outputs, Almond and Coleman were assuming a system with informed citizens and an open government ala the democratic model. Thus, being developed was equated

with being democratic which became the ideal type by which all other systems were measured. Implicit was a value judgment concerning which systems were better.

The assumptions of the structural-functional model were adapted by subsequent analyses of developing areas. Studies were undertaken to measure the degree of sophistication of bureaucracies, political parties, and communications networks, among others, in developing areas. In 1963,Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba wrote The Civic Culture which was an attempt to apply behaviorist theory to comparative analysis. They sought to analyze the relationship between structure, attitude, and behavior. The political culture, that is, the attitudes toward government, toward the nation, and toward oneself and fellow citizens, had an important influence on the types of structures created and on the behavior of citizens. Survey techniques were used and systematic empirical correlations were attempted.[2] The major contributions of this work to understanding the politics of developing areas were to encourage more quantitative, statistical and objective studies and to develop the linkage between political culture (which could be seen as an elaboration of the political socialization function) and the structure of government.

Critiques of political culture literature and behaviorist theory in general have argued that there is an overemphasis on political culture as causing structure. R. Fagen argued that the government's role of establishing and inculcating values and beliefs were overlooked. R. Tucker also viewed the emphasis on political socialization from below as being biased toward the western European systems.[3] Here again, the criticism could be made that The Civic Culture held the western democratic model as an ideal type rather than a neutral yardstick for evaluation.

The 1960s witnessed the decline of democratic regimes in the nations of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and the increasing trend toward violence and dictatorial regimes. David Apter, in The Politics of Modernization, ventured to say that democracy may not work in the developing stages of a polity so that other means (e.g., coercion) for regime consolidation should not be ruled out. His work set out to develop the relationships between three analytical frameworks: normative (questions of right action and moral choice), structural-functional (changes in political process), and behavioral (attitudes). By analyzing modernization from these viewpoints, he sought to delineate various solutions to problems faced by developing nations.[4]

C. E. Black, in The Dynamics of Modernization, offered a criticism of modernization as having been a violent process, disrupting total societies. He cautioned that the loss of traditional ties had not been replaced by necessarily better forms, but that the alienation caused by industrialization and urbanization had caused misery for millions living in modern societies. He stressed the need to explore different routes to modernization in the hope of avoiding some of the problems faced by previous modernization epochs.[5]

What the studies of the mid-1960s had in common was the belief that modernization was the same as democratization. The transition or the movement toward modernization might differ from region to region, but the end-result was always assumed to be the liberal democratic types of systems found in the United States and Western Europe. Studies which dealt with the problems of modernization were implicitly using pluralist democracy as their point of reference. The frequency of military coups, the divisiveness of interest groups, political corruption, and other patterns were labeled "problems" because they were seen as "lacking" in cohesive institutions and channels of communication, for certain governmental functions were deemed to be non-existent. Those functions, of course,

were those associated with the democratic model of government.

In 1968, Samuel Huntington's Political Order in Changing Societies provided another facet to the analysis of modernization theory. Huntington differentiated between modernization and political development. Modernization involved the social and economic transformation of the society as a whole; political development dealt specifically with the specialization and adaptability of governing institutions dealing with these social and economic transformations. The problem with developing societies was that mass mobilization (i.e., groups formed with articulate interests) occurred before government structures were institutionalized to meet these demands. Because government structures could not adapt to increasing demands, the result was instability, leading to violence and the imposition of authoritarian regimes. The prior emphasis on system inputs, therefore, had been misguided; what was needed now was analysis of institution stability.[6]

One of the effects of Huntington's thesis was the trend toward the study of elite groups such as the military, business, university students, and civil servants, among others. For example, rather than assume

the existence of military regimes as a sign of underdevelopment, analysts were now viewing the prominence of military regimes as a logical and necessary outcome of transition. This was particularly true within the field of Latin American politics as the 1960s saw the capitulation of democratic governments to military men. Rather than proving to be "unmodernized," many of the military regimes of the 1960s displayed competence at economic planning, foreign policy, and regime consolidation.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a turning point in the field of Latin American politics. Given that many of the Latin American nations were not following the "traditional" path toward modernization and refusing to accept the idea that Latin America was backward rather than that something was wrong with the political development model, analysts in Latin American studies began to break away from mainstream thinking of comparative politics and to attempt new explanations for Latin American political change. In observing the ascendancy of military regimes in many Latin American countries, theories were advanced to explain their emergence and to assess their significance to Latin American political change.

In conceptualizing change in Latin American politics,

contemporary theories focused on the compatibility of non-democratic regimes with economic development. It was in explaining the reasons behind this compatibility that the debate ensued. Several schools of thought, each with a distinctive argument but sharing some similarities and assumptions, attempted to explain the rise of military regimes. The various schools of thought can be divided into two categories: corporatist and authoritarian (with bureaucratic-authoritarianism as the major sub-type). One major school of thought which will not be addressed directly is dependency theory as many of the salient features of dependency theory will be incorporated in the analysis of bureaucratic-authoritarianism.

Corporatism

Although the corporatism/authoritarianism debate in Latin American politics was a decade ago, the theory of corporatism still exists today. Corporatism, as defined by Latin American political theorists, is a political system whereby power is hierarchically organized and interests were incorporated vertically in a pyramidal structure. Power would be centralized among a very small elite; in 1960s Latin America, it was the military in many nations which was at the apex of power. Below

the military came other powerful organized interests such as the landed oligarchy, the Roman Catholic Church, the middle sectors, and labor each sharing some degree of power and influence. Below these groups would be the newly organized middle class, below them the skilled workers, and at the bottom of the pyramid would be peasants and the urban poor. The key to corporatism is that it seeks to maintain the power of the traditional elites while at the same time allowing certain organized interests into the power structure. For example, labor had traditionally not been a power sharer in many Latin American nations but with the increasing growth in number of workers and strength at the work place, traditional elites saw the need to somehow incorporate labor into the ruling structure. This incorporation would take the form of promoting several labor leaders into the corporatist structure and delegating them power, but this power would be conditioned by loyalty to the status quo. The ruling elites realized the need to accommodate newly emerging interests in society, but they were also intent on preserving the hierarchical, authoritarian system which had favored them for so long. By using strategies of cooptation and incorporation, the ruling elites sought to maintain control over the growing number of demands of a society undergoing rapid

social and economic transformation.[7]

Corporatism then, is clearly non-democratic and its hierarchical organization reinforces class distinctions among groups in society. In Latin America, it was clear which groups had power and influence and which did not. Interest articulation was carried out through set, established channels with control emanating from the top of the pyramid. It is the group rather than the individual which takes precedence in this social system and it is the state which determines and controls the existence and functions of these groups. That is, groups were given the right to represent certain interests by the state and more often than not, the group's very existence was dependent upon the state's willingness to grant them benefits and privileges. Each group was functionally distinct from the other, representing a prescribed set of interests. In return, these groups abdicated their autonomy to the state and agreed to work within established boundaries in their demand-making. The state ideally represented the "common interest" and the society was an organic whole in which group interests were tied together. Problem solving was carried out through bureaucratic administrative channels, where they were administered and handled rather than taken care of substantively.[8]

The reasons behind why corporatism rather than pluralist democracy had been the norm rather than pluralist democracy were varied and in contention. One school of thought argued that corporatism was a logical development given the distinctive heritage of Latin America. Theorists such as H. Wiarda, F. Pike, G. Dealy, and C. Veliz argued that Latin American historical development had been rooted in hierarchical, paternalist, and Catholic social and political arrangements. Latin American corporatism was a direct descendant of the Spanish colonial system which was brought to the New World almost intact by the conquistadors. The Spanish Crown theoretically maintained control over its colonies through the encomienda system whereby the Crown, claiming control over the indigenous Indian population, granted certain individuals the right to use Indians in their mining and agricultural pursuits. The relationship the Crown sought to enforce was one where power was centralized in Spain with conquistadors subordinate to the Crown and dependent upon Spain for benefits and privileges.[9]

While the degree of effectiveness of control by the Crown varied from region to region, the conventions established by patrimonial Spanish society were adapted to Spanish America and have perpetuated to this day.

The political order was an hierarchical one with one man rule. What prevented this system from being despotic was the adherence to Catholic principles. The conquistador and later in the nineteenth century, the hacendado had a responsibility over his underlings -- to Christianize and to treat them humanely. According to Catholic doctrine, society was treated as an organic whole, each person having a specific function and enjoying the rights and privileges thereof. Individuals were subject to higher authority in rank order. Ideally, the church and its clergy were at the top of the hierarchy in the temporal life, below them the hacendados, and below them the masses. In Catholic tradition, much emphasis was placed on obedience to authority, based on the assumption that God ordered temporal life the way he did for good reason. This notion, coupled with resignation to your lot in life, made Latin America an inherently conservative and slow-changing region.[10]

Centralized non-democratic authoritarian rule based on traditional Spanish society has remained an integral characteristic of Latin American political life. Rule by individual hacendados has given way to rule by military men or by a small elite of defined groups. Even during the republican periods of the late

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, politics coalesced around certain populist figures. Present-day corporatist structures were but reifications of traditional Spanish Catholic society.

Another interpretation for the reasons behind the development of corporatism was offered by Alfred Stepan. Stepan first set out to distinguish between a culture's guiding philosophy and the way a society attempted to order itself in concrete structures and policies. Like Wiarda, Stepan argued that the liberal-pluralist tradition with its pursuit of individual interests as producing the best good for society was not a part of the Latin American heritage. Rather, an "organic-statist" tradition had prevailed which located the common good with the existence of a strong statist community. Organic-statism posited that man's nature could only be fulfilled within a community. To attain this community, a strong interventionist state was required. The end of state action was to serve the common good, and the state had the prerogative to take autonomous action in promoting radical changes in society. While public and individual pursuits were allowed, the state had the legitimate right to bridle these pursuits as it saw fit. Each component part of a community had its own proper place and function within

the organic whole.[11]

Where Stepan differed with the "corporatism as historical continuity" school was in his assessment of the origins of corporatism. Stepan argued that corporatism was first and foremost a set of institutional arrangements established to order society and that organic-statism was often the justification for imposing such corporatist structures. Corporatism was a means whereby established elite groups dealt with perceived threats to their power; policies were therefore consciously adopted. As new groups emerged to compete for power, groups already in positions of power felt they were being threatened; when they saw the tide was irreversible, those in power sought to control the degree of change which occurred by utilizing the instruments of the state to corporatize a select number of newly organized groups.[12]

In this model, the state directed the process of incorporating certain groups into the power structure. Control was located in the state for it was the only institution which could claim legitimacy in maintaining control. For the elites who felt their power eroding, the state and its corporatizing strategies provided a means for controlling newly mobilized groups under the rubric of the "organic-statist" philosophy. By allowing

"non-conflictual" and limited modes of participation, carefully directed by the state and legitimized by it, elite groups felt they could minimize the erosion of their power.[13]

Stepan further refined his thesis by differentiating between various sub-types of corporatism -- inclusionary and exclusionary. In attempting to explain the diversity of political institutions which existed throughout Latin America, Stepan delineated the variables he saw as important in the creation of corporatist regimes. Inclusionary corporatism, as the name implies, entailed policies which sought to incorporate "salient working-class" groups into the power structure. Exclusionary corporatism was policies which sought the repression and deactivation of salient working-class groups through coercive means and their reintegration under conditions which were in accord with the stated goals of the state.

The conditions under which inclusionary or exclusionary policies were used varied according to the politico-socioeconomic conditions prevailing at a given time. Generally, inclusionary policies were instituted under conditions of early industrialization and low political mobilization giving way to the natural demise of oligarchical forces in the onward march toward

modernity.

Exclusionary policies which were perhaps more the norm in most Latin American countries were institutionalized under two conditions. The first was an environment where political mobilization was high and ideologically differentiated. The elite assumed control of the state apparatus and, utilizing coercion, sought to exclude these highly mobilized groups from the political arena and to deactivate them. Concurrent with this deactivation, it would seek to redefine these excluded groups by creating associational organizations designed and controlled by the state.

The second condition occurred where the elites in power decided that in the interest of furthering economic development, the state must take a central role and impose repression over certain groups (workers) whose interests were perceived as hindering further development. Exclusionary policies were enacted with the aim of later reintegration under conditions of controlled interest representation by the state.[14] These conditions, commonly known as bureaucratic-authoritarianism, will be analyzed in the next section of this chapter.

Stepan went on to delineate a series of variables which could be used to predict or explain the success or

failure of corporatist regimes. These variables were meant to posit causal relationships between prevailing politico-socioeconomic conditions and the types of policies instituted and the degree of effectiveness of these policies. What Stepan was attempting to demonstrate was that corporatism was a set of consciously adopted policies on the part of elite groups seeking to preserve their power in the face of mounting pressure for change. This being the crux of his argument, he rejected the "corporatism as historical continuity" school of thought as not standing up to empirical proof. However, there was little in Stepan's argument to refute outright the relevance of history and culture toward an understanding of corporatism. Where Wiarda et al, saw history and tradition as primary, Stepan argued for consciously applied policy choices. Still, policy choices are not arrived at in a vacuum; they were and are necessarily guided by the cultural and philosophical ethos of a society and it is in this respect that both interpretations of corporatism have validity.

Authoritarianism

Perhaps the most burgeoning amount of analysis of Latin American political change has been done concerning

the many facets of authoritarianism. From an analyses of how the era of caudillismo led to the era of military regimes to an analyses of international capital and its requirements for authoritarian political structures, authoritarianism has been dissected and debated by all Latin Americanists. In this section, various interpretations of authoritarianism with specific attention to bureaucratic-authoritarianism as developed by Guillermo O'Donnell will be analyzed.

In Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America, James Malloy set out to explain the rise of authoritarianism in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s. Like the theorists on corporatism, Malloy rejected the standard wisdom of comparative politics which posited a direct relation between economic development and the growth of pluralist democracy. He argued that the nature of economic development in Latin America lent itself to the emergence of authoritarian governing structures and that corporatist structures characterized state-civil relations.

Malloy viewed authoritarianism as a product of two forces acting in twentieth century Latin American history -- delayed dependent development and populism. For most nations of Latin America, economic growth had been based on the exportation of raw materials to the

United States and Western Europe and the importation of manufactured products to Latin America. As Latin American nations entered late into the international capitalist market, their economies became dependent on international market forces beyond their control. This system of classic dependency took expression internally in the creation of a dual society: an urban sphere based on exports and a traditional agrarian rural sector with the former exploiting the latter in maintaining relations with the capitalist center. This system was held together through what were commonly called patron-client relations between various unequal groupings which cut across class, race, and ethnic lines. Through strategies of vertical integration, groups were corporatized into the system.[15]

As this system of export-oriented growth carried over into the twentieth century, state structures emerged to mediate relations among various groups in society but their autonomy was limited by the interests of elite groups and the limited resources at their disposal. The continuing need to maintain control over the growing demands of an emergent middle class of professional white collar public employees required large state treasuries. With an economy which was oriented outward, state structures came to depend more and more on

external sources of funding.

This state of affairs came to a head with the Great Depression of 1929. The Depression caused the export-oriented growth economies of Latin America to come crashing down. The havoc this caused led to the emergence of populism. With the collapse of national economies came a political crisis over the legitimacy of the ruling elites. Middle-class sectors became disaffected and sought to wrest power from the traditional ruling elites but in and of themselves they did not have the resources to overthrow them. These middle sectors turned to the lower classes for support in overthrowing the traditional elites. Under the guise of promoting substantive economic and social change, middle sectors sought to mobilize the lower classes (which in most cases were the urbanized working classes) and to present a united front in ousting the oligarchies.

Populists saw the central problem of Latin America as economic underdevelopment conditioned by economic dependence on a capitalist center dominated by the United States. What's more, this dependency was perpetuated and reinforced by groups within society which were characterized as being "anti-nation." In order to unseat these anti-nation groups, a multi-class

movement was necessary. Populists advocated national independence and the promotion of social justice reforms. They advocated the development of the economy in all sectors, and utilizing an implicit "organic-statist" philosophy, called for the combined efforts of all classes in the building of an independent nationalist state. Yet, in their vision of populism, the middle-class sectors (the main adherents to this movement), never gave the lower classes an equal footing in the struggle to overthrow the established oligarchies. Rather, they assumed that the working classes and peasants would defer to the middle sectors in carrying out the reforms of the new society. Middle-class sectors had an implicit corporatist view of how social relations were to be organized; it was one which did not differ radically from the one imposed by the ruling oligarchies -- only now, the middle classes would occupy the position the oligarchies had held.

To tie these disparate groups together and to carry out the program of national development, the state became the cornerstone of the system. In breaking the power of the oligarchies, the state had to locate its legitimacy in the support of the newly mobilized lower classes. To do so, the state utilized various strategies in building support: encouraging charismatic

leadership styles which emphasized nationalism and increasing welfare expenditures to meet the needs of these groups. By making the state the primary distributor of social welfare benefits, populism created the conditions for future conflict between politically mobilized civil sectors and a state with limited resources. As long as the economy kept growing (as it did during World War II and immediately after due to import-substitution-industrialization), the state would be able to meet the demands of these newly mobilized groups and new power contenders would be absorbed into the system under a corporatist framework.

But throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the state never achieved real economic independence from the external capitalist market. Import substitution policies led the way to more sophisticated forms of dependency and many Latin American countries found inflation spiralling out of control. The populist policies of massive social expenditures could no longer be sustained but attempts to cut back were met with popular discontent. It was under these conditions that the military came to power in the 1960s. The inability of populist state structures to cope with the needs of economic development and the needs of politically mobilized classes necessitated taking over the reins of the former

by bridling the power of the latter. In the interest of, or under the guise of, furthering economic development, the decision was made to depoliticize the very groups that populism had mobilized. The middle-class sectors abdicated the state to the control of the military and the military instituted policies of repression against the population. Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, authoritarian regimes came to dominate Latin America.[16]

In sum, Malloy viewed the development of authoritarianism as an elite response to the economic crises of the 1960s. Using in part the Huntingtonian model, Malloy argued that the need for further economic development became incompatible with the demands of a politically mobilized population. Where there once was room for the incorporation of new groups into the political system, now there existed a need to exclude some of these groups from the political arena. As these groups were unwilling to give up the power and influence they had enjoyed, repression and violence became common tools of the political game.

Guillermo O'Donnell pursued this same line of reasoning by introducing the concept of bureaucratic-authoritarianism. Specifically, O'Donnell argued that differing phases of industrialization led to various

forms of state domination over civilian sectors. The demise of oligarchical rule which led to the emergence of populism was brought about due to a nascent industrialization based on the production of consumer goods. With the imposition of tariffs and state subsidies to promote import-substitution-industrialization, there evolved a domestic industry concentrated on the production of consumer goods. During this phase of industrialization, the Latin American economies were not as integrated into the international capitalist market and as production was concentrated inward, there was less need to compete on the world market. Economic elites had more flexibility when it came to dealing with working- class demands. They viewed the incorporation of working-class groups as beneficial to economic growth so they enacted policies which increased social welfare spending and allowed workers to form unions. In return, working class groups tacitly gave their allegiance to the state which provided the state with a degree of autonomy from foreign capital.

Once the market for import-substitution-industrialization goods was exhausted, as occurred in the late 1950s, the next phase of industrialization called for the importation of capital equipment.

O'Donnell argued that in order to further capitalist industrial development, i.e., to enter into a phase of heavy manufacturing, economic elites had to import technology, expertise, and capital. Latin Americans decided to turn to outside markets, more specifically to multinational corporations and to a certain extent, to foreign aid. To finance this new phase of industrialization, they turned to international banks for loans.

To attract the necessary capital to further industrial development as the means toward achieving economic growth, elites had to adopt "orthodox" economic policies which necessitated cutting the consumption demands of the population. These austerity measures came into direct conflict with the interests of working-class groups who saw their economic and political power base eroding. Unwilling to accept the dictates of the economic elites, agitation took place by way of strikes.

Meanwhile, the process of industrialization had created a class of technocrats which carried out the economic policies of the state. For the most part, these technocrats were employees of the state bureaucracy or the military, and they sought further industrialization by seeking the aid of foreign capital. They were intolerant of the demands of the popular

sector and sought authoritarian solutions to popular unrest. For many, the logical solution to dealing with popular unrest was to mobilize the forces which excelled at the business of coercion and repression -- the military.

The military, for its part, came to have the same views as the economic elites concerning how to promote economic growth. They too viewed the need to attract foreign capital as necessary for this economic growth, and what's more, they linked economic growth to preserving the national security of the nation. They viewed all attempts at disrupting the promotion of industrial development as a threat to the security of the nation. When they saw that civilian governments were incapable of dealing with this threat, the military came in to enforce law and order. It was at this juncture that the bureaucratic-authoritarian state was imposed.

The bureaucratic-authoritarian state in its initial phase was one which:

1. consisted of an alliance between the military, sectors of the economic elites (technocrats), and foreign capital whose interests coalesced around:
2. increasing economic growth via policies of advanced industrialization concentrated on the production of

manufactured goods and the pursuit of foreign capital, and who viewed these interests as being directly threatened by:

3. the demands of working-class sectors whose very goals undermined the national development of the country. To deal with this threat, the military was brought into power to manage these groups via policies of coercion and repression. To maintain control, the military utilized strategies of cooptation to corporatize certain groups into the system. First, they excluded already existing mobilized interest groups from the political arena and destroyed their bases of support. Then, they selected certain groups or individuals and allowed them into the system, awarded them certain rights and privileges, but denied them the status of representatives of certain interests, and maintained tight control over them. This was all done within an environment of clearly authoritarian structures.[17] The maintenance of this type of regime will now be discussed.

Political Change Under Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism

The maintenance of a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime was replete with tensions and contradictions. Because this type of regime was imposed through coercion

and repression of already existing politically mobilized groups, the mechanisms for continued control required a high degree of sophistication. O'Donnell in "Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy," set out to delineate the various pressures that a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime faced in maintaining its existence.

The bureaucratic-authoritarian state came into power and justified itself by claiming to represent a greater logical developmentalist rationality which would cure the sick body politic of its ills of economic chaos and social unrest. Echoing the philosophy of organic-statism, proponents of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state argued that their policies were guided by a higher rationality which in the long run would benefit the general interest. Because the bureaucratic-authoritarian state claimed to be curing a sick society, it was also above society -- not a part of it-- but superior to it and represented all interests of that society.[18]

In locating itself above society and not as a part of it, the bureaucratic-authoritarian state required mechanisms of legitimating its control over society and more often than not, for justifying its use of coercion and repression. Specifically, it needed to create

consensus among the various interests of society if it was not to remain or to become a totalitarian state. For O'Donnell, there were three "mediations" which any state needed to generate in order to retain its legitimacy to rule over civilian sectors. The first was the idea of nationhood which was the recognition of a collective identity of a people based on a shared history, language, etc., and which made one people distinct from another -- a "we" versus a "they." The second mediation involved the idea of citizenship which involved voting rights and the right to have recourse against arbitrary acts on the part of state institutions. The third mediation involved lo popular or el pueblo which viewed the state as having responsibility toward the less favored sectors of the population. Lo popular required that the state be above the factionalism and antagonisms of civil society, and that it promote the welfare of all citizens of that society. Yet, in the bureaucratic-authoritarian state, these very mediations were repressed, which led to the unveiling of this type of state as representing certain interests over others. Because the bureaucratic-authoritarian state's philosophy was one of attracting foreign capital to promote capitalist industrialization, it necessarily required the muting of the we-they

dichotomy so as to promote the transnationalization of production. What's more, in promoting foreign capital, the bureaucratic-authoritarian state tended to align itself with the least nationalistic sector of the bourgeoisie which shared the same economic interests as the bureaucratic-authoritarian technocrats. In repressing the very mediations which promoted the legitimacy of its rule, the bureaucratic-authoritarian state had no recourse but to use naked force in maintaining its power.[19]

It was at this point in his analysis that O'Donnell went on to discuss other structural tensions in the bureaucratic-authoritarian model, namely the interplay between various sectors of the bourgeoisie, between the bourgeoisie and international capital, and between the bourgeoisie and the military. He argued how the particular interests of these groups along with external conditions created pressures on the system which led to policies which might in the long run destabilize this type of state. It was an analysis of how the favored elite groups grappled with power. What was fundamentally lacking in O'Donnell's thesis was a real analysis of what the working-class sectors were doing throughout these periods of bureaucratic-authoritarian rule. If the bureaucratic-authoritarian state precluded

any consensual means for maintaining its power, then it would stand to reason that the repressed popular sectors would seek means to undermine it, especially given their previous mobilization in the political system. If the elite groups which made up the bureaucratic-authoritarian "alliance" were insecure in how to best satisfy their interests, then it was possible for repressed interests to gain some foothold into the system. The part of O'Donnell's theory which remained underdeveloped was to what degree the state was successful in repressing previously mobilized groups in society. As William Canak observed, O'Donnell assumed the repression of popular working-class sectors as a fait accompli. He took their defeat at the hands of the bureaucratic-authoritarians as a given and proceeded to analyze how the elites went about imposing their policies.[20] What required analysis though, was in what ways and through what means these repressed popular sectors influenced the policies which were enacted. The Argentine Cordobazo of 1969 and the return of Perón to power in 1973 were two glaring examples of how the bureaucratic-authoritarians failed to impose their will over working-class sectors. It will be argued that the return to democracy in 1983 in Argentina signalled another defeat for bureaucratic-authoritarianism.

On another point, O'Donnell rejected the notion of corporatism as being incompatible with bureaucratic-authoritarian needs.[21] He perhaps rejects this idea out of hand. In seeking to maintain the bureaucratic-authoritarian state, resources were not infinite for the prolongation of physical coercion and repression. It was in the bureaucratic-authoritarian state's interest to find other means for controlling the population. Corporatism as a set of policies linking state and society would fit well into the bureaucratic-authoritarian's needs for it would be a means of controlling the degree of "participation" in a society. By giving pay-offs to certain groups within the civilian sector, the bureaucratic-authoritarian state could mediate the space between its legitimacy as ruler and the acquiescence of society. Bureaucratic-authoritarianism and corporatism were not incompatible in this respect and perhaps the former could lead to the latter in its attempts at stability.

Transitions from Authoritarian Rule

The preceding discussion on various ways of conceptualizing authoritarianism and change within authoritarian regimes has led to the current preoccupation with the transition from military

authoritarian rule to of all things, democratic civilian rule. While the recent transitions to democratic rule all require analysis and interpretation, the majority of published work thus far was written before the transitions were complete or during their early stages. Because of this, much of the current literature on transition to democratic rule remains tentative and preliminary.[22]

Perhaps the most important work to come out to date, are the studies commissioned by the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Affairs under the direction of O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead. In a collection of essays by various authors, the themes of transition and democratization are explored in Southern Europe and Latin America and compared cross-nationally. Tentative conclusions are also drawn up attempting to give some theoretical perspective for studying transitions but no theory has really been offered as yet. This is mainly because when the papers were written (1980-81), most of the transitions were either in their infant stages or had not yet occurred.

Still, the volumes offer insights into the specific characteristics of regime change. In Adam Przeworski's chapter on "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," he looks at the political space within

which regime transition should be viewed. On one level, focus could be placed on macro-oriented forces, i.e., the objective conditions prevailing at the time of the transition which caused the transition to occur. In this case, emphasis would be on economic, social, and external factors such as economic growth, class shifts, increased educational levels, and war as causal to transition. It would be a study of how the inevitable march of history determined the process of change. On another level, focus could be placed on micro-oriented factors, i.e., the interplay of political actors, their actions, interests, and perceptions. In this case, emphasis would be on individuals, decision making, problem solving, and choice making. These studies assume that the key to understanding politics lies with an analysis of key players in any given situation.[23]

Przeworski argues that while macro-oriented factors are important to an understanding of regime change, all they really tell us are the constraints under which regime changes take place. They do not determine the outcome of such situations, but they delimit the possibilities inherent in any given historical situation. What does determine the nature of liberalization will be the struggles within the ruling blocs, among group interests, and the strategic postures

taken by all key groups. In short, it is the micro-oriented factors which determine the outcome of regime transitions. This is a conclusion which is pretty much adhered to by most analysts of regime transition in South America.

Having established where the focus of attention should lie, Przeworski goes on to comment on what micro-oriented factors are causal to regime changes. One problem he tackles is that of legitimacy. Most studies on regime stability, particularly authoritarian regime stability, argue that legitimacy, i.e., the acceptance by those who are ruled that those who rule have a right to do so, is necessary for any regime to remain in power in the long run. Przeworski argues that this concern is misplaced. This is especially so of authoritarian regimes, which by their very definition are regimes which are in power through the use of force. Rather than assessing whether a regime has legitimacy or not, Przeworski argues that of greater importance is whether or not there exist viable alternatives to the regime in power. That is to say, a regime can remain in power even if it is clearly inept, by the fact that the key players cannot agree on what a viable alternative would be to the regime at hand.

This leads to a larger point in that Przeworski and

all the others writing in this volume view that the impetus for liberalization comes from those within the ruling blocs rather than from mass upheavals. There are, of course, a few notable exceptions, but the vast majority of transitions will come about due to schisms within ruling bloc groups, so attention on regime transition needs to be focused there.[24]

Alfred Stepan, in his analysis "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," attempts to categorize the various routes which transition from authoritarian rule can take. He delineates about eight typologies, but for the purposes of this thesis, only those paths which he labels "redemocratization from within authoritarian regimes" will be considered. Under this category, Stepan lists three distinct possibilities for the impetus for redemocratization:

1) from the military as government;

2) from the military as institution, acting against the military as government;

3) from the civilianized political leadership.

In the "military as government" scenario, initiation of liberalization comes from the military in power. This is usually done only when it is perceived to be in the interests of the military as a corporate

institution to leave power, coupled with a strong societal demand to do so. In this case, the military will seek to remove itself from power and return to the barracks. In the case where the "military as institution acts against the military as government," the overriding concern would be to protect the military as institution. Paradoxically, in this case, the military comes to believe that their survival depends on a return to democratic rule. In the "civilianized political leadership" approach, impetus for democratization would come from newly installed civilian leaders but with veto power in the hands of the military, which would remain a threatening force. Here, the negotiation of pacts would probably be the path taken toward greater democratization.

In all three cases, the military plays the role of ultimate arbiter over the course and extent of regime transition. What becomes the critical factor for the military is to safeguard its survival as an institution. Social pressures are important in these scenarios and in some cases are of critical importance, but they usually do not determine the outcome of the transition.[25]

Alain Rouquié, in "Demilitarization and the Institutionalization of Military-Dominated Politics in Latin America," provides some clues as to how Latin

American military regimes are different from the totalitarian regimes of the past in Europe. He posits that the dominant ideology of Latin America has always been liberal and democratic. Military regimes are really the exception rather than the rule and in this lies their precarious existence. Latin American military regimes have always paid lip service to democracy because, inherently, a democratic constitutional order is the only legitimate order in society's eyes.[26]

Another important point Rouquié makes is that contemporary Latin American military regimes have for the most part no organized political project with which to carry out their rule. The existence of a "threat" to society may enable them to come to power, but it does not offer them a long-term project in which society is transformed in one way or another. Rather, these authoritarian regimes always invoke the promise of future democratic rule to justify why they must stay in power now. The notion of legitimacy, therefore, is important to Rouquié's analysis.[27]

In O'Donnell's and Schmitter's conclusion, they attempt to draw together many of the points discussed by their contributors. They begin by offering some definitions followed by a description of some of the key

variables necessary for a "successful" transition. They posit parameters of what constitutes a transition to be the beginning of the dissolution of one regime ending with the installation of another regime. An indication that a transition has begun is when the authoritarian rulers begin to modify their own rules "in the direction of providing more secure guarantees for the rights of individuals and groups."[28] This is called "liberalization" and occurs when there are important divisions within the ruling bloc itself. No transition to date has begun without schisms within the ruling bloc -- hardliners versus softliners in general.[29]

Once a transition has started, there exist no guarantees that the initiators will remain in control of the process. Other important, non-predictable variables can come into play in a transition and each of these can help to determine the outcome of the transition. For example, a dramatic event such as a war or some key person's untimely death could push a transition in different directions than those intended. The process of resurrecting civil society -- i.e., remobilizing key civilian groups -- will be critical to the nature of the transition as will the problem of dealing with the past abuses of the outgoing regimes.[30]

Within this realm of uncertainty though, O'Donnell

and Schmitter offer some prescriptions as to how a regime transition can lead to a successful democratic instauration. First, the perception that a military regime has resoundingly failed will enable the transition to get off to a good start toward democracy. Where the record of an outgoing regime is not so clear (as in the case of Brazil), the road to democracy will be more shaky. Pacts which are not characteristic of recent regime transitions are also important to transition. O'Donnell and Schmitter argue that pacts negotiated between the outgoing military and incoming civilian governments are less stable, given the military's penchant for retaining control. Rather, pacts between civilian groups will make the successful instauration of democracy more likely. In their minds, when key civilian groups come to some agreement as to the rules of the game, by negotiating a pact, the road to democratic instauration will be more certain.[31]

Along with this, the first elections of a newly liberalized regime must not allow any one side to win a resounding majority. Both left-center and right-center parties must win enough votes to allow each side a significant say in the new regime. This will promote in people a greater faith in the system, since it will be clear that the results are not predetermined.[32]

Finally, the entire transition has certain rules and agreements to which all contending parties must adhere for democracy to be feasible. The two most important rules, based on recent transitions, are the protection of the property rights of the bourgeoisie and the continued institutional survival of the military. No transition to democratic rule to date has taken place without such prior understandings. Two tacit agreements which have also been significant involve the players in the game of transition. One is the agreement that all players will seek benefits and space to compete in the transition but without seeking the elimination of their opponents. A second agreement or understanding is that the players in the game do not necessarily have to have democratic values when they start the game. In the process, they will come to acquire these democratic values.

Transitions from Authoritarian Rule offers many provocative avenues for further research on transitions and redemocratization, especially now that most of the nations of South America have returned to some form of civilian rule. However, it is important to keep in mind that the current era of redemocratization should not be interpreted as a vindication of the earlier theories concerning modernization which posited that all nations would eventually move toward pluralist democratic rule. It is clear from these volumes

that the road to redemocratization is quite different from a "stages of economic growth" approach, and it is also far from certain whether the current wave of democratic regimes will endure over time. The tentative nature of the concluding volume speaks to this uncertainty.

While the focus of these volumes have been on transition rather than democratic instauration, it would have been helpful if the authors had come up with an initial definition of what constituted democracy. For Latin America, the mere existence of democratic forms such as elections, a congress, and a constitution have been poor indicators of whether a nation was democratic or to what degree it was democratic. What Latin American scholars need to do is to define what democracy is in the Latin American context. Until that is done, the danger remains of judging Latin American politics through the prism of U.S. and Western European democratic norms.

Another omission from the Transitions series and other current articles is the role of civilian groups in the transition process. As with the literature on bureaucratic-authoritarianism, the current literature on transitions remains state-centric with only passing reference to the role key social groups can play in a transition. If we accept the premise that the initial impetus for transition comes from within the ruling bloc: what is it that causes differences to

become schisms? What would constitute a "ruling bloc", what groups are involved, and under what conditions do the "softliners" come to dominance? Who influences their decisions and the actions they take? Could the resistance of certain civil groups to the authoritarian regime provide and provoke schisms within the ruling bloc thereby opening the way to a transition? For any analysis of transition to be complete, more attention needs to be focused on the role of civilian groups in this process.

Labor and Regime Transition

The analysis of authoritarianism in Latin America has traditionally concentrated on the actions of ruling elite groups. This is due to the fact that the very definition of authoritarianism assumes centralized control by the regime over civilian sectors. However, in light of the regime transitions of the mid-1980s, it behooves political scientists to come to an understanding of how and why the experiment with military authoritarianism failed so miserably in so many countries. The current literature on regime transition begins to explore the characteristics of these recent transitions. However, in the literature on both authoritarianism and regime transition, little light has as yet been shed on the role key civilian groups played in undermining authoritarianism and their impact on regime

transition. To address this gap in the literature, this thesis attempts to analyze the role of labor in Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

In general, labor could be viewed as enjoying a special status in many Latin American nations. During the 1940s, under programs of import-substitution-industrialization, labor was incorporated into the political system as a key player. In Argentina and Brazil, the labor movements were taken into the political fold and transformed into state-dominated, hierarchically and vertically structured interest groups.

In Argentina, under Juan Perón, labor enjoyed status and power, unparalleled in any other Latin American nation.[33] After the demise of Perón, labor became the special object of repression. The newly emergent political coalitions of the late 1950s and 1960s sought to undermine labor's role in the political game by stripping it of its economic and institutional power. The exclusionary corporatist strategies discussed by O'Donnell and Stepan were targeted specifically at labor. Labor's response to these strategies could therefore shed light on how effective bureaucratic-authoritarian policies were.

Most analysts of the recent military authoritarian experiment in Argentina have argued that the regimes of 1976-83 also sought to depoliticize labor. Through a combination

of laws, repression, and the playing off of one faction against another, the military attempted to destroy the institutional existence of the labor movement.[34] How successful the military was at this project and more importantly what the labor response was will be explored. An analysis of the dynamics of military-labor relations will create a better understanding of the many facets of authoritarianism as well as give guidance to the efforts at democratic restructuring.

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CHAPTER II

ARGENTINA AND THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

The history of Argentina in the twentieth century provides an example of how traditional modernization theories have been inappropriate in explaining the politics and economics of Latin American nations, while those theories designed to specifically address Latin America have provided models for understanding that area. At first glance, Argentina appears to possess all the prerequisites of a modern industrial society. It has vast natural resources as yet untapped. Its population is predominantly white (and proud of it) and literate. Its major cities are centers of culture with an huge middle class. Its urban infrastructure looks much like that of U.S. and European cities, and its population is one of the best fed in the world. Yet for

most of the twentieth century Argentina has had nondemocratic forms of government and an economy which has suffered severe fluctuations in its fortunes. Industrialization and urbanization did not bring about democracy but helped to engender one of the most brutal regimes in modern history. The predominantly white and literate urban middle class did not possess the "values" so necessary to a "civic culture," and the population's intake of beef made Argentina one of the leading countries where cholesterol and heart disease are endemic. Also, the stages of economic growth did not "take-off," but rather Argentina experienced more than its share of high inflation and economic turmoil.

On the other hand, theories of corporatism, populism, and bureaucratic-authoritarianism have proven better guides than traditional modernization theories in interpreting the Argentine case. Starting from its position as a dependent agricultural export producing nation at the turn of the century, Argentina's twentieth century growth has been sharply influenced by tne international economic system. The Depression of 1929 pushed Argentina to begin import-substitution-industrialization which led to the emergence of populism and new social forces in society. The resulting "exhaustion" of this form of industrialization led to the imposition of military rule. The decision on the

part of the military and other groups to "deepen" industrialization led to further repression and the greater entrenchment of military rule. Throughout, corporatist strategies were utilized in maintaining state-civil relations.

This is not to say that Argentina's modern development was solely the result of inevitable economic determinants. On the contrary, almost every step along the way, Argentines made fateful decisions which led to the events which transpired. The international economic system and the nation's dependency set the parameters by which Argentines acted. The nation's particular history and diverse settlers go toward explaining why they made the choices they have. Therefore, in order to understand contemporary events in Argentina, one needs to begin with the past.

The Making of a Nation

Argentina declared itself independent from Spain in 1810. The move was undertaken by a Buenos Aires-based coalition of merchants and landowners seeking to expand their trading markets. The economy was based on agricultural exports, and this system continued to predominate throughout the nineteenth century.

The basis of Argentina's agricultural economy was cattle. Argentina possessed a vast area of extremely

fertile lands called the pampas, particularly suited to cattle raising. Early settlers had only to buy up land and some cows and bulls, to see their fortunes multiply. Wealth was based on exporting beef to foreign markets, primarily to Europe. There was little need for labor and capital expenditures. What little infrastructure was developed, was created solely for the purpose of facilitating the transport of beef to the Buenos Aires port and for collecting the profits from these sales. Little attention was paid in the nineteenth century to the needs of the internal market, as Buenos Aires landowners became increasingly wealthy from the sale of their beef.[1]

Independence from Spain led to disputes concerning how the nation ought to be governed. One group, made up of the Buenos Aires merchants, wanted the nationalization of Buenos Aires. These "unitarists," as they were called, sought to protect their wealth from the other provinces by keeping Buenos Aires province a separate autonomous region. Another group, representing the interior provinces, sought a federalist structure in which each province would maintain political and economic autonomy from each other. The interior provinces had been fairly self-sufficient, and their economies were geared toward internal consumption. They feared the dominance of Buenos Aires in forcing them to

open up their markets to goods from Buenos Aires. A third group, also calling themselves federalists, were Buenos Aires cattle breeders who sought provincial autonomy but with Buenos Aires being the dominant province. Their economic interests called for protecting their profits from the provinces, while forcing the provinces to buy goods from Buenos Aires.[2]

The struggle over how Buenos Aires would be governed ended up pitting the provinces against Buenos Aires. In 1829, the cattle breeding federalists triumphed in the name of Juan Manuel de Rosas who is credited with unifying the provinces that now make up Argentina. In 1852, Rosas, who ruled as an old-fashioned caudillo dictator, was overthrown by formerly supportive cattle breeders and an emergent liberal bourgeois group of intellectuals. Disputes over the dominance of Buenos Aires in the nation's affairs did not stop. Only in 1880 was a constitution drawn up which separated the city of Buenos Aires from the province. The city of Buenos Aires was redesignated the federal capital. Nevertheless, Buenos Aires today remains the dominant center of the nation. All political and economic decisions are made here, and their effects resonate back to the provinces. Divisions between Buenos Aires and the rest of the nation persist as each province seeks to force Buenos Aires to attend to its needs.[3]

With the unification of Argentina under the dominance of Buenos Aires established in 1880, the nation experienced a period of growth unparalleled in its history. Its economy continued to be based on agricultural exports but this now included ranching, sheep herding, and cultivation of grains, flax, and seeds. Refrigerated railroad cars, dock facilities, and banks were all expanded to accommodate these export activities, and the political system (based on a constitution and liberal democratic rule) ensured that tariffs and import duties did not hamper the flow of trade.[4]

The diversification of agricultural export production led to important transformations in Argentine society. While the traditional landowning cattle raising and breeding elites amassed greater amounts of land and grew wealthier and continued to dominate the state, there emerged by the 1880s a class of urban middle-class white- collar workers. These were the people who owned no land (or very little of it) but who worked in the service industries which handled the financial aspects of the agricultural export trade. Also numbered among them were small shopkeepers in the urban centers. From this class of people pressure would come to liberalize the political system dominated by the landed cattle interests.[5]

By far the most important transformation in the late nineteenth century was the massive migration of southern European immigrants to the shores of Argentina. The creole landed elites saw the need to increase the population of the nation so in the 1880s, the government attempted to promote European migration, primarily from northern Europe and England, with the promise of land. However, the vast majority of immigrants came from southern Europe, mainly Italy and Spain, and rather than acquiring land, for the most part they either became tenant farmers or laborers in the cities.[6]

The massive wave of southern European immigration which began in 1880 coincided with an agricultural export boom and rising land prices. The established elites had parceled out most of the desirable pampas farmland by the mid-nineteenth century and were unwilling to sell their land to newcomers. Instead, they leased land out to tenant farmers who would oversee the planting and harvesting of crops for export. This system sustained itself until the end of the nineteenth century when the mechanization of farming led to the collapse of the tenant farmer system, and many were driven into the cities in search of work.[7]

Other immigrants came to Argentina in search of temporary work because of bad economic situations at the time in their home countries. This worked out well as

the seasons in the Southern Cone were the reverse of those in Southern Europe so workers could cross back and forth for the harvest seasons. These workers garnered the nickname of golondrinas (swallows) because of their movement back and forth across the oceans and also because they were predominantly brown-skinned. The mechanization of agriculture forced many of these immigrants to return to their homelands permanently, but some stayed and went to seek work in the cities. [8]

Estimates show that between 1890 and 1914, 4 million immigrants landed on Argentine shores and 2.4 million took up permanent residence. The initial waves of immigrants were absorbed by the agricultural needs of the countryside, but many settled in the cities. After the economic crisis of 1890-1895, with the collapse of the land tenure system, the flow of migrants was from the rural areas to the urban centers. The majority of immigrants were unskilled so they took up labor as railroad workers, dock workers, and meat packers. A small minority of immigrants had entrepreneurial skills, but they applied them to commercial and speculative activities rather than in promoting industrialization.[9]

By the turn of the century, Argentina was a nation with a large urban center but little industrial base, and the landowning elites wanted it to stay that way. They were committed to an economy based on agricultural

goods exports, and they used their control over the state to obstruct attempts at encouraging industrial development. The little industrialization some did favor was that which complemented the business of agricultural export. It should be noted that the development of what urban infrastructure existed was financed by British capital. The refrigerated railroad car, docks, and banks were all run by British funds and the landed elites funneled their wealth into private accounts overseas and ostentatious consumerism. Little thought was given to the development of an internal market and much less concern was shown toward the growth of the urban middle and working classes.[10]

The political hegemony enjoyed by the landed elites was challenged by the middle and working classes as early as the 1880s. Urban middle-class, white-collar workers (mainly clerks and state bureaucrats), small shopkeepers, and several small independent farmers joined the Radical Union (later to be the Radical Civic Union) in an attempt to lobby for greater political rights and freedoms. This group sought neither economic transformations nor economic redistribution per se, but it wanted a voice in the allegedly democratic political system. Members of the group, among them Leandro Alem, Bartolome Mitre, Carlos Pellegrini, and Hipolito Yrigoyen, sought to force the landed elites to give up

the practice of fraud in elections. Several coup attempts were tried but failed. On the part of the working classes, anarchist and socialist groups sought to influence the political system but to little avail as well. Yet those groups (of which more will be said in chapter 3) would play a decisive role in the ruling elite's decision to liberalize their political system in 1912.[11]

The agitation of the middle class in calling for political reform was not rejected by all segments of the landed elites. Many saw the need for some reform in the interest of preventing a deluge of demands from flooding in. In 1910, Roque Saenz Pena, a reform-minded landowner, came to power, and in 1912, a new electoral reform law was implemented which established universal male suffrage and a secret ballot. This signalled the end of the landed elites' dominance over politics, but it was their view that, given the political situation, some concessions were necessary. At that time, many in the landed elites feared the spread of anarchist and particularly communist influence among the working classes. To deter that influence from growing, it was thought better to incorporate the Radical Civic Union into the political ranks so as to appear more liberal but also to obtain the Radicals' support in fighting what were deemed to be subversive elements among the

working classes.[12]

The passage of the Saenz Pena Law resulted in the election of Radical Hipolito Yrigoyen in 1916 to the presidency, but the conservative landed elites maintained control over the congress. Yrigoyen, while espousing democratic principles and freedoms, actually acted like a strong-arm caudillo within his party and in government. He attempted little change of the economic system and only encouraged domestic industrialization because the war efforts of Europe and the United States precluded import trade. He did nationalize the oil industry by creating the state run YPF (Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales) in 1922.[13]

Because Yrigoyen's and the Radicals' platform was so narrowly defined, they had little success in attracting members from the upper and working classes. The upper class was suspicious of any hint at social reform and used the congress to obstruct Yrigoyen's modest proposals. The working classes saw little benefit from Yrigoyen's policies and continued to agitate for change via strikes and work stoppages. In 1919, a series of labor strikes led to a bloody put-down by government forces. The Radical Civic Union lost any support labor had given it, and before Yrigoyen left office, he greatly increased state spending and enlarged the government bureaucracy.[14]

In 1922, Marcelo T. de Alvear, another Radical was elected to the presidency. During his administration, the Argentine economy prospered through cereal and meat exports and the last great wave of immigration took place. However, dissension soon arose within the Party over Alvear's attempts to curb the public spending which had marked the last years of Yrigoyen's first administration. The majority group repudiated Alvear and allied behind Yrigoyen. The smaller more conservative-oriented group organized itself into the UCR-antipersonalist wing in direct opposition to Yrigoyen. Yrigoyen, for his part, attempted to promote a populist image among middle-class sectors, and in 1928 he won re-election to the presidency.[15]

However, Yrigoyen's second administration would be eclipsed by a military coup. The conservative landed elites had become discouraged with the Radical democratic experiment, especially with Yrigoyen's brand of populism. They sought a change and began to agitate the military to undertake a military coup. The Depression of 1929 gave them the perfect reason to foment a coup as they could blame Yrigoyen for the worsened economic situation. In 1930, Yrigoyen was deposed and sent into exile.[16]

The year 1930 heralded in nearly fifty years of military domination of Argentina's politics. The

Argentine military by then was a highly professionalized and European-trained group of men. Created by the landed elites, the military was supposed to be loyal to civilian authorities and to eschew the dirty game of politics. However, throughout the early twentieth century both landed elites and Radicals sought military complicity in their political ends, so that by 1930, the military, particularly the army, had grown accustomed to playing a role in the affairs of state.[17]

General Jose F. Uriburu of the army came to power in 1930 and pursued policies of repression. He sought to dismantle the constitution and to impose a form of fascism on Argentina. His extremist views led him to be replaced by General Agustin P. Justo, a more moderate legalist who called for constitutional democracy, although controlled from above. These two men represented two contending extremes within the military during the 1930s. One faction, the legalists favored constitutional government; the other favored authoritarian corporatist control. Both were initially tied to landed elite interests but by 1940 many had become disaffected from this sector.[18]

The Depression of 1929 and Justo's policies led to profound changes in the nation's economy. Industrialization, which had been opposed by the landed elites, finally began to take on significance in the

form of import-substitution-industrialization. Bereft of markets from which to import manufactured goods, urban middle-class entrepreneurs began production of light consumer durables.[19]

The landed elites attempted to control the nature of this industrialization. They only supported it in the hope that import-substitution-industrialization would be temporary and in time the internal market would correct itself and agricultural export products would resume at high profit levels. The military supported import-substitution-industrialization as it began to envision itself as a more modernized sophisticated establishment.[20]

Much of the initial impetus for import-substitution-industrialization came from foreign entrepreneurs who still maintained ties to their native countries. Many had not even taken up Argentine citizenship, and therefore, they represented a distinct non-national class separate from the traditional elites of Argentina. So too, many of the economic policies promoted by Justo sought to encourage foreign investment and to deepen the already dominant role of British capital. The Roca-Runciman Treaty passed during Justo's regime, gave the British a monopoly over the beef trade.[21]

Justo was succeeded by Roberto Ortiz. Ortiz ruled for only a short time due to poor health and Ramon

Castillo succeeded him to power. World War II began in Europe. Many German-educated army men sought to ally with the Axis powers and the United States government stepped up pressure to keep Argentina from joining this alliance. Within the army, a group of mid-level officers conspired to implant a fascist regime in Argentina. When elections were called in 1943, this group under the name of Group of United Officers (GOU) and a pro-United States moderate group would lead an army revolt against Castillo. In the aftermath of the coup, these two factions fought over what direction the new regime would take and which side to take in World War II.[22] The GOU nationalists managed to come to power, and an army colonel by the name of Juan Perón stepped into the limelight.

The Perónist Revolution

By 1940, the military, which had traditionally sided with the landed elites in political matters, was no longer as supportive of maintaining the status quo. Rather, many had come to see the need for greater industrialization and for greater control over the economy, which was still dominated by foreign interests. Nationalistic feelings ran high within the army by 1942 as it felt undue pressure from the United States and Brazil to declare war against Germany. In a climate of

rising tensions, with Radical support, the army overthrew Castillo and imposed a military regime.[23]

After a period of political wrangling between the moderates and GOU nationalists for control of the government, General Edelmiro Farrell was installed in power in 1944. Juan Perón, who had been active in pursuing the nationalist cause became his minister of war. As minister of war, Perón was responsible for controlling promotions and the distribution of military supplies. In this highly influential position, he appealed to the army and navy as an advocate for military independence. In 1944, he spearheaded the creation of an air force. His support among many in the military grew.[24]

While Perón was building up military support, he was also concerned about winning popular support for the army's efforts. In 1943, under a government reshuffling, he took over the National Labor Department in Buenos Aires and turned it into the Secretariat for Labor and Social Welfare. Attempts to win the support of the political parties were to no avail, and in a short time, Perón turned his attention to the working classes. He realized the untapped popular base labor could provide in his vision for reshaping Argentina and began a concerted effort to win labor's support.[25]

From his position as head of the National Labor

Department, he began to settle disputes in labor's favor. He doled out wage increases and benefits to workers in efforts to court union leaders' support. He reversed longstanding anti-labor legislation and passed new legislation favorable to labor. To the labor leaders, such cooperation and support from a government official was a radical change from years of unfulfilled demands and repression. Many readily allied behind him.[26]

Throughout his rise to power (he was named vice president in June 1944), Perón extolled the virtues of nationalism and the need for an independent Argentina. He argued for the need to unite against communism (a threat from within the labor unions) and against imperialism. He was particularly effective in exploiting the fears of the army against an alleged scheme by Brazil, instigated by the United States, to invade Argentina in light of the latter's refusal to openly break with the Axis powers. It was this particular stance which allowed Perón to carry out labor reforms without setting off alarms within the military. Many in the army viewed his gestures toward labor as defusing a potential rebellion by the masses.[27]

One other group Perón managed to gain the support of was the Catholic Church. In 1943, the GOU had advocated compulsory religious education in the schools. When

Perón was running for the presidency in 1945, he reaffirmed the commitment to impose compulsory religious education, to the satisfaction of the Catholic Church hierarchy.[28]

Perón's rise to power, however, was not without opposition. The first group to be alarmed at his policies were the landed elites and the Argentine Union of Industrialists, a group of export-linked manufacturers. Both these groups viewed with alarm the benefits Perón doled out to the working class. Factions within the military, particularly in the navy were worried at Perón's growing acquisition of power and began to voice dissent against the Farrell regime. A group called the Fuerzas Vivas, which had come into existence in 1940 and consisted of free trade advocates from landed interests, exporters, importers, and foreign interests, openly declared its opposition to Perón's social reforms in mid 1945. Perónist sympathizers openly repudiated this opposition. The stage was set for confrontation.[29]

General Farrell, by mid-1945 realized events were moving against him and his vice-president. Bowing to pressure from within the military and from civilian groups, he dismissed Perón and had him imprisoned. What transpired after this has now become the folklore of Perónist history. Perónist sympathizers lost little

time in amassing support to force Perón's return from exile. Labor union leaders and Perón's mistress, Eva Duarte, canvassed working-class neighborhoods in Buenos Aires to rally support for a demonstration. On October 17, 1945, to the horror of the traditional elites, thousands of workers rallied to the Government House (Casa Rosada) demanding the appearance of Perón. He was quickly brought in from Martin Garcia Island and Farrell called elections for February 1946. Perón and his sympathizers had won the first round.[30]

In late October 1945, Perón organized the Labor Party and managed to win the support of a minority faction of the Radical Party, called the UCR-Junta Renovadora. Its leader, Hortensio Quijano, became Perón's running mate in the 1946 elections. He had also garnered the support of many provincial conservative party bosses due to his nationalist outlook. By election time Perón had the solid support of the working classes, many in the army, the Catholic Church, some radicals, and provincial conservatives. Opponents to Perón rallied behind the Democratic Union, but this group was too heterogeneous to provide real opposition to Perón. In one of the few fraud-free elections of the twentieth century, Perón won a solid 54 percent of the vote.[31]

Perón's vision of a new Argentina consisted of three basic goals: (1) to strengthen and extend

industrialization; (2) a certain redistribution of the wealth of the country; (3) to stake out a distinctive international role that was much like what today is the non-aligned position. He had to his advantage a large state treasury from which to dispense funds for his economic endeavors. Argentina had seen its beef exports increase during the war years when Europe's economy was concentrated on the war effort, and Perón also enjoyed the initial support of most of the key groups in society, save for the landed elites.[32]

Perón continued to pursue his pro-labor policies by promulgating laws covering all aspects of workers' lives. He instituted compensations, procedures, and created a union bureaucracy to oversee all labor-related matters. Redistribution of income was accomplished by transferring funds from the primary export sector. Workers' wages and benefits were substantially increased, and for the first time in Argentine history, the working classes began to see a substantive improvement in their standard of living.[33]

Funds from the agricultural exporting sector were also transferred to the industrial sector. Here Perón embarked on a program to purge foreign interests out of industry. He nationalized the railroads, telephone, gas, and urban transport. The state took control over matters concerning external trade as well. Compensation

for these nationalizations came from state treasury funds which led to a severe depletion of state funds for promoting greater industrialization. Perón emphasized light consumer durables production over capital intensive manufactured products. With his goal of social reform and giving benefits to groups which had helped him come to power, he spent monies on non-productive activities such as military expenditures and housing construction. Little of his industrial programs created the basis for self-sustained economic growth.[34]

In agriculture, Perón did little to force changes in land tenure practices. He wrested some profits from the landowning elites to benefit other sectors of the economy, but overall, this group did not suffer severe losses, despite their protests to the contrary. Perón raised rural wages and passed protective legislation for agricultural tenants, but no structural changes were forced upon the landowning elites. However, this group responded by cutting back on agricultural production.[35]

The presidential style of Perón was clearly personalist and throughout his rule he fostered the adulation of his followers. With his charismatic wife Evita at his side, the couple became revered by many, particularly among the working classes. This image of benevolent patriarch however, hid from the public eye some of the less civil policies of Perón. He purged

from positions of influence those who disagreed with him whether labor union leaders or newspaper publishers. Perón overlooked abuses of power (such as embezzlement of funds) committed by those who supported him and his wife. Unquestioning loyalty to the Peróns was necessary to anyone who sought government patronage or influence.[36]

The authoritarian bent of Perón has been characterized at times as being fascist. Certainly, the efforts at centralized control spoke to Perón's desire for personal power at all costs, but at the same time, his authoritarianism was moderated by a certain degree of populism. There was repression, censorship, and outright strong-arm mafioso brutality, but a terror network never really developed. The degree of control over society was not all pervasive as in totalitarian regimes, nor as organized. Rather, as David Rock, argues, Perónism was a peculiar blend of authoritarianism, chock full of internal contradictions.

The Perónist experiment at reshaping Argentina began to fall apart in 1950. Perón's economic policies for income redistribution and industrialization were all based on state treasury funds and expropriating profits from the agrarian export sector. By 1950, state treasury funds had run out owing to expenditures to the

massive state sector and to compensation for nationalizations. In the agricultural sector, severe drought and a drop in international prices for agricultural goods led to a fall in production and lower profits. Perón had assumed he could rely on this sector to pay for his reforms, but he was mistaken and Argentina fell on hard times.[37]

The economic crisis of the early 1950s enabled Perón's opponents to build up opposition to his rule. While Perón managed to win election under the Justicialista Party to a second term in 1951, efforts were already underway to depose him. The landed elites and middle classes had never been supporters of Perón so they eagerly awaited his demise. Factions within the army were upset at his personalist strong-arm tactics and liked even less what they saw to be the undue interference of his wife, Evita, in military affairs. Even the labor unions, while still the most loyal to Perón, began to call strikes in protest of the economic situation. Lastly, Perón had managed to alienate the Catholic Church with his recognition of certain cults and spiritualist groups.[38]

The beginning of the end for Perón came after the death of Evita in 1952. Gone was the woman who brought Perón to the masses, and with her death, Perón became increasingly isolated. He responded to the situation by

imposing greater repression against his critics and even had labor strikes squashed. He sought relief from the economic situation by courting foreign investors, especially the United States, but this did little to effect the situation. Army factions felt he had to go. The Catholic Church was scandalized by his passage of a divorce law and declared outright opposition to him. By 1955, civil unrest had become endemic with pro-Perónists and anti-Perónists fighting each other in the streets, often at the instigation of Perón. On September 19th, 1955, amidst army revolts in Cordoba and Bahia Blanca, and with Buenos Aires under blockade by the navy, Perón resigned and fled into exile. The first Perónist experiment was over.[39]

The legacy Perón left Argentina in 1955 was expanded group interests vying for political power. Added to the landed elites, the army, and the urban middle-class Radicals was a Perónist Party whose backbone was the labor unions and working classes. To the state he left an huge bureaucracy with responsibilities to nationalized industries and social welfare policies. To the economy, he left a depleted state treasury and a shaky industrial base. He neither destroyed the power of the traditional ruling elites nor did the Perónist government gain enough strength to check the former's power. Rather, in the next eighteen years, attempts

would be made to defeat Perónism, all of which would fail at high social cost.

The Liberating Revolution

The military which came to power in 1955 sought to create law and order once again in civil society. Dominated by the army branch of the military, first General Eduardo Lonardi and then General Pedro Aramburu took power. With the backing to the landed elites, the army undertook the de-Perónization of Argentine society. It intervened the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) and purged all union leaders who were loyal to Perón. Strikes by workers were brutally squashed as well.[40]

Aramburu also saw to the purging of Perónist symbols from society. He embarked on a campaign to expose the excesses and corruption of the Peróns by displaying the material goods amassed by Juan and Eva Perón. He was also responsible for kidnapping Evita's body and having it sent to Milan, Italy, so as to deny the Perónist movement of a "sacred" symbol.[41]

In the economic sphere, Aramburu reversed the Perónist policy of transferring funds to the industrial sector and once again, favored the agricultural export sectors. He encouraged the export sectors and entered Argentina into the International Monetary Fund. He also encouraged foreign investment, thereby worsening

Argentina's international debt. The economy was not to recover to pre-1940 levels of prosperity.[42]

The efforts at de-Perónization did not succeed in cleansing Argentine society of Perónism. The labor union movement reacted by becoming more fiercely pro-Perón. Factions within the army were dubious of Aramburu's efforts to create a Perón-free Argentina, and from exile Perón offered words of support to those still in allegiance to him. Aramburu saw the need to leave power and called elections for February 1958.[43] From its inception, the "Liberating Revolution" was only to be a temporary measure to correct chaos and corruption before civilians could take over again. After three years of attempting to "liberate" the nation from Perónism, the army had lost its revolution. So too, it showed little success in dealing with the economy.

The Radicals Return

The elections of 1958 did not include the Perónists as the army continued to proscribe the group's existence. Nor was the army to relinquish all control over the civilian regime which would come to power. The army saw to it that in 1958, the Radical Party came back to power.

By 1958, the Radicals had split into two factions.

One faction, led by Arturo Frondizi called itself the UCR-Intransigents and advocated accommodation with the Perónists. The other faction, led by Ricardo Balbin, called itself the UCR-Pueblo and urged complete dissociation from Perónism. In order to win the presidency, Frondizi entered into a secret pact with Perón: in return for working-class support Frondizi promised to re-legalize Perónism. This strategy worked in defeating Balbin for the presidency but the political costs were more than Frondizi could handle.[44]

Frondizi's pact with Perón led to great mistrust on the part of the conservative elites and the army, and his administration was subject to several coup attempts. His campaign promises to Perón were initially fulfilled but rather than coopting Perónist labor support, the Perónists demanded more concessions which Frondizi could not deliver. Frondizi's economic program of "devlopmentalism" could not support the kinds of social welfare benefits which Perón had been able to dole out. At the end of 1958, Frondizi embarked on an economic project designed to promote price stabilization and to end a balance of payments deficit. To carry this out, Frondizi sought foreign assistance by way of a $328 million loan from the International Monetary Fund. In order to obtain the loan, Frondizi was forced to adopt policies which hurt his attempts at coopting working

class support. The initial result of his program was a fall in real wages of 26%.

The response to Frondizi's program was a series of strikes by labor, which were violently crushed. The army, alarmed at the recent revolution in Cuba viewed labor agitation as part of the international leftist conspiracy. It pressured Frondizi to take a hard line against labor discontent.

By late 1961, early 1962, the economic situation, which had shown some signs of improvement, was again in crisis. The army was alarmed at Frondizi's foreign policy forays which many interpreted as attempts to buy popular support. In 1961, Frondizi sought to mediate the confrontation between Cuba and the United States. That same year, he welcomed Che Guevara back to his nation of birth. With several gubernatiorial elections slated for 1961, Frondizi was seeking votes. However, the army was becoming increasingly impatient with him.

The elections of 1961 were victories for the Radicals and Frondizi decided to make good on a campaign promise by allowing the Perónists to run their candidates in the 1962 gubernatorial elections. Frondizi hoped that a Radical victory would give him some independence from an increasingly overbearing army. He lost his gamble as the Perónists won a majority of the governorships. The army pressured Frondizi to annul the electoral results;

he refused and the army deposed him in a coup.

The period immediately following the coup witnessed a power struggle within the army over what form of government to install. One faction, called the Azules (Blues), wanted a return to legal constitutional rule and favored some accommodation to Perón. The other faction, called the Colorados (Reds), was militantly anti-Perónist and wanted extended military rule. Throughout 1962, conflicts and clashes, at times violent, took place, but eventually the Azules got the upper hand and called elections for July 1963.[45]

In this election, the Perónists were still banned from participating and UCR-Pueblo candidate Arturo Illia was elected with 25% of the popular vote. The army, as with Frondizi did not completely retreat from the scene and continued to exercise its veto option. Illia represented the conservative wing of the Radicals and was only able to maintain the support of the party's traditional wing. The landed elites had since formed a coalition with the UIA and called for less state intervention in the economy. They viewed Illia's policies of expanding the government bureaucracy and state spending as inflationary.[46]

His fiercest critics though, came from the CGT and the labor unions. Having been denied the right to run their candidates in the July elections, few in the

working classes saw Illia as a legitimate ruler. When Illia attempted to divide the labor movement, the response was a series of strikes and sit-ins which disrupted the country. From exile, Perón encouraged efforts to destabilize Illia and even attempted a return to the country but was stopped in Rio de Janeiro and sent back to Spain.[47]

In September 1965, Illia called congressional elections with every intention of seeing the democratic process through, which meant allowing the Perónists to field candidates. Hoping for a Radical victory, again the gamble was lost when the Perónists won. Labor stepped up its military support for a coup. Factions within the army began working toward a coup. On June 28, 1966, Illia was removed, with hardly a protest from any group in Argentine society.

The administrations of Frondizi and Illia, while nominally democratic, were basically army-orchestrated attempts to have civilians deal with Perónism. Neither Frondizi nor Illia were totally free to exercise power as they pleased, but rather, the army expected the Radicals to rule without Perónist support. When they were unable to do so and began to negotiate with some factions of the Perónists, the army came in. The army knew it had forced an impossible task upon the Radicals, but the other two alternatives seemed unpalatable in

1958: they could have allowed Perón to return to Argentina and negotiated some kind of pact with him -- to most in the army at that time, this was an unacceptable strategy -- or they could have come to power themselves, which a faction of the army advocated and which ultimately, was the solution adopted in 1966.

Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism

The Argentina of 1966 had undergone several transformations since 1955 when the army ousted Perón. The landed elites were still a significant force in politics and were the principal supporters of de-Perónization. In those ten years they had recovered much of their wealth -- which they sent out of the country -- and many had entered the realms of finance, commerce, and eventually, industry. The national industrial bourgeoisie had grown in number, but its fortunes were languishing due to the inability to deepen industrialization.

This group was rivaled by the entrance of foreign multinational corporations, primarily from the United States. Under the Radicals, foreign investment had increased dramatically and was now a significant player in the economy. The middle class was divided into factions. Many who had seen democracy crushed by the military in the past ten years went in search of an

alternative to Radicalism and joined up with the Perónists. The Radicals, having failed at governing, fell into disarray and conflict among themselves. Radical policies of favoring foreign capital over domestic industry also alienated many from the middle class. The working classes, after ten years of repression, were as powerful as ever. Successive policies of de-Perónization had only led to greater identification with Perónism. So too, in the 1960s there had emerged labor leaders who were less dependent on Perón and internal rivalries plagued the labor movement between Perón's loyalists and those who sought an independent way.[48]

Together with this heterogeneous group of contending social forces was the army which had become disillusioned at civilian inability to defeat Perónism and to attain economic stability. The army of 1966 had come to adopt the notion of "national security" in its interpretation of what was wrong with Argentina. National security broadened the traditional view of "enemy" to include the enemy from within. Threats such as communist infiltration and counterinsurgency were very real, and the military had the responsibility to weed them out and destroy them. "Warfare" was no longer limited to fighting an external enemy but expanded to include the eradication of internal opponents. To many,

Perónism and the working classes harbored subversive elements which needed to be destroyed. What the civilians could not do, the army would.[49]

Another aspect of national security called for maintaining the traditional values of Argentine society. Liberation Theology, a radical reexamination of Catholic doctrine, was spreading its gospel in parts of Latin America and the Argentine military was worried it would gain a foothold in Argentina. Therefore, when the military came to power, their public discourse was imbued with Christian symbols. The messianic element of military rule from 1966 to 1982 was a direct response to reformist trends within the Catholic Church at that time.[50]

Economically, the military was committed to an industrial program for developing Argentina. With its goal of making Argentina a modern world power, the military favored the deepening of industrialization. Import-substitution-industrialization had been exhausted. Under General Carlos Onganía, the military sought an alliance with foreign capital to provide the needed impetus for expanding industrialization. This alliance was the first experiment at bureaucratic-authoritarianism.[51]

In order to implement his program of attracting foreign capital, Onganía had to take care of the,

broadly defined, opposition. Labor, of course, was his principal target as it posed the most serious threat to attracting foreign capital, and the repression unleashed was unprecedented in Argentine history up to that time. Perónist labor leaders were jailed and the principal labor unions intervened. The severity of the repression was a direct consequence of the high levels of political mobilization on the part of labor. Because labor was accustomed to playing an influential role in the nation's politics as an opposition force, greater force was necessary to silence its opposition.[52]

Labor was not the only group attacked. University professors and students, intellectuals, the political parties, and anyone who appeared to question Onganía's policies were purged and silenced. To Onganía and the military, Argentine society had become corrupt and immoral. No less than an all-out internal war was necessary to cleanse Argentine society of its sins.[53]

Having initially crushed opposition to his rule, Onganía moved full speed ahead to implement his economic program. He cut workers' wages and benefits, devalued the currency, and rationalized various sectors of the state bureaucracy to create a favorable climate for investment. The initial results were good as foreign investment increased dramatically by 1967. However, the social dislocations were severe and would prove fatal to

Onganía's plan. Labor of course suffered the brunt of his policies as massive unemployment and a drastic reduction in workers' overall well-being occurred. The national bourgeoisie and owners of small and medium businesses also suffered as foreign competition led many to bankruptcy. The traditional elites and the military were the only domestic groups to view these developments favorably.[54]

Onganía's plan could continue to work so long as he was successful at keeping a lid on social protest. Between 1966 and 1969, it appeared that Onganía was in control of the situation, but this illusion was dispelled in May 1969 in the city of Cordoba. There, an auto worker strike, a student protest, and middle-class support led to massive demonstrations against the regime. While military forces successfully repressed the strike, other protests occurred in other cities and Onganía's days were numbered.[55]

Onganía attempted to hold on to power despite the growing number of voices within his own ranks advising him to resign. Those in the army who had never really wanted the military as governors found the opportunity to force their hand. In 1970, Onganía was deposed in a military coup.

The Resurrection of Perón

The army generals who ousted Onganía in 1970 realized the futility of four years of dealing with social discontent by force. As a result, under General Alejandro Lanusse, the military government decided it had to allow some democratization to take place. Lanusse embarked on a campaign to popularize his image in the hope of garnering support from the middle class and the political parties. He called it the "Grand National Agreement," but managed to only attract the support of a few minor parties. Social discontent grew by leaps and bounds. Along with all the other groups which make up the Argentine political spectrum, there emerged in the early 1970s leftist guerrilla groups which would make efforts at political reconciliation impossible without Perón.[56]

Urban guerrilla groups had come into being mostly during the early 1960s, but they became significant players in politics in 1970. In the last days of Onganía's regime, a group calling itself the Montoneros kidnapped General Aramburu and executed him. The event sent shock waves throughout the nation. This was to be followed by other kidnappings, assassinations, bombings, and bank robberies. Other urban guerrilla groups, such as the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) and the FAP (Perónist Armed Forces), had been active in the late

1960s and were responsible for the assassinations of several labor union bosses.[57]

These urban guerrilla groups predominantly consisted of middle- and upper-middle-class youths disillusioned with the Argentine political stalemate. Most, though not all, were inspired by the likes of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and the other giants of Marxist revolution. Having been raised in the period of outright and de facto military rule, these groups, particularly the Montoneros were scandalized at the degree of repression and social injustice meted out by the authorities. So too, these groups felt the root cause of Argentina's problems was in foreign capital exploitation, and they blamed certain collaborators for this situation. They accused union leaders of selling out to the establishment and pushed for popular revolution. When few in the working classes responded, they took to the streets themselves.[58]

Juan Perón watched these developments with great interest from his exile in Spain. He let it be known that he supported the ideology of these guerrilla groups, and so, he won many of these leftist groups' support, especially the Montoneros. Perón's interest, of course, was in using these groups to his political advantage. By 1970, the political landscape was in disarray. Efforts to defeat Perónism had failed; the

military was disorganized; guerrilla warfare appeared endemic. What better time for Perón to promote himself as the only one who could reconcile the contending factions of Argentine society?[59]

The military by 1973 was exhausted from failing to contain urban terrorism and arrest a declining economy. Many advocated (although reservations existed among others) allowing Perón to return to Argentina. The middle classes had also grown tired of social and economic upheavals. The Radicals and the military had failed, and many defected to Perónism. The working classes had seen their hopes and needs ignored time and time again during the past eighteen years. The possibility of a Perónist resurrection was tantalizing. The labor union elite was a bit more guarded: they were used to acting without Perón and were unsure as to what his return would do to their influence and power. The urban guerrilla groups saw Perón's return as aiding in their cause for social revolution. After some last minute skirmishing by the army, Perón returned and he conquered. He was inaugurated on October 12, 1973, at seventy-seven years of age. At his side was his third wife, Isabel.[60]

Immediately upon taking office, Perón set about repressing the militant youth movement he had encouraged for so long. Repression was unleashed on the guerrilla

groups and the ideals of these groups were shattered. However, others refused to accept what was happening and went underground. From there, they regrouped and would launch a new wave of political violence. With labor, Perón attempted to revive some of the social welfare policies of forty years earlier, but the economy was in deep recession. Instead, he hammered out a tripartite agreement between labor, business, and government to freeze prices and wages until the inflationary spiral halted.

Social unrest did not abate but escalated. Urban terrorist groups intensified their activities. Labor, seeing no improvement in its plight, called strikes. The army was grumbling and the middle class felt squeezed. And then Perón died. On July 1, 1974, after less than a year in power, Perón was dead. What followed was a period of chaos and terror. With Isabel now in power, the political situation deteriorated rapidly. Policy making was irrational, the economy continued in disarray, and urban terrorism increased. Most groups in society mobilized to call for a military coup. On March 24, 1976, the wish was granted, and once more, the military took over.[61]

Caudillos, Radicals, Populists, and the Military

The history of Argentine politics up to 1976 illustrates a path of development distinct from that of

the United States and Western Europe. As with most of the other Latin American nations, nineteenth century Argentina was dominated by cattle ranchers vying for economic and political power. Independence from Spain led to conflicts between the provinces over how political power should be distributed with the eventual triumph of the Buenos Aires cattle ranchers. From the mid-nineteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century, political power was alternated among the landed elites under the facade of liberal democratic forms.

The emergence of the Radicals at the turn of the century was a result of the growing urbanization of the nation. The backbone of this group was middle-class white collar workers engaged in the business and financial aspects of agro-exporting and small shopkeepers. Economically, these groups sought to maintain the status quo of furthering agricultural export production, but they wanted political rights and privileges. The Roque Saenz-Pena electoral reform law enabled this sector of society to achieve political power and control over the state apparatus.

In much of the traditional political development literature, the middle class is considered to be a democratizing force in society. On the surface, the Radicals would appear to have fulfilled this function in

Argentine society, promoting honest elections and representative government. However, a critical difference between the Argentine middle class and the North American middle class was the former's continued ties to the agricultural exporting sector rather than to the industrial sector. The Argentine middle class was but an extension of the agricultural export economy. This helps to explain why both the Argentine middle class and landed elites proved intransigent to the growing demands of an emergent working class. This also helps to explain why both landed elites and middle-class groups courted the military at various times to gain political ends.

This is not to say that the landed elites and the middle class share the same concerns, for the landed elites were very suspicious of the Radical's expansion of the state bureaucracy and attempts at political reform. After a period of Radical rule, the landed elites agitated the army to take over and the year 1930 initiated fifty years of military dominance over Argentine politics.

Initially, the military espoused very limited goals in coming to power: to clean up chaos and corruption and call elections. It neither sought long-term rule nor had a grand vision for Argentina. However, significant groups within the military were preoccupied with

politics and sought to promote their interests in the political sphere. Despite statements to the contrary, the Argentine military from 1930 on played a significant activist role in the nation's politics, even when the president in the Casa Rosada was a civilian. The nature of this political intervention would be determined by economic and social factors.

The 1930s and 1940s were periods of industrial growth for Argentina under policies of import-substitution- industrialization. The economic transformation and the consequent social changes led to a period of populism under Juan Perón. An army officer, Perón rose to power by enfranchising the working classes and creating a new political force in Argentine politics. His leadership style was clearly personalist and his opening up of the political system to the labor unions did not mean greater democracy for Argentina. However, his social welfare policies created substantive improvements for an hitherto repressed sector of society.

It was the mobilization of the working classes as a political force which Perón's successors sought to undo. After Perón was deposed in a coup, the army spearheaded a campaign to crush the power of the labor movement and the working classes. When it failed, the military resurrected the Radicals and let them have a go at it.

The ignominious failure of the de-Perónization of society led to the imposition of a military regime, different from all of its predecessors.

The Onganía regime of 1966 was markedly different from previous attempts at military rule. Disillusioned with civilian incompetence and committed to repressing Perónism, the Onganía regime sought to transform Argentina into an industrial world power by fostering industrialization through foreign investment. Committed to a vision of political and economic greatness, Onganía attempted to manage the economy as well as to promote social peace. Herein lies another aspect of Argentine political development different from traditional modernization theory. The impetus for industrialization came from the military which was overseeing a technological bureaucracy in carrying out its economic program. In Brazil the program was working, but in Argentina it led to failure. Nevertheless, in the 1960s when Argentina had become highly urbanized and industrialized, its politics were highly repressive and non-democratic. Industrialization was not creating liberal democracy as modernization theorists had believed. Rather the opposite was occurring throughout the continent.

The failure of the first bureaucratic-authoritarian experiment and the subsequent return of Perón to power

illustrated how social forces in society had a significant impact on the policies followed by those in the Casa Rosada. The Cordobazo of 1969 served notice that social groups would not sit idly by as they saw their standard of living eroding. This was a lesson though, that few in the Argentine military would learn until some years later. Before that would happen, Argentina had to enter one of the darkest periods of its history.

In sum, Argentine political history up to 1976 followed a path distinctive from that followed by North America and Western Europe. Even though to most observers, Argentina resembled a sophisticated and modern nation, this appearance belied its roots as a dependent Latin nation. As such, social and economic forces had differing impacts on the nation's politics. One such social force which has had a significant effect on the course of contemporary Argentina is the labor union movement. Its evolution will be discussed next.

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CHAPTER III

ARGENTINE LABOR

1890-1976

From their early beginnings as loose collections of immigrant self-help societies, Argentine labor unions have played active roles in the nation's politics. Their growth and strength as an economic and political force has been met with periodic repression, cooptation, and accommodation on the part of governing authorities throughout the twentieth century. Under Juan Perón's three administrations (1946-52, 1952-55, 1973-74), members of the labor movement elite exercised power and influence in matters beyond those specific to labor such as foreign policy. Under military and Radical party administrations, labor exercised power as a voice of

opposition to standing regime policies. In all cases, the labor movement has been subject to cooptation from the Casa Rosada and the labor elite itself has been characterized by internal divisions. The complex nature of regime-labor relations and of intra-labor relations will be explored in the context of Argentine political development of the past century.

The Birth of the Labor Movement

As will be recalled from chapter 2, the 1880s in Argentina were characterized by the massive immigration of Southern Europeans to its shores in search of work. From among these immigrants emerged the first efforts to create a labor union movement. Labor activists of this period brought to the New World such Old World-conceived ideas as anarchism, socialism, sindicalism, and communism. These ideas became the bases for collective identity building among the newly arrived immigrants.

Early attempts at group formation divided along ethnic lines as newly arrived immigrants were assimilated into Argentine society by mutual aid societies. Out of these societies emerged labor unions whose interests focused on working conditions and wages. Strike activity early on became an integral part of the strategies labor unions utilized to make their demands heard. Government actions to repress this growing labor

activity was also characteristic of this period.[1]

Within the labor movement itself, there raged fierce debates over how best to organize the movement. Anarchists eschewed any type of organization and favored direct action over political participation or negotiation. Socialists, on the other hand, saw political action as the best means toward achieving favorable labor legislation. Sindicalists, who represented a minority strain within the labor movement, sought an apolitical, bread-and-butter issues-oriented approach to unionism.[2] These three dominant ideological currents, with diverse political agendas, made attempts at labor unification difficult. Nevertheless, attempts were made at organizing unions into associations to promote labor interests. In 1901, anarchists and socialists were able to set aside their differences, albeit temporarily, to form the Worker Federation of Argentina (FOA). Unity did not last long, and subsequently the socialists formed their own organizations starting with the General Union of Workers in 1903.[3]

As industrial development intensified, coupled with increased rural to urban migration, labor union membership accelerated in the first decade of the twentieth century. Anarchist-oriented unions predominated at this time within a political order still

dominated by landed elite interests. The anarchist strategy of using strikes as a means of political protest was greeted with government repression by force and by legal statutes. In 1902, in response to a massive series of strikes by labor unions over working conditions, the government instituted the Law of Residence which gave it the power to deport any alien considered undesirable. This law was an attempt to squash the growing militancy of a labor movement dominated by immigrants from Europe. In 1910, the Law of Social Defense gave the police the right to imprison anyone suspected of anarchist affiliations. Throughout this decade, government authorities harassed labor militants and periodically imposed states of siege.[4]

The repression by the government and the lack of organization by the anarchists led to their eventual demise in the second decade of the twentieth century. The passage of the Saenz-Pena electoral reform law and the election of the middle-class Radical party to power in 1916 did not lessen the hostility of government authorities toward labor militants. The ideological bent of anarchists for direct, disruptive action only served to reinforce the resolve of the Radicals to use force to destroy rather than accommodate the labor movement. Government repression led to terrorism on the part of many unionists. Hostilities between labor and

government culminated in January 1919 with "La Semana Tragica," a week in which police authorities clashed violently with labor demonstrators. This signalled the end of anarchist dominance in the labor movement as the repression of two decades finally succeeded in weakening the power of anarchists in the labor movement.[5]

As anarchism became less viable, socialism or social-democracy became attractive to many in the labor movement by the 1920s and 1930s. The rise of socialist support coincided with changes in the character of the industrial worker and in the nature of industrialization itself. The original appeal of anarchism was to an artesanal class whose members were being absorbed into the fold of encroaching industrialization. As industrialization became the dominant focus of the Argentine economy by the 1930s under import-substitution-industrialization, socialists came to dominate within the labor movement elite. Part of this trend can be attributed to the strong presence of socialist politicians during the Radical ruling period of 1916-30 which had an impact on labor union activists. Another aspect of socialist popularity lay in its emphasis on organization and working within the system to promote change. The increasingly complex nature of industrialization was expressed in a greater identification by labor activists with the goals of

promoting better working conditions and economic justice, as espoused by the Socialist party. The chief rival to the socialists were the communists who dominated in the manufacturing and construction trades.[6]

The socialist principle of negotiating with government authorities did not result in improved conditions for the working classes. Rather, the military coup of 1930 brought renewed repression against the labor movement as well as other sectors of the population. Military leaders attempting to create a fascist regime modeled after Mussolini's Italy disregarded constitutional rules and norms. Their economic policies favored a return to an emphasis on agricultural export production and a deepening economic relationship with Great Britain. Some industrialization was tolerated as a means of dealing with the nation's trade deficit and as a source of employment so as to defuse a potentially volatile social situation. Despite the accelerated pace of industrialization by 1935 (promoted mostly by foreign entrepreneurs), the ruling elites of the period remained hesitant and suspicious of this trend. However, they became powerless to reverse it as the 1940s approached.[7]

The economic changes of the 1930s led to a profound social transformation of the laboring classes. The impetus toward industrialization coupled with the

declining employment opportunities available in the rural sector due to the Depression, created a migratory flow of rural laborers to the cities. No longer a class of recently arrived immigrants from Europe, the urban working classes were now characterized by second and third generation Argentine citizens. As such, they were unschooled in the debates of their predecessors over the ideologies of socialism, communism, or sindicalism. This was in marked contrast to the labor union leaders who in the 1930s and early 1940s were highly ideologically oriented and quite elitist. These new migrants from the interior were much more narrowly concerned with their ability to earn decent wages and to work under decent conditions.[8] The inability of the socialist and communist dominated labor elite to understand or even to communicate with this new rank and file led to a political leadership vacuum at the exact moment when the working classes were at their strongest numerically. Needless to say, the growing numbers of urban workers did not translate into access to political power as the 1930s ruling elites chose to ignore this significant transformation of Argentine society. It would be left up to a singular individual with farsighted vision to understand and to capitalize on this new social development.

Perónism - Take I

No other period in Argentine history has had such a profound effect on labor and on Argentine society as that of the regime of Juan Domingo Perón. The period between 1943 and 1955 wrought truly revolutionary changes in the political life of the nation, opening up the political game to new players and changing the nature of state-civil relations. Perón brought labor into the arena of national decision making and for the first time in Argentine history, the needs of workers were a principal concern of the national government.

Between 1937 and 1947, some 750,000 migrants from the countryside moved into greater Buenos Aires in the hopes of finding work in the import-substitution-industries. With an economy which began earnestly to industrialize, workers, as a class, became critical to the nation's well-being. With increasing industrialization came increased membership into labor unions and an increased number of new unions. In 1936, individual union affiliations numbered around 370,000. In 1941, that number had increased to 447,000 and by 1945, the number stood at 522,000. The number of unions between 1941 and 1945 nearly tripled from 356 to 969.[9]

While the older union leadership competed among themselves for control over the ideological direction of the labor movement (the early 1940s saw a split between

the socialists and communists in the CGT), other less experienced labor leaders began to espouse the cause of economic nationalism. Understanding their role in an expanding industrial economy, many labor leaders by the late 1930s began a call for nationalization of foreign-owned public services. So too, labor's demands changed in a significant manner. According to David Rock, labor demands after 1940 concerned the issue of fringe benefits rather than wages. Workers' standards of living were already on the upswing by the early 1940s when Perón began his ascendance to power.[10]

Perón began to court the labor movement in mid-1944 by making claims of seeking "redistributive justice," "humanized capital," and a "harmony of classes." Using his position as the head of the National Department of Labor, he translated his rhetoric into action by settling a series of strikes in the union's favor and by dispensing substantive benefits directly to the workers. However, Perón's popularity with labor rank and file cannot only be attributed to economic payoffs. The principal cause for his staying power can be found in the fact that he elevated the worker to a level of dignity and respect hitherto unheard of in the rhetoric of Argentine politics.[11] With his mistress and later wife, Eva Duarte, Perón mobilized a generation of working men and women into a newfound sense of self-

esteem, precisely at a time when the nature of their work alienated them from their identities. The events of October 17, 1945, when the streets of Buenos Aires filled with workers demanding Perón's release from jail, was a testament to him as the master populist politician.

Perón's ability to gain the support of the labor elites during his rise to power between 1944 and 1946 was not as facile as winning over labor rank and file. Part of his success in gaining the upper hand can be attributed to the factionalism among the labor elites and also to their isolation from those whom they claimed to represent. The repression by the military in the early 1940s, particularly against communist union leaders, also gave Perón ample room to maneuver.

Before his electoral victory in 1946, Perón had already begun to reshape the labor movement to his purposes. In 1945, he won passage of the Law of Professional Associations, which established a system of government registration for all officially recognized unions. Under this law, no union could enter into collective bargaining, go on strike, or appeal to a labor court without government recognition (personeria gremial -legal personhood). What's more, the law called for one single recognized union per industry and one national labor confederation. As the General

Confederation of Labor (CGT) was the only national organization of labor at the time, it became the dominant labor organization under the control of Perón.[12]

For its part, many in the labor elites saw their autonomy eroding and fought vigorously against Perón's centralizing policies. However, their efforts to maintain their power and to keep the labor movement independent were futile. Perón had too many resources at his disposal and he offered substantive power and influence to those leaders who cooperated with him. For the first time in Argentine history, labor leaders were consulted for their ideas and handsomely rewarded when they did Perón's bidding. Not only did their sphere of influence encompass labor-specific issues but also issues of general policy making. Labor leaders who refused to align with Perón were isolated and shut off from his pro-labor patronage. Later, many of these leaders would be forcibly removed from their leadership positions.[13]

Soon after his release from prison, Juan Perón organized the Labor party, the vehicle through which he spearheaded his campaign for the presidency. Many union leaders joined and offered their support, in the belief that their political time had come, that labor was finally an emergent political power. The principal

supporters of this Labor party were the younger labor leaders, who had emerged in the previous two years. Others, from the older unions, felt an independent Labor party would serve labor's interests in the years to come. In concert with all the other groups sympathetic to Perón (military, factions of the Radical party, industrialists, the Catholic Church), their support elected Perón to office in February 1946.[14]

As president, Perón continued to enact policies favorable to labor. At the same time, he successfully consolidated his control over the labor unions, thereby eclipsing the old-line of union activists. Under the Secretariat of Labor and Prevision, Perón created an extensive bureaucratic network for the administration of labor affairs. He gradually concentrated matters concerning organized labor within the General Direction of Labor and Direct Social Action (DGTASD). This agency provided a direct link between the unions and Perón for dealing with matters such as collective bargaining, labor law enforcement, union registration and dues, employer-union debates, and work accidents. The CGT was empowered by the government to intervene in unions to replace their leadership as a means of dealing with any dissent over government policies. Perón also abolished the Labor party and created the Justicialista party which became known as the Peronist party.[15]

Through his policies, Perón sought to subordinate the labor unions to the needs and requirements of his regime. Throughout his tenure in office, no labor leader came to prominence nor was the substance of labor matters debated. Policies emanated from the DGTASD, and Perón directly appealed to the workers for support.[16] Eva Perón was fundamental in fostering direct links to the people. With her lower-class background and charismatic style, she epitomized to many the true essence of Perón's commitment to the working classes. These populist appeals were successful in solidifying Perón's control.[17]

After a period of improving workers' rights and benefits, Perón's policies began to emphasize the direction and management of labor affairs. Under his tutelage, there arose a class of labor leaders whose orientation centered on Perón, rather than on theoretical debates over how best to fight for workers' interests. Having ousted the old-line labor leaders, Perón brought into power men who would do his bidding. These union men usually had obscure union activist backgrounds and next to no independent working-base support. As supporters of Perón, these union men accrued considerable benefits, not only in terms of political influence but better standards of living as well. Also, Perón drafted labor leaders for important

government positions such as secretary of foreign affairs and minister of the interior. The growing bureaucratic establishment for the administration of labor affairs also provided opportunities for upward mobility on the part of labor union men.[18]

The virtual hegemonic support Perón enjoyed among the working classes did not translate into passive labor acquiescence to his economic policies. Throughout his administration, he faced a number of very severe strikes. On the one hand, many strikes were instigated by Perón himself and their "officially sanctioned" status was to demonstrate the strength of Perón to other power groups in society. On the other hand, wildcat strikes took place which were instigated by workers over the objections of their union leaders. In March 1948, a strike was called by bank employees directed by an Inter-bank commission which was not connected to the legally recognized bank union. As was their usual tactic, the CGT, at the behest of Perón broke up the strike through repression and the dismissal of many workers. The CGT also replaced the union head with a leader to their liking. In February 1949, a strike was called by some graphics workers and here again the CGT intervened. In December 1950-January 1951, a strike was called by the railroad workers, headed by a clandestine Consultative Commission of Emergency. The strike was

declared illegal, was intervened with the CGT, and Perón went so far as to conscript the workers into military service. At the time, Argentina was engaged in hostilities with Chile over the Beagle Channel and the railroad strike threatened the flow of supplies to the south. By conscripting the railroad workers, Perón made their actions a matter of national security. To back up his decree, he sent the army in to end the strike. After the strike ended, Perón conceded to the workers' demands. In all these cases, workers were striking over real material issues and did not view their actions as disloyal to the government. Rather, they explicitly saw their adversaries to be their employers while at the same time, they affirmed their loyalty to Perón.[19]

Labor support for Perón, however, began to wane after 1951 as the economic crises loomed and Perón began to respond to criticism with greater authoritarianism. The death of Evita in 1952 was a critical blow in his efforts to maintain the support of labor. Labor strikes by 1954 were getting alarmingly numerous, and labor rallies invoked by the Perónist labor leaders attracted fewer numbers of supporters. The economic problems of 1952-1955 were multifaceted; the result of a combination of mismanagement, embezzlement, and the exhaustion of the import-substitution-industrialization program for economic growth, and of severe problems in the

agricultural sector brought on by drought and landed elite resistance to Perón's policies. These problems were addressed by austerity measures which began to eat into the standard of living of workers (as well as other groups).[20]

Perón attempted to offset growing labor discontent by directing its frustrations at other groups and by continuing to dole out benefits from the Eva Perón Foundation (a social welfare agency which dispensed patronage to Perónist supporters). As discontent from other groups in society began to increase, Perón mobilized his supporters to seek revenge against his enemies. In 1953, after a bomb exploded during a Perónist labor rally, mobs of Perónists ransacked and torched the Jockey Club, exclusive domain of the landed elites. After repeated confrontations with the Catholic Church, Perón also encouraged his supporters to oppose church policies and the result again was a great deal of violence and destruction in many churches.[21]

By 1955, the situation appeared to be getting out of hand. Civil violence seemed rampant and there were calls from all sides for Perón to resign. The CGT elite, a creation of Perón's, did not openly break with Perón. The years of partiality to labor and the symbolic conditioning had gone far in creating a loyal labor elite. However, this loyalty did not provoke

labor to come to Perón's aid in the coup of 1955. Nor did Perón seek an armed workers' movement to keep himself in power. Rather, Perón left Argentina and in the eighteen years before his spectacular return to power, he attempted to manipulate the labor movement in his determination to remain a political force in Argentine politics.[22]

The first Perónist regime succeeded in coopting a new group into the arena of Argentine politics. The old ruling landed elites and the urban commercial middle classes were forced to accommodate to the priorities of the urban working population. The political mobilization of the working classes was not a new era of democracy for Argentina, but a classic example of corporatism under a populist banner. The labor movement was incorporated into the Perónist state with its power circumscribed by Perón. Union leaders, because they were chosen by Perón, were obligated to him, and therefore their function was less to represent workers than to gain worker support for Perónist policies. Initially, the corporatizing efforts were accompanied by substantive redistributive policies, but as the latter became less frequent, the acceptance of Perónist policies reached crisis proportions.

Labor and the Liberating Revolution

The military coup of 1955 marked the beginning of a new stage in the history of the labor movement. Perón was no longer in the country, but he attempted to control the labor movement from exile through emissaries who shuttled back and forth to Argentina. The labor movement was subjected to repression as the new regime undertook an all-out assault on Perónism. This situation served to mold the nature and strategies of the labor movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

General Eduardo Lonardi attempted to seek an accommodation with the labor movement but, his efforts were eclipsed after three months by a hard-line military faction led by General Pedro Aramburu. Aramburu sought to de-Perónize and deinstitutionalize the labor movement. His strategies included purging union leadership positions of Perónists, installing a military intervenor as head of the CGT, and outright harassment of Perónist rank and file. He hoped that by "housecleaning" the labor movement of Perónist influence, labor would return to its pre-1945 apolitical status.[23]

The repression faced by the labor movement had some initial consequences for labor's power. With the absence of Perón the old divisions of the pre-1945 era reopened and the old-line socialists and communists who

had been marginalized during Perón's regime re-emerged as contenders for power within the labor movement. They welcomed the coup of 1955 and felt that they would be able to retake control of the labor movement now that an anti-Perónist government was in power. This assumption proved fatal to these old-line unionists for Aramburu's regime proved not only anti-Perónist but also anti-labor in its policies. With the Perónists in opposition to the regime, it appeared as though the socialists were selling out to the military regime. The latter's credibility with labor rank and file was lost. By 1958, socialist, communist, and sindicalist elements within the labor movement were marginalized once again.[24]

Perónist labor leaders, facing repression and bereft of political power scrambled to retain their leadership roles even though their benefactor was no longer around to protect them. They well knew that labor rank and file held its allegiance to Perón and not to them. Most also saw the military regime to be uncompromising in its desire to rid the labor movement of Perónism. Given this situation, many Perónist labor leaders felt the best way of remaining a force in politics was to prove their ability to lead the labor rank and file. To facilitate this, the Perónist labor elites used the return of Perón to Argentina as their rallying cry to unite labor rank and file. Perón, from exile, did not

discourage but encouraged such efforts.[25]

By using the return of Perón as the ultimate goal of the labor movement, labor leaders were able to maintain some status within the labor movement and were able to survive the reversals and repression of Aramburu's regime. Each repressed strike or discriminatory policy was interpreted as a temporary setback in labor's long-term struggle for the return of Perón. The drastic decline in labor's fortunes in the years immediately following Perón's ouster caused many to view the days of Perón as glory days for Argentina. Uniting under a Perónist banner seemed to be the only way of surviving the attacks by the military regime.[26]

The austerity measures imposed by Aramburu kindled labor militancy against the regime. Over the objections of Perón, the number of strikes and illegal actions increased between 1956 and 1958. Out of these confrontations, a new class of labor leaders emerged whose success at mobilizing workers accrued to them real power and influence. Many of these new leaders began to develop their own social base of support by claiming to be heirs to Perón's legacy.[27]

Labor Under the Radicals

The elections of 1958 were an army-orchestrated attempt to pursue civilian rule without the

participation of the Perónist party. Two rival factions of the Radicals competed against each other with Arturo Frondizi the victor. As will be recalled from chapter 2, Frondizi won the election by entering into a pact with Perón to gain Perónist rank and file backing. In the preliminary provincial elections earlier that year, Perón had urged supporters to cast dissenting votes by casting blank ballots. A full 25% of the votes cast were blank, attesting to Frondizi and everyone else the popular support Perón still enjoyed. Frondizi, the master politician that he was, made a deal with Perón in which he promised that if elected, he would relegalize the Perónist party. Perón, also a master politician, thought this would be a good opportunity to begin machinations for his eventual return to Argentina. However, Perón in Spain had to convince labor leaders in Argentina that voting for Frondizi would help labor in the long run. After all, labor had been on the "front lines" battling military repression and seeing its standard of living declining drastically in the past three years. In order to gain their acquiescence, Perón had to get Frondizi to agree to reinstituting the Law of Professional Associations and allowing Perónist labor leaders to regain control of the CGT. Frondizi did so and won the elections from his arch rival Ricardo Balbin.[28]

Once in power, Frondizi made good on his promises by overturning some anti-Perónist legislation, calling for new union elections, and enacting a law similar to that of the Law of Professional Associations. However, Frondizi viewed his pact with Perón as a political convenience for winning the elections and after a short period of time, he began to pursue policies which proved detrimental to labor's well-being.

Frondizi's economic project, called "developmentalism," sought to promote advanced industrialization through capitalization efforts and the encouragement of foreign investment. Emphasis was placed on capital-intensive production accompanied by the freezing of salaries and the contraction of the labor force. Along with austerity measures imposed by the IMF, the economic condition of workers continued to worsen. Real salaries during Frondizi's administration declined by 30%.[29]

Labor was quick to respond to Frondizi's anti-labor policies by calling a series of strikes during 1958 and 1959; unequaled in militancy up to that time. Frondizi reacted by sending in the army to repress them. To many in the labor movement, these actions demonstrated the intransigence of the Radicals to sympathizing with labor's needs. Pact or no pact with Perón, labor rank and file began to act against Frondizi's regime.

From the very beginning, Frondizi had sought to play several groups in society off against each other. He used labor initially to demonstrate to the military, landed elites, and entrepreneurial class that he could coopt them. When labor agitation arose over his policies, Frondizi raised the specter of social chaos if the military and other elites did not align behind him in repressing this new wave of labor activism. He attempted to prove his staying power with labor by alternating the use of the carrot and the stick. Concessions to labor would be followed by repression in his goal to tame the unions. In the end he failed to satisfy anyone.[30]

By late 1961-early 1962, Frondizi was feeling pressure from all sides. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had heightened the army's concerns about communist infiltration and it specifically saw the labor movement as susceptible to subversion from within. The labor unions continued in their strike activity, and the economy was in dire trouble. Gubernatorial elections were in the offing. Frondizi decided to use the upcoming elections as a means of shoring up his popular support. In three provincial gubernatorial elections held in late 1961, his party had won all three positions so, he felt confident he would win the major elections of 1962. So sure was Frondizi of his popular support

that he allowed the Perónist party to field candidates. The result was a disaster for Frondizi. Of fourteen provinces, Perónist candidates won ten. This was more that the army could accept and in March 1963 Frondizi was deposed in a coup.[31]

The regime of Arturo Illia was ill-equipped to deal with labor opposition and army pressures to take a hard line. Labor, again denied the right to field candidates in the army-orchestrated election which brought Illia to power, stepped up its opposition. In early 1964, the CGT declared a "Plan de Lucha" (Battle plan) in which selective strikes and factory sit-ins were employed to express labor discontent with the government. These actions were taken for more than economic reasons: labor was intent on showing government and business that it could no longer be ignored when it came to politics. Despite Illia's attempts to bypass the labor leadership and seek the support of rank and file, the labor movement maintained a stance of opposition throughout his regime. On another front, labor militancy and growing political chaos led Juan Perón to believe the time was ripe for his return to Argentina. Months of negotiations and rumor-mongering in Argentina heightened political tensions. It all came to naught as the army made sure Perón would not be allowed to end his exile.[32]

The first ten years of post-Perónist rule created

profound changes in the labor movement. The Frondizi and Illia regimes proved ineffectual at bridling labor's power; Perón had clearly manipulated labor to his own personal needs but had failed to make his promised comeback in 1964. A new class of labor leaders emerged during this period, who sought to break with Perón. The most influential one of this class was Augusto Vandor, head of the powerful Metalworkers Union. Vandor interpreted the events of 1955-62 as demonstrating the need for a change in strategy on the part of the labor movement. Rather than pursuing militant confrontation, Vandor sought more pragmatic strategies such as negotiation with the powers that be. Labor activity should rely less on mass mobilization and more on calculated assessments of the kinds of pressure to be applied in each specific situation. Also, in seeking to decrease Perón's influence, Vandor and his followers attempted after 1964 to marginalize the issue of Perón's return to Argentina and to concentrate on carving out some space for labor in the political arena.[33]

Perón saw what was happening, and he countered the independent labor leaders by pitting his allies against them. José Alonso, leader of the Textile workers, was the most significant of the labor leaders to do Perón's bidding. The schisms which these two factions of the labor movement created and nurtured throughout the

1960s still have their impact on the labor movement today.[34] What was interesting about the 1960s debates between the two factions was that each claimed to be the true heir to Perón's legacy. While Vandor sought to distance the labor movement from Perón's influence, he and his allies nevertheless saw the need to rely on Perón's name to maintain their standing with the rank and file. Their public stance was always one of expressing support for Perónism, while privately seeking to separate Perónism from Perón -- or more aptly, Perónism without Perón.

The ability of the labor movement to disrupt the regimes of Frondizi and Illia gave it a renewed sense of power, for while repression was certainly used by the Radicals, it was not near the same levels as had been suffered during the previous military interlude. Many in the labor leadership believed their marginalization from politics to be a thing of the past, and therefore, the labor movement stepped up its opposition to Illia (along with every other group in society) while divisions within the ranks became endemic. In the 1965 congressional elections, Perónists won and the wheels began to turn for another coup. It came in 1966, and hardly anyone in Argentina raised any objection.

Labor and the First Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Experiment

General Ongania's accession to power inaugurated a new era for Argentine politics. Unlike his military predecessors, Ongania very quickly dispensed with the word "provisional" to describe this regime. Ongania was in power to stay, and he sought to capitalize on the public's discontent with the Radical regimes to consolidate his power. Labor, under the guidance of Vandor, adopted a policy of tacit conciliation.[35]

It was not long before labor began to feel the brunt of Ongania's policies, which sought to freeze wages and to contract the labor force. Initial protests by those unions hit the hardest by his policies were brutally repressed and these unions faced military intervention. However, Ongania also required some sectors of labor support in his goal to deepen industrialization. Toward this end, he attempted to coopt some unions under his control.[36]

The strategy of dividing and conquering one's adversaries is far from unique in the history of humankind. What is interesting as regards Argentina is that all governing elites have viewed labor as perhaps the most threatening factor to their rule. Each successive regime since 1955 sought to bridle the labor movement, to assert control over it, and each regime was

successful up to a point. Ongania inherited a labor movement which was factionalized over what strategies to pursue vis a vis the government. The two main divisions were those which were willing to cooperate with the regime and those who argued for outright opposition. Vandor led the faction calling itself the "Participationists" which argued for cooperation, but it was a cooperation predicated on the same strategy he used under the Radicals. That is, Vandor thought he could use strikes and confrontations as a stepping-stone to negotiation. First carry out a policy of confrontation, then retreat and open up the arena for negotiations with a government forced to listen under the threat of greater confrontations. However, while this strategy worked to a certain degree with the Radicals, it failed miserably in the face of a military regime disposed to the use of force. In March 1967, the CGT held a 48 hour strike demanding better wages and protesting some of the economic rationalizing schemes of Minister of the Economy Adalberto Krieger Vasena. The strike was lifted without any concessions from the government, but with Vandor expecting to be able to negotiate. Instead of negotiating, the government suspended collective bargaining agreements with labor for two years, thereby effectively annulling the power of labor to have a voice in determining salaries.[37]

The hard line taken by Onganía as time progressed led to the formation of two separate CGTs in 1968. The Vandor-led Participationists called themselves the CGT of Azopardo. The unions which were outright hostile to the regime called themselves the CGT of the Argentines or of the Paseo Colon. This faction was led by the printer's union head, Raimundo Ongaro. Also in contention for power was the faction which remained loyal to Perón. It called itself the Orthodox wing or the "62 Unions at Perón's side." This faction was led by José Alonso.[38]

In May 1969, a strike called by auto workers in Cordoba erupted into a popular demonstration against Onganía's policies. The Cordobazo, as it was called, was the turning point in Onganía's political fortunes. The province of Cordoba has historically been radical and suspicious of policies emanating from the federal capital, usually for good reason as Argentine public policy has always been discriminatory toward the provinces. Industrialization occurred later in Cordoba than in Buenos Aires with the result that labor was concentrated in smaller unions with greater contact between the rank and file and its leaders. Unions were less tied to Perón and Perónism. Because of this, labor demands and subsequent strategies were more radical and the union leadership more willing to call strikes and

confrontations. The eruptions of May 1969 led to a full- scale rebellion by other sectors of Cordoban society, including students from the local university and elements of the middle classes. The demonstrations were met with repression and violence, and rioting appeared to rule the day. The failure to promote law and order spelled the end for Onganía's regime.[39]

The rebellions in Cordoba spread to other industrial cities as well. Violence appeared endemic as a whole host of forces were unleashed during this time period, spurred on by the utter failure of Onganía's economic project and the widespread view that things were getting worse. A month after the Cordoba uprisings, leftist terrorists assassinated Augusto Vandor, leaving a huge gap in the union leadership. A year later, José Alonso was assassinated as well. The alleged reasons for these assassinations were leftist groups' claims that the labor leadership had sold out to the authorities. As leftist terrorism increased, counterattacks came from the extreme right. By 1972 the country seemed to be at civil war. Labor strikes were increasing; middle-class youth-dominated terrorist groups were bombing, kidnapping, and ransoming their way into supporting their violent habits; and military factions struggled over what to do. The nation was at an impasse and the only solution to many was that Perón could save the

day.[40]

The eighteen years between Perónist regimes illustrates several points about labor and politics. First, since 1955 every regime, military or radical, had had its fortunes tied to its effectiveness in dealing with labor. Their failure as governors was due to their failure to contain the activities of an highly politicized labor movement. Second, labor had not discriminated between nominal democratic or military regimes. When it saw its economic well-being threatened, it reacted. Third, every regime had attempted to divide and conquer labor, which exacerbated differences among the labor elites. Fourth, while clear differences existed among labor leaders, labor rank and file remained staunchly Perónist. These patterns would continue into the 1970s.

Juan Perón - Take II

The Argentina Juan Perón returned to in 1973 had changed much in his eighteen years in exile. The state of the economy was in disarray with runaway inflation and few resources to call upon to aid it. Armed leftist and rightist terrorist groups were assaulting the general population. Most importantly, the labor movement which Perón had centralized and politicized was now a huge conglomeration of groups, used to being in

the opposition, sophisticated in political manuevering, and more than ever, divided over how to play the political game.[41]

The labor leadership for the most part was apprehensive over how Perón would deal with it, especially since in the past, Perón had always sought to undercut its power and influence. Nevertheless, with the assassinations in 1969 and 1970 of Vandor and Alonso, respectively, there existed no charismatic labor leader to rival Perón. Soon after the interim government of Campora was installed, a "Social Pact" was promulgated, which was to be the cornerstone of Perón's economic policy. The social pact was a tripartite agreement between business (represented by the General Economic Confederation [CGE]), labor (represented by the General Confederation of Labor [CGT]), and government on income policy in an attempt to fight inflation. The agreement called for freezing prices of all goods and services at existing levels, a one-time 40% across-the-board increase in family allowances, and an across-the-board increase of 200 pesos per month. Collective bargaining conventions would be suspended for two years as wage negotiations were centralized within the hands of the government. An agency would be set up --the National Commission on Prices, Incomes, and Standard of Living (CONAPRIN) -- composed of representatives of the

three involved parties, to oversee that the real purchasing power of wages would not fall below the levels estimated and to generally monitor business costs and profits. These economic measures were to be in effect for two years.[42]

Once in power, Perón enacted a new Law of Professional Associations which centralized power relations within the labor movement. Among its provisions were (1) there would be no more than one union representing one branch of activity; (2) these unions had the right to intervene in their affiliates and annul the mandates of elected delegates, if deemed necessary; and (3) union leadership terms would be increased from two to four years. The effects of these provisions were to centralize power relations within the labor movement among the top leadership elite, and of course, to facilitate Perón's control over the labor movement as a whole.[43]

Despite the labor leadership's capitulation to these measures (which effectively stripped it of power in the area of wage bargaining and independent action), peace did not reign during Perón's tenure in office. Throughout his administration, many strikes were held to protest working conditions, unfair dismissals, contract disputes, etc. These confrontations did not initially attack Perón. Rather, union infighting was the norm as

dissident unionists attempted to challenge established leaders over control of the labor movement. As the provisions of the social pact began to unravel, wage disputes began to grow in number and so did the number of strikes. Perón attempted to mediate the situation with wage increases but the economic and social situation continued to worsen. The situation did not abate until his death on July 1, 1974.[44]

Isabel Perón and José Lopez Rega

The death of Perón ushered in a period of economic crisis and social convulsions which were to culminate in a military coup. Neither Isabel Perón nor her assorted advisors, principally José Lopez Rega, were equipped to handle the economic crisis which was gripping the country. Instead, the policies followed by the Perón-Rega team were irrational and lacked any sound basis of judgment, thereby alienating all sectors of society. The labor leadership was divided over how to deal with Mrs. Perón. One faction argued that the labor movement was a political arm of the government and therefore should follow and support Perón unconditionally. The other wing, represented within the group of "62 Organizations" argued that the labor movement was a pressure group and therefore its mission was to apply pressure to any government in power, Perónist or

otherwise. This faction though, did go to great lengths to support Perón, for it realized that if they opposed Perón and aided in destabilizing her regime, the results would be disastrous for labor's political power. Under the Perónist regime, labor enjoyed a modicum of political influence and power, a situation which benefitted many labor leaders personally. In confronting Isabel, they attacked those around her, primarily her minister of economy.

Nevertheless, as the economic situation worsened, the labor leadership could not ignore the growing demands from rank and file for action to ameliorate deteriorating incomes. A period of government repression, against independent union action, during 1974, while successful at first in containing strike activity, only made the situation more explosive in 1975. In March 1975, the Ministry of Labor convened the bargaining committees to discuss wages and working conditions which would be put into effect in June upon the expiration of the social pact. Several months of negotiation followed with increased rank and file labor agitation and greater obstinance on the part of Mrs. Perón in negotiating seriously with labor. When Mrs. Perón refused to ratify the agreements reached, the CGT called a forty eight hour work stoppage. The result of this confrontation was the capitulation of Mrs. Perón to

labor demands and the reaffirmation of support by the central labor movement leadership for her government.

While this particular crisis was resolved in victory for the labor movement leadership, the events of the following months were to destroy this resurgence of labor movement power. The economic situation continued to worsen with heightened fears on the part of the rank and file of more layoffs and unemployment -- a situation which continually forced the labor leadership to react to each new crisis. This along with growing rumors of a coup and heightened agitation by other sectors of society made Argentina a pressure cooker by February 1976. As factions in the labor movement continued to fight over how to deal with Mrs. Perón, political violence on the part of terrorist groups appeared to grow rampant, and Mrs. Perón seemed to be losing control over the government. The situation cried out for a means to decompress the pent-up tensions. The solution came in the form of a military coup on March 24, 1976, with practically all sectors of society welcoming the change. The labor movement leadership which had attempted to remain loyal to Mrs. Perón was in no condition to protest the coup: after three years of Peronist government, it found itself alienated from its rank and file, and therefore unable to assert itself either way over the political crisis. All debates

concerning what the labor movement should do became moot when the military intervened in all the central unions and many labor leaders were jailed.[45]

Conclusion

The historical development of the labor movement in Argentina has been as unique and complex as that of Argentine politics itself. Unlike labor movements in other Latin American countries, the path of Argentine labor development has seen greater integration into the political arena engendering both special opportunities and pitfalls.

The early efforts at union organizing coincided with the great waves of Southern European immigration from the 1880s to the 1920s. Early labor unions borrowed from their European counterparts in Italy and Spain both in ideology and organization. Labor leaders were predominantly foreign born and sought to replicate the same strategies they had used in Europe for gaining labor rights in Argentina. These organizing efforts were consistently met with repression by the authorities. Despite the social and economic transformations of the time, the ruling elites were not interested in accommodating this new emergent class. The landed elites were very much against the trend toward industrialization and so were hostile to labor.

The urban commercial elites saw labors' demands as unreasonable, so when they wrested power from the traditional landed elites in 1916, the plight of the working classes improved little.

Despite the repression suffered by labor in the first decades of this century, the rapidly industrializing economy ensured that the labor unions and the labor movement would continue to grow. By the 1930s, the sociological make-up of labor had transformed from being predominantly immigrant to being second and third generation migrants from the countryside. As a consequence of this social transformation, many in the working classes were not partisan to the older ideological debates of the past. Rather, their goals centered around wages, working conditions, and employee benefits.

This seeming lack of ideological sophistication on the part of the working classes has been cited as the principal reason for Perón's ability to coopt them under his influence. Much of the literature on this period argues that his charisma and hand-outs to labor were largely responsible for his success at winning them over, especially given their lack of political savoir faire. However, Perón's charisma and pro-labor policies do not tell the whole story. It is an undisputed fact that up till the time Perón came into power, no

political leader or political party paid much attention to labor's demands. Instead, outright hostility against labor was characteristic in the pre-1940 period among Argentina's political and economic elites. Perón won over labor not just because of fancy rhetoric, good looks, a pretty wife, or doling out patronage. He enacted policies and programs which made significant improvements in the lives of workers. In his political discourse, he celebrated the worker, imbued him with dignity, and perhaps more importantly, he reaffirmed their claim to being true Argentines. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the working classes have been viewed as marginal members of society -- dark-skinned people who were a little less Argentine than the fair-skinned upper and middle classes. Labor support for Perón was rational given his actions.

Perón's personal commitment to improving the lot of the poor and working classes is still under much dispute. What can be said is that his pro-labor policies were important to all three administrations and his wife Evita strongly identified with the Argentine lower classes. However, the Peróns exacted many sacrifices from the labor movement in return for a slice of the economic and political pie. As president, Perón destroyed the independence of the labor movement and incorporated the labor leadership under his control.

In bringing labor from the shadows, he kept a tight grip over the activities of the labor movement. Policies emanated from the top down and the labor leadership became messengers of Perón rather than representatives of the working classes. This was classic corporatism under a populist banner.

Organizationally, all unions were grouped under one central labor confederation, the CGT and only unions officially recognized by the government were legitimate actors in labor affairs. Perón also ensured that only loyal union men held positions of power and responsibility; any and all who deviated from his needs were systematically purged from union positions. In dealing with labor rank and file, he made it clear that he was the individual who fulfilled the demands of labor. Direct appeals to the people constantly reminded them that Perón and not their union leaders were responsible for the benefits they received.

Perón was successful at maintaining labor support so long as he continued to enact economic policies which enriched this sector of the population. However, as economic troubles mounted, his support from labor (as well as from other groups in society) began to slide. While his most vocal supporters still came from among labor during 1953-55, Perón was unable to prevent the outbreak of strikes and disruptions from renegade

unionists. In the end, he had succeeded in mobilizing labor and corporatizing labor into the political system, but he failed to exert total control over its actions.

In the years after the 1955 coup, the labor movement sought to resituate itself within an environment of anti-Perónist and anti-labor policies. The political power and influence which labor had enjoyed under Perón was replaced by physical and legal forms of attack. Under the provisional military government of 1955-58, pro-labor legislation was abolished and labor unions purged of Perónist supporters. So fierce was the hostility of the military government that General Aramburu had Evita's body confiscated from Argentina, thereby making necrophilia an enduring part of the Argentine political landscape.

Life under the Radical governments was more bearable as the repression lessened but only to a degree. Frondizi's pact with Perón allowed labor to reenter the political fray but this time the divisions within its ranks would become more prominent. A new generation of labor leaders emerged in this period who would seek independence from Perón. New strategies were tried in seeking accommodation with the regime, rather than outright opposition. Nevertheless, the denial of political participation to the Perónists eventually intensified the criticisms of the Radicals, helping to

bring about their downfall and the ascendancy of a military regime.

The first bureaucratic-authoritarian experiment failed to bring prolonged peace to the nation. Instead, by 1966 it was clear that many competing groups were at war against each other, each strong enough to disrupt society but too weak to overwhelm the others. Labor again was a special target of repression and the internal divisions over strategy continued to plague its leadership. Juan Perón maintained a heavy hand in exacerbating these divisions as he fought to remain the undisputed leader of the working classes. It would be in the city of Cordoba that labor would first erupt against the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. The Cordobazo laid bare the naked force of Onganía's peace and it also demonstrated the failure of the fourteen year effort at de-Perónization. The Cordobazo led to the end of the first bureaucratic-authoritarian experiment in Argentina.

The spectacular return of Perón in 1973 illustrated the failure of Argentine elites -- military, urban middle classes, urban industrialists, agriculturalists, labor -- at finding some means of living peacefully together. Perón was a throwback to another time when life was less complicated and the state treasury was full. The labor elite was cautious about his return,

but nevertheless saw the opportunity to exercise real power and influence again. By then, other people had joined the Perónists and the movement was no longer solely labor but incorporated various sectors of the intelligentsia and disillusioned middle-class youth.

Perón unfortunately could not heal the divisions in society. Even had he lived, he probably would have failed, especially since he turned his back on radical student groups, thereby unleashing a renewed bout of terrorism on society. Isabel Perón's short tenure at running the country almost brought the nation to ruin. Again, the only solution seemed to be a military coup and on March 24, 1976, that was what precisely happened. As in 1955, the labor leadership did little to protest the removal of Perón from power. Rather they, like every other group in society, awaited a new round of housecleaning -- some with alarm, most with relief. Little did anyone anticipate the nightmare to come.

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CHAPTER IV

DIVISION AND DEFEAT
ARGENTINE LABOR 1976-1978

The Development of State Terrorism

In Robert Potash's seminal study of the army and politics in Argentina from 1898 to 1964, one of his concluding observations is that every time the military has taken over the reigns of government, it has done so with the popular support of the Argentine people. No doubt, the military takeovers of 1955, 1966, and 1976 faced little substantive opposition from the many interests -- political parties, landed elites, urban industrialists, labor union leadership -- which make up the Argentine political scene. Yet, to translate this initial support on the part of some groups into long-term support for policies enacted by these military regimes does not necessarily follow, especially as regards the labor movement. On the contrary, the widespread use of force and repression against the labor movement on the part of all three military regimes

illustrates the lack of legitimacy each military regime has had in the eyes of some sectors of the labor movement.

The relative ease with which the military came to power in 1966 and 1976 was due to the state of affairs existing at the time and to a political power vacuum where no alternative existed save for a military one. In 1966, the specter of Perón's return was threatening enough to move the army out of the barracks and into the Casa Rosada. The ensuing repression and experiment with a bureaucratic-authoritarian mode of rule only served to pave the way for Perón's return in 1973. The violence of the Cordoba riots enabled workers and students to effectively unhinge the seeming control Onganía held over the political arena. By 1976, Perón had died but the previous three years of a Perónist government just reaffirmed to many the dangers of Perónism. This along with an onslaught of urban terrorist attacks and economic chaos led to the inevitable return of the military.

Initially, the mandate of the military was clear--to put an end to the guerrilla activity in the streets of Argentina's cities. Next, to reform the nation's economy which under Isabel Perón had come to near bankruptcy with spiraling inflation and irrational policies. For the military junta, which consisted of a

member from each branch of the armed forces, with General Jorge Rafael Videla of the army as its president, the task of maintaining law and order and of setting the economy back on a straight course was not a novel one to most Argentines. Since 1930, Argentines had experienced several military coups. Military dominance over political and economic affairs was to be expected of those who took control of the Casa Rosada. Law and order, of course, is the mainstay of any military regime, and in Argentina, many held high expectations that the military junta would deliver Argentina out of its Perónist nightmare.

On law and order, the military junta acted swiftly and soon after taking power, the streets of Buenos Aires and other cities were quiet. However, the military junta's goals went beyond the elimination of bomb-wielding terrorists as it viewed Argentina's political problems as more severe, necessitating drastic remedies. The junta sought to reorganize society and it called its project the "Process of National Reorganization," later to be called simply "el Proceso." Its ideological bent combined the Doctrine of National Security with a messianic Christianity which it perceived as giving it an ordained right to rule. Protection from communist infiltration necessitated a heavy hand in weeding out domestic subversion, and Argentines, with their

conservative leanings, embraced the anti-communist stance wholeheartedly. After all, they considered themselves of the West and were Christians above all else. The communist conspiracy was neither Western nor Christian and its alleged expansionist designs in the western hemisphere posed threats to nations such as Argentina. The very worst of the Cold War mentality embraced the notion of an ongoing struggle between East and West in all political conflicts. The leftist insurgency in Argentina was interpreted in this light and so the battle against it was seen as one global effort in the struggle to defeat the spread of communism.[1]

Against this ideological backdrop, the military viewed terrorism as "subversion" of the Argentine way of life and they struck back mercilessly. Never mind that the enemies they were fighting were other Argentines. To the ruling junta, the entire fabric of Argentine life had been poisoned and diseased by subversion, leading to a sick society rent with chaos and corruption. The solution was a concerted campaign to purge Argentina of those subversive elements and to bring back the real traditional values of Argentine life. Indeed, one of the self-proclaimed mottoes of the military junta was "Tradition, Family, and Property." While further explanation of what "traditional" Argentine values meant

was never forthcoming, the junta continuously evoked the moral rightness of its cause, always justifying its actions through religious principles and Argentine conservative nationalism. The Argentine Catholic Church hierarchy offered little as a counter to the junta's claims.[2]

The methods used by the military junta are by now famous. Green Ford falcons with no license plates chauffeured by nondescript men sped through the streets of Buenos Aires both day and night, in search of specific individuals believed to be subversives. Illegal detention centers were set up all over the country with sophisticated apparatuses for torture. The junta created clandestine groups from within the state and police forces whose jobs were to weed out and eliminate the subversives within Argentine society. These groups operated with impunity and were given carte blanche in their covert activities. While the junta often did not know the exact nature of these groups' activities nor who their victims were, it fully approved and supported their efforts. By distancing themselves from their work the junta was able to deny that it was violating human rights. This position allowed the junta to promote its image as good moral Christian soldiers.[3]

The result was a society gripped in fear and paralyzed by state terror. Thousands upon thousands of

people were kidnapped, jailed, and tortured without any recourse but to pray that their lives be spared. The "lucky" ones were freed after a time in detention and after being subjected to a full array of torture techniques. More often than not, the torturers remained anonymous as the victims were almost always kept blindfolded during their "interrogation" sessions. Even if they were freed with all their anatomical parts intact, the psychological trauma alone was enough to send most of them fleeing the country. The ones who were never heard from again most assuredly died in a violent manner. Today, common graves are continuously being discovered, filled with skeletons marked by bashed-in skulls and broken bones. One favorite recourse used to dispose of bodies was to throw them into the River Plate in the hope that the bodies would flow out to sea and be eaten by sharks. One month several dozen bodies washed ashore on the Uruguay side of the River Plate.[4]

No sector of Argentine society was immune from this war of subversion; the hardest hit were the working classes, students, labor movement activists, and urban professionals. The wandering Ford falcons operated at all hours of the day and night, and people "were disappeared" without a trace. Any attempts by friends and relatives to find out what was going on from the

authorities only led to the danger of them being "disappeared" without a trace. Meanwhile, babies borne to women held in captivity were "adopted" by others, often by military men and even by the torturers themselves. While the junta maintained strict censorship over what was happening, the pervasive extent of this war against subversion, the "dirty war," filtered its way into the Argentine consciousness. Between 1976 and 1979, Argentina was a nation under siege from within and the junta was at its helm.[5]

The Economic Imperative

While the junta was waging its dirty war on the social and political front, it delegated the running of the economy to José Martinez de Hoz. Martinez de Hoz came from an old Argentine family and had been active in the Rural Society which represented large cattle and wheat interests. He was also an industrialist and financier. He had served in various capacities during several military administrations and had a modest international reputation. When he was called to take over the helm of the economy, he went to work and lasted five years as the minister of economy, a record-setting tenure for an economics minister. The usual norm in the post-World War II era was eleven and a half months.[6]

The economic program of Martinez de Hoz was to force

Argentina into an economy regulated by free market forces. In order to curb inflation and restimulate production and growth, Martinez de Hoz set about freezing wages and setting up price controls, allowed the peso to devalue, and attempted to dismantle the state bureaucracy involved in the regulation of the economy. Using a standard free- market approach, Martinez de Hoz attempted to curb public employment and sell state-run enterprises to public investors. To stimulate economic growth, he lowered tariffs so as to encourage international competition. He imposed severe restrictions over labor union activity in the areas of wages, collective bargaining, and control over union benefits. To promote productivity, he instituted technical rationalizing schemes to stimulate industrialization.[7]

The results were a disaster. Inflation was curbed for only a short time and its long-term consequences were to drastically lower the standard of living of most Argentines and to allow inflation to spiral out of control once again. Rather than promoting competition, the loss of protectionism caused Argentine markets to become flooded with imports driving Argentine industry to a state of near bankruptcy. Attempts to curb the state's role in the economy met with stiff resistance from the military which had become used to (and very

wealthy from) the control of certain industries. As other problems arose over his policies, Martinez de Hoz would make changes, but these would lead to other problems. By 1979, the country was tired of the lack of positive change in the economic situation and, as things continued to worsen, the tenure of Martinez de Hoz came to an inauspicious end.[8]

The reasons for the failure of Martinez de Hoz's grand project will be debated for some time to come. What bears noting at this point is that any strategy for economic development necessarily requires an appraisal of social, political, and historical factors. While people in the Economics Ministry spent their time poring over graphs and charts and came up with sophisticated econometric formulas in the name of rationality and science, they forgot that judgments and values were at the heart of any economic planning. Given the "cult of fear" within which Argentina lived throughout the Proceso, Martinez de Hoz was able to impose policies over the working classes without much fear of massive resistance; but this only bottled up their resentment against the regime to be expressed later on. His attempts to affect other groups met with greater resistance, which forced him to abandon or modify many of his policies. Throughout his tenure, it was irrelevant to him whether there existed consensus over

his policies. He held a particular vision of what Argentina should be like, and as the military junta acted out its moral crusade under a reign of terror, Martinez de Hoz carried out his crusade for a free-market economy without any consideration to social and political consequences. Yet, it was precisely these considerations which forced his economic program to fail.

In sum, the Argentine political and economic situation between 1976 and 1979 was dismal indeed. Fear and terror reigned throughout society as almost all avenues for political expression were repressed. The usual accoutrements of military rule, such as censorship, suspension of civil liberties, and illegal detentions were supplemented with massive disappearances, deaths through both primitive and technologically sophisticated forms of torture, and an ideology of moral uprightness which mangled the meaning of "Christian behavior". These oppressive policies along with economic policies which affected the working classes more adversely than other groups, substantively effected the political power of the labor movement. This is the political and economic context within which I examine the political activities of the labor movement.

The Initial Blows - Repression and Intervention

The labor movement at the beginning of March 1976 was divided over what course of action to follow within the political arena. Partisans of Mrs. Perón attempted to hold her shaky government together while critics, at the behest of rank and file demands, undertook strikes and refused to accept her policies. Many of these critics of Mrs. Perón were disposed to a military coup being the only solution to the problems at hand. Unfortunately, no one realized the consequences such a coup would engender.

In 1976, the labor movement was overlord of a vast labor bureaucracy which substantively affected the well-being of all workers. Due to their growth in the 1960s, labor unions controlled all social welfare benefits programs (obras sociales), which covered everything from health care to paid vacations for workers. Internal commissions set up within factories by unions oversaw the enforcement of labor contracts and each union had its own elected officeholders, who were in turn represented by a larger federation and ultimately by the CGT. The CGT coordinated all these groups and determined the political strategies of the labor movement. This centralization of labor power, which had been accomplished by Juan Perón so as to maintain control over the movement, was also in later years to

enable labor mobilization against standing regimes.[9]

The coup of March 24, 1976, dealt a powerful blow to the labor movement. While a military takeover was of little surprise to anyone, the rapidity with which the junta acted to repress labor "agitators" came as a shock to most of the labor elite. Several policies aimed at destabilizing labor's power were enacted from the very day of the coup. The most prominent leaders were jailed and in their places were installed military personnel (intervenors) to oversee the running of the bureaucracy of the unions. The leadership of the CGT was replaced and so was that of the thirty most important unions, mainly those involved in heavy industry such as the metalworkers and construction unions. Leaders who were jailed were for the most part released after several months in confinement. Lorenzo Miguel, head of the Metalworkers Union and leader of the Perónist "62 Organizations" (the political arm of the union movement) and the most influential of the labor leaders at that time, was kept in confinement for four years.[10]

Over the course of three years, approximately twelve hundred unions were intervened and their leaders replaced by military personnel. What this often meant was the presence of armed soldiers within the factories ensuring the workers' passivity and compliance. The military sought the smooth running of the factories, not

to look after the interests of workers, and as the military controlled all aspects of work life, including the dispensing of worker benefits, the obedience of many workers was ensured. The Ministry of Labor was also put in the hands of military personnel. General H. T. Liendo of the army was named the minister of labor and all the key offices within the labor ministry went to other military personnel as well. In all, twenty percent of all labor unions were intervened during the initial three years of military rule, but this twenty percent represented eighty-five percent of all workers covered by collective bargaining agreements. The ruling junta was highly selective in choosing which unions to intervene by maximizing effect and minimizing effort.[11]

The Weight of the Laws

Not only was threatened physical coercion used to pacify the labor movement, but the derogation of labor legislation and the enactment of repressive laws also served to contain the movement's activism. Among the first decrees enacted was Decree #9 which suspended activity in all types of unions, using the justification of cleaning up disorder, corruption, and subversion. Decree #10 dissolved the "62 Organizations," which had in the last Perónist government been closely allied to Mrs. Perón. The first law enacted, Law 21161, suspended

the right to strike and of any direct action toward disrupting production. Law 21356 passed in June 1976, reaffirmed Decree #9 and outlawed elections, assemblies, and congresses within the unions. Moreover, it authorized the Ministry of Labor to enforce mandates handed down by the junta, to carry out interventions, and to replace union leaders with ones who would do the military's bidding. The Law of Professional Associations was suspended as well.[12]

Law 21400 passed in December 1976 dealt with industrial security. This law suspended the right to strike and any other action which affected production. It listed penalties ranging from jail terms to cuts in pay for activities leading to a decrease in production. Law 21250 was a resurrection of the Law of Residence, which stated that the executive had the power to expel any foreigner suspected of threatening national security. Law 21297 was enacted to curb workers' rights in areas of due process and conflicts with employers. Employees now had the burden to prove they were being discriminated against by their employers rather than simply showing just cause that discrimination existed. It also established the right of employers to dismiss workers before guilt was proven over any transgression or crime.

Law 21576, passed in December 1976, created sweeping

changes in collective-bargaining agreements between unions and employers by allowing reform in matters concerning vacation, compensatory work, and leaves of absence. It also allowed for government interference in union affairs, such as the appointment of officers, the collection of contributions, and the allocation of funds. This law was used to intervene in the social welfare (obras sociales) system of the unions. Obras sociales consisted of the running of health facilities which dispensed services such as in-patient and out-patient care, dental and diagnostic care, and pharmacies. Obras sociales also covered hotels, sports camps, nurseries, old-peoples' homes, and cultural benefits. The goods and services this produced accounted for four percent of the gross national product in 1976. The economic weight of controlling the social welfare network accrued to labor much economic power over the rank and file. The military took over approximately ninety percent of the obras sociales and installed military personnel as administrators over these programs.[13]

While the above-stated laws and decrees were all enacted within the first year of military rule, the most sweeping piece of anti-labor legislation, a new Law of Professional Associations, was not passed for three years. The Law of Professional Associations, which was

first enacted during Perón's first regime, is the premier set of principles delineating state-labor relations. It set up the structure of all the groups which "represent" labor, established a system of judicial oversight of labor matters, and delimited the power of the state over labor affairs. It was the original Law of Professional Associations which established the CGT as the only confederation representing the labor movement and the system of *personería gremial*. It allowed only state-recognized unions to have legal and representative status.

The enactment of such legislation made the labor unions organizationally dependent on the government and many labor leaders had fought against it when Perón instituted it. However, after Perón's demise, successive military and civilian governments attempted to de-institutionalize the labor movement by doing away with the Law of Professional Associations and with the CGT. This caused labor to rally around the CGT and to argue for the continued legality of this law. The existence of the CGT and the continued standing of the Law of Professional Associations statutes have often been the rallying points for labor in the past thirty years. Perhaps this centrality of the Law of Professional Associations for the labor movement caused the military junta to keep its "reforms," all

debilitating to labor's power, from being enacted for three years.

The "reforms" proposed by the junta called for

- The permanent abolition of the CGT.
- The prohibition of political activity on the part of unions.
- The separation of obras sociales from the unions.
- The separation of categories of workers within one union into separate unions (i.e., within one industry, workers, technicians, and supervisors were often represented within one union. The new rules would make intra-industry unionization difficult.)
- Those running for union office would have to have clean slates -- i.e., no police records, which in effect meant no one engaged in prior strike activity would be able to hold office in the union.
- Circumscribed the activity of unions to only the region from which they came, thereby making it illegal, for example, for unions in Cordoba to work with unions in Buenos Aires.
- Modified the system of elections for union delegates and leaders to effectively prohibit re-elections and to keep leaders from interacting with the rank and file. Once elected, leaders would have to answer to a government agency.
- Encouraged the formation of many unions representing

comparable types of workers so as to divide the federative nature of the labor movement. Traditionally, labor had a centralized system of representing workers, whereby unions of workers engaged in the same or comparable activity were grouped into one federation from which collective bargaining could be done from a position of strength.

- Gave the state power to regulate union elections, control funds, preside over judicial matters, and to modify union statutes when it deemed necessary.
- Allowed for meetings, assemblies, and congresses only with the knowledge and consent of government authorities, thereby making illegal any attempts to organize independent union actions.[14]

The military junta promulgated these reforms in the name of cleaning up the entrenched corruption endemic in the labor movement. Many non-military sympathizers favored these reforms, most notably the editors of La Nacion, the influential conservative Argentine newspaper. True, the labor movement in 1976 suffered corruption and misuse of power on the part of many who benefited and profited from union leadership positions. However, the military's overall goal was to depoliticize and de-Peronize the labor movement so as to create a docile labor force in the economy. Attempts at decentralization were aimed at destabilizing labor's

political power and the curtailment of labor activity was to prevent any opposition to the junta's economic policies. It was hoped that by passage of such a sweeping Law of Professional Associations, the labor movement would finally be put in its place, that is, removed from effective political participation.[15]

The Preliminary Attempts at Labor Unity

While the military junta was busy jailing and harassing the major labor leaders, other labor leaders busied themselves with resurrecting or creating a new agenda for the labor movement. In the period in question, a group of labor leaders came into prominence, who were to seek accommodation with the military junta while at the same time attempting to appear in opposition to the regime's policies. These leaders were often heads of unions which were not intervened and unions which historically had not had much political clout within the labor movement. In the intervened unions, there emerged leaders from among the lower-level union delegates and internal commissions members. All these new-found power wielders were courted by the military junta, which to varying degrees was successful at coopting them into acquiescence to its policies.[16]

Labor leaders made various attempts in the first months of the military regime to stem the tide of

military repression by opening a dialogue with the military intervenors. In April 1976, a group of union leaders made the first attempt at a union meeting at the headquarters of the Federation of Sanitation. Their goal was to set up a "Commission of Liaison" between the government and labor to discuss labor issues. Colonel Fabrizzi, the military intervenor of the CGT at the time, declined to meet with this group and nothing ever came of its initial meeting.

In August of that year, the "Commission of 10" was formed which eventually became the "Commission of 12". This group brought together a number of diverse union leaders. There were two representatives from two of the most important intervened unions, Metalworkers and Light and Power; two representatives from the Group of Eight--labor leaders who had attended the annual meeting in June of the International Labor Organization in Geneva, Switzerland; six members from the working groups of the CGT; and two representatives from regional CGTs. The aim of this group was to formulate a set of goals and programs for the labor movement, and to hold a congress for discussing which goals to adopt. Due to military intimidation and internal disagreements, a congress was not held, but this Commission of 12 continued to meet.

In September 1976, a group of representatives from non-intervened unions joined together to form a

delegation to meet with the temporary intervenor of the CGT, Commandant Julio Cesar Porcille. This group which later took the name "Commission of 25," appealed to Porcille for a meeting to discuss the labor situation, especially concerning the military's suspension of labor activity. The existence of two commissions was disquieting to enough leaders in several unions that they attempted, through the Commission of 5 to unite the Commissions of 12 and 21. The Commission of 5 consisted of representatives from intervened and non-intervened unions and was headed by Oscar Smith, head of the Light and Power union. During September and October 1976, this group attempted to hold a meeting to seek common ground between the Commissions of 12 and 21, but due to labor conflicts surrounding the Light and Power union, discussions were terminated. November witnessed another attempt at creating a dialogue with Commandant Porcille by a group of union leaders calling themselves the "Commission of 7." This group did succeed at procuring an interview with Porcille, but he declined to hold a meeting to discuss state-labor relations, citing that the conditions were not appropriate for such a meeting.

The first nine months of military rule saw various attempts at creating unity and dialogue among the unions. It should be noted that these meetings were held in spite of the overt repression taking place where

union members were being fired, jailed, kidnapped, and disappeared. In most instances, the desire for unity was to create one voice in dealing with the government and to reach agreement over what long-term relationship would exist between the state and labor. This, of course, required trade-offs and agreements. If the various commissions had been successful at this time in gaining an audience with the junta, they most assuredly would have acquiesced to the military regimes' demands. As it was, the junta being in a position of strength, remained deaf to labor's pleas.[17]

The Commission of 25

It was not until March 1977 that there emerged the first major coalition of labor union groups to which the military junta eventually gave legal recognition as representatives of the labor movement. A planned visit by Otto Kersten, general secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, gave a group of unions an excuse to organize a commission to greet him. Secretary generals from eighteen non-intervened unions and representatives from the CGT created the "Commission of 25." The Commission of 25 like all other commissions before it, was intent on revitalizing the political activities of labor. To do so, it sought legal recognition from the junta as a legitimate

representative of labor. The military junta was not happy with this group, but after the International Labor Organization gave recognition to the 25, the junta felt compelled to do so as well.[18]

The Commission of 25 consisted of unions which were members of the CGT and unions of secondary importance in terms of historical influence within the labor movement. Throughout its entire existence, there were many cleavages and defections within its ranks. In its first two years, there were five identifiable sectors within the Commission. The first group were the "Verticalists." These were supporters from the largest group of hard-core Perónist unions. The Verticalists argued for a resurrection of a closed and hierarchical labor leadership organization, as was the case under Perón's regimes. Power and policy emanated from the top down and dissent from the lower ranks could not be tolerated. These unions recognized the leadership of Lorenzo Miguel, head of the Metalworkers union and of the 62 Organizations.

The second group called itself the "ex-Combatives." They were a group of leaders who were also a faction of the Perónist "62 Organizations" but in the late 1960s had been members of the CGT of the Argentines (a group that led the Cordoba rebellions which brought down the government of General Onganía). A third group was the

"anti-Verticalists" or "Group of 8." These were ten (sic) unions which had broken from the Perónist 62 Organizations in 1969. They were very anti-Perónist and collaborated with the military regime of General Onganía.

The fourth group were the "Independents". They were non-Perónist and were former supporters of Augusto Vandor. The last group were the "Participationists." They were heirs to Vandor's strategy of collaborating with the military regime under General Onganía.[19]

Constant conflicts occurred among these groups and leaders would change allegiances on a frequent basis. Alliances were never permanent and each new week would bring new configurations of who was a member of what group. Old rivalries from the past continued to play important roles in how labor leaders dealt with each other. Other groups would arise to deal with a particular crisis, but the groups would remain in existence long after the crisis which engendered its existence was resolved. Perhaps the major reason for the intense factionalism lay in personal ambition. Heading up a splinter group gave unionists opportunities to climb up the movement ladder. Being leaders of this or that faction would ensure press attention for their views. This would open up opportunities for greater influence.

Of course, not all the various factions were a result of opportunistic maneuvering. Leaders had genuine differences of opinion concerning how to deal with the junta. Out of the factionalism of the 25, new labor coalitions formed which would rival the 25 for control over labor. Before addressing other key groups though, something needs to be said about the 25's general goals.

The goals or demands of the 25 centered around the release of jailed unionists, the normalization of intervened unions, the normalization of the CGT, the renewed standing of the Law of Professional Associations, and a host of other measures seeking to regain labor's previous control over the workplace.[20] The Commission of 25, in most cases wanted to open up a dialogue with the military junta, so their initial demands did not call for a return to democracy nor did it stress its concerns over the kidnappings and disappearances taking place. Rather, it concentrated on labor-specific issues such as salaries, collective-bargaining, and normalization of the labor movement. The group's dominance of the labor arena lasted until mid-1978 when another group emerged to rival the 25's power.[21]

The National Commission of Labor (CNT)

In April 1978, after two years of military rule, the Ministry of Labor decided that the time was ripe for improving relations with the labor movement, given that most labor leaders had been "ideologically de-purified" or, more accurately, no longer towed the Peronist line. What the Ministry of Labor was attempting to do was to prepare the stage for Argentine representation at the annual June meeting of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and also to court those labor leaders who appeared most willing to collaborate with the regime.[22] Viewing this as a political opening, several leaders, representing the most powerful intervened and non-intervened unions, decided to form a separate labor organization from the dominant Commission of 25. This new organization was called the Commission of Effort and Labor. The stated aims of the new Commission were to improve the salary situation of workers, to appeal for the normalization of the intervened unions, and to lobby for the release of detained unionists. The group stated that it would undertake such efforts without interfering with the work of the Commission of 25. Although both had similar stated goals, the Commission of Effort and Labor viewed the Commission of 25 as too confrontational and openly stated that it wished to be the "dialogue wing" of the labor movement. It claimed that it would

act in the "professional plane," which meant that its concerns would be strictly labor-oriented, and it would not interfere in politics. In other words, while the Commission of 25 maintained some oppositional stance toward the regime and left itself the prerogative of making political statements, the Commission of Effort and Labor was willing to play by the regime's rules.[23]

The seeming rivalry between the Commission of Effort and Labor and the Commission of 25 was disquieting to several labor leaders who sought to unify both groups into one coalition. However, attempts at unity failed for in September 1978, the Commission of 25 itself split. This is not surprising given the disparate groups which made up this unstable alliance. The more moderate faction of the 25--the Independents and anti-Verticalists, decided to join the Commission of Effort and Labor. The newly constituted group took the name the "National Commission of Labor" (CNT). The remaining groups in the Commission of 25 continued to agitate for changes in regime policy, and its criticisms of the regime became more strident. The new CNT utilized the strategy of collaborating with the government and confined itself to issues strictly related to labor. This group openly rejected the Commission of 25's monopoly over labor representation while at the same time claiming to work for the same goals.[24]

The existence of the CNT was at first disconcerting to the military junta. It attempted to discourage the group from forming, mainly through jailing several of its leaders for a brief time. However, 1978 was a good year for the junta as it perceived itself as winning the war against subversion. Despite being criticized by certain international organizations and the United States over human rights violations, Argentina's hosting of the World Cup Soccer Championship games and its subsequent win of the title enabled the junta and Argentina to forget about its economic and political troubles for a while. Besides, having two separate groups claiming to represent labor would enable the junta to play one group off the other, thereby ensuring the labor movement's continued weakness in fostering real, significant opposition to the regime.[25]

The Importance of the International Labor Arena

The strategies pursued by the Commission of 25 in 1977 and 1978 involved attempts to lobby the regime toward restoring labor's pre-1976 power and influence. When the CNT was founded in 1978, it openly espoused the need to promote a dialogue with the powers that be. Much time was spent on making public declarations concerning the state of labor and the economy. Much more time was spent on these two groups of union leaders

negotiating with each other in attempts to arrive at consensus over goals and strategies. However, unity between the two groups was not to be achieved until 1983 when military rule finally came to an end.[26]

Of primary importance to labor during 1977 and 1978 was the recognition of the international labor organizations, specifically that of the ILO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Given that effective action was impossible at home due to military repression, labor leaders sought contact with the international labor arena to air their concerns and criticisms of the domestic labor situation. They felt that their demands would carry greater weight with the regime if they had the support of the principal international organizations of labor. So too, they viewed the forums of these international organizations as "safe" situations for criticizing government policies, and there they promoted themselves as opposed to the military regime, regardless of whether they were or not. This appearance of opposition to the regime enabled many of them to maintain their credibility in the eyes of the rank and file. It also provided them with opportunities to form strategy and plan without the fear of reprisals.[27]

The yearly meetings of the ILO were particularly fertile ground for the type of politicking described

above. For its annual June meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, the ILO requires each nation to send a delegation representing three sectors of society: representatives of the government, of the labor movement or principal national labor organizations, and the entrepreneurial sector. It is assumed that the labor representatives will be elected from among the ranks of labor, rather than be appointed by the government. These requirements proved problematic to the junta. In many ways their thinking was similar to that of the labor leaders: the military junta viewed the forum of the ILO as important to fostering Argentina's international image. Despite worldwide condemnation for its repressive policies, the junta always attempted to make the ILO meetings a showcase for its membership in the civilized western world. As elsewhere, it sought to reaffirm its ties to the capitalist, industrialized West. It also sought to win friends abroad but, of course, failed.

In 1976, the government and labor delegations to the ILO meeting did not clash in any way, nor did the ILO make any statements concerning Argentina. The Argentine minister of labor made a presentation concerning the need for foreign investment to generate greater employment, and the labor delegation made a mild statement concerning the desire to see the normalization

of the labor movement. Both groups were very cordial; the meeting went well and without incident. Upon returning from Geneva, the labor delegation began negotiations to form a representative labor body. It was these discussions which eventually led to the formation of the Commission of 25 in 1977.

The year 1977 proved markedly different from 1976. The Commission of 25 had been formed in March and the regime was further entrenched in power. The labor situation wasn't improving; rather it was getting worse and attempts by labor to gain an audience with the junta fell on deaf ears. Preparations by the government to form a delegation to the ILO meeting were attempted. Labor reneged on appointing representatives to the meeting and a delegation from Argentina therefore did not attend. The minister of labor had attempted to dictate to the labor leadership how it should select delegates to the ILO meeting, but labor was unwilling to go along and so refused to appoint representatives.[28]

The year 1978 saw competition between the Commission of 25 and the Commission of Effort and Labor over sending delegates to the ILO meeting. By this time the Commission of 25 had received recognition from the ILO as the official legitimate representative of the Argentine labor movement. Despite the protests of the Commission of Effort and Labor, the 25 succeeded in

gaining control of the delegation to the ILO. Argentina was represented at the 1978 meeting by this delegation along with the minister of labor. Members of the labor delegation made several critical presentations concerning the Argentine situation. Criticism was levelled at the economy, which was causing the loss of jobs and the decreased purchasing power of workers' salaries; at the laws in force prohibiting labor activity; and over the status of jailed unionists. Critical statements by the labor delegation embarrassed the minister of labor. In its annual report, the ILO cited Argentina for violations in the labor sphere. All this was important in affirming the legitimacy of the Commission of 25 as speaking for the movement. Also, this international recognition made the Commission less vulnerable to repression by the government at home.[29]

Argentine labor activism in international labor organizations was not new to the labor movement in the late 1970s. Since the 1960s, Argentina had always participated in the ILO, and several labor leaders held key positions on its committees. It was during periods of government repression, though, that membership took on added significance in that it provided the movement with a forum to voice its criticisms and to gain international support. The only means of gaining attention from the military junta during 1977 and 1978

was when the junta began to look into forming a delegation to the June ILO meetings. It was the period between April and June of each year which saw greater activity between the junta and the labor movement, as each group attempted to gain political leverage over the other. The domestic battles were then played out in Geneva, with labor attaining the upper hand. This, along with periodic visits by labor delegations from other international labor organizations--all of which condemned the repressive policies of the junta--gave the labor leadership a certain degree of power and legitimacy within a climate of repression.

Strike Activity 1976-78

It would stand to reason that during this most brutal period of repression against labor, there would have been a paucity of strikes in both the public and private sectors. Yet, there were several significant strikes during these (almost) three years, always undertaken in a climate of fear and threatened violence. The first labor conflicts under the military regime occurred in September 1976. In that month, strikes took place at the General Motors, Ford, Fiat, Peugeot, and Chrysler plants in Greater Buenos Aires province. The issue concerned salaries, and the situation was aggravated by

management's harassment of the shop-floor union representatives. General Liendo, the minister of labor, attempted to resolve the crisis by going to the General Motors plant to hear their concerns from the union representatives themselves. This action was preceded by the installment of armed officers in the factories, so that discussions were held basically at gunpoint. The conflict was resolved through jailing the protagonists of the strike and the threatened use of force against others.[30]

A more serious labor conflict took place in October 1976, lasting until February 1977. In October, the military undertook a review of the legislation concerning the handling of collective bargaining agreements with unions representing public utilities. It made several changes which effected working hours, ability to negotiate over wages, working conditions, and vacations. In response to proposed government policies, the Light and Power union, headed by Oscar Smith, a hard-line Perónist, decided to mobilize against the changes. Workers undertook a series of work stoppages which seriously effected the provision of electricity to the population of Buenos Aires. The electric company, SEGBA, whose head was a military admiral, reacted by dismissing the leaders of the union, among them Oscar Smith, and threatening physical retaliation against the

striking workers. This only served to aggravate the situation. The military junta, rather than the minister of labor, made a public statement intimating its willingness to use force to end the conflict. It also accused Light and Power of being infiltrated by subversives. Fifteen days after the start of the conflict, electricity was returned to almost normal levels, although no concessions were won by the union. It instead had succeeded in making the government enter into discussions and negotiations over collective bargaining issues. The rest of the year witnessed periodic slow-downs and stoppages by Light and Power workers.[31]

Despite negotiations, in December the junta enacted Law 21576 which put into effect revisions in collective bargaining procedures. January witnessed a renewed outbreak of labor stoppages not only by Light and Power but by other public utilities (such as Water and Energy) as well. Conflicts also occurred in cities other than Buenos Aires including Rosario, Cordoba, and Corrientes. Thousands of workers took to the streets on January 26, 1977, to voice their dissatisfaction over the labor situation; energy outages became common. The state responded by dismissing labor "agitators," jailing others, "disappearing" a few of the more radical union representatives, and sending police troops into the

plants to force workers back on the job.[32]

The solution to the conflict was formulated by Oscar Smith at the beginning of February 1977. However, his disappearance several days later made the immediate solution to the conflict insignificant as all sides were shocked at his kidnapping. Labor union leaders demanded a full investigation of the affair and called for Smith's release from captivity. The government claimed it knew nothing of his whereabouts. What is known was that on the early morning of February 11th, Smith's car was intercepted by two green Ford Falcons driven by non-descript men and that Smith was whisked away in one of the Fords.[33]

The disappearance of Smith was not the first disappearance of a labor leader, but it was the first one of a major leader of a major union during the military regime. Because the Light and Power union is one of the most powerful unions in Argentina, its leaders carry great political clout in the labor movement. The state had historically not harassed Light and Power's leaders as much as leaders of less important unions or shop-floor labor representatives, mainly because major labor leaders have been more willing to negotiate than agitate. Because of this, it is not clear whether the state ordered the disappearance of Smith, especially since he had succeeded in ameliorating

the labor conflict. Evidence does point to the security forces as having played some role, considering the cars which intercepted Smith were Ford Falcons, a trademark of the junta's security forces. Whoever is to blame (and to this day, Smith's disappearance has not been explained), his disappearance became a cause celebre for the labor movement and made him a martyr representing the sufferings of labor under the military junta.

The rest of 1977 was punctuated by a series of "shows of force" by telephone workers, railroad workers, and petrochemical workers. This involved work stoppages which caused inconveniences in the provision of services. The government's response was to utilize two strategies: threatening to use force against the workers supplemented by detentions and jailings, and maintaining a dialogue with the unions in question to give the appearance of real concern over the labor situation. The concerns of these unions revolved around the reformed collective bargaining agreements and the salary situation. Minister of the Economy Martinez de Hoz refused to negotiate changes but Minister of Labor Liendo took a much more flexible stand. By the end of 1977, a genuine reappraisal was begun over the salary situation of public sector employees. Negotiations continued into 1978 as some genuine dialogue between labor and the Ministry of Labor seemed to take hold.[34]

In 1978, more strike activity occurred within private sector industry than in the public sector. The recession was accompanied by more layoffs and dismissals, and the worsening salary situation caused strikes in the mechanics, textiles, and garment industries, among others. All these strikes centered around specific labor issues, such as wages and conditions in the workplace, and were pretty much limited to the specific unions in question. Strikes during 1978 did not cause the political problems those in the public sector had the year before.

Public sector strikes of significance were held by the railroad workers union over dissatisfaction with wage increases. In March, the railroad workers promulgated work stoppages, which effectively disrupted rail service in Greater Buenos Aires. An all-out strike was attempted, but the promoters of the strike were jailed and no strike occurred. In December 1978 the railroad workers union threatened another strike. This was a critical time for the junta for it was engaged in a dispute with Chile over rights to the Beagle Channel Islands. Tensions had reached a high point and Argentina was preparing to mobilize military forces in the south. The running of the railroads would be critical to this venture. After negotiations between the government and labor leaders, the union decided not

to strike and impede the Beagle Channel dispute, mainly out of fear of appearing unpatriotic to the Argentine cause.[35]

In all, the strikes of 1976, 1977, and 1978 which occurred among rank and file revolved around labor specific issues and were not designed to criticize the legitimacy of the ruling military junta. Yet, these strikes were problematic for the regime, because their very existence pointed to a lack of consensus by the working class over the regime's economic policies. The very fact that many rank and file union members were willing to risk their jobs, and many their lives, by striking over labor issues illustrates the inherent destabilizing power of the labor movement sector of society. The critical underpinnings of the Argentine junta were to maintain law and order and to oversee the recovery of the economy. These critical goals were undermined every time there was a strike called, regardless of whether or not the strike leaders had as one of their motives to criticize the regime as their legitimate governors. While the strikes were resolved more or less to the regime's benefit, they nevertheless hindered the regime from enacting all of its economic and social policies with impunity. No other sector of Argentine society during this period put forth any public show of disapproval to the regime's policies.

An Assessment of the First Three Years

The period from March 1976 through 1978 saw a concerted attack by the military junta against the political and economic power of the labor movement. Through the use of repression, threatened violence, and legal statutes, the junta effectively stripped the labor movement of a central base from which to protest state policies. The jailing of the most important labor leaders effectively removed any initial opposition to the regime. The kidnapping and disappearance of other labor leaders and unionists served notice to many others that the junta was willing to use all means to liquidate dissension. The derogation of labor laws replaced by the enactment of proscriptive labor legislation served to make legal the de-politicization of the labor movement as a whole.

The very harshness with which the military junta acted against labor illustrates one of the characteristics of the O'Donnell paradigm of bureaucratic-authoritarianism. The system imposed in 1976 was one of "exclusionary bureaucratic-authoritarianism," i.e., it required such harsh measures because it was dealing with a sector of society that was highly organized and politicized. Along with the perceived threat to society posed by urban terrorists,

the regime opted to use extreme force for it was attempting to de-politicize already politicized sectors of society.

The reactions of the labor movement to the regime's repressive policies were twofold. On the one hand, certain sectors of the labor movement attempted to negotiate and accommodate labor to the new regime. On the other hand, the persistence of strikes over these almost three years posed constant worries to the regime and inherently effected its legitimacy as governor. The overall impact of these three years, however, was labor's preoccupation with reconstituting itself and redefining its goals as a movement.

The labor leaders who owed their power to the regime were undoubtedly more accommodating to the regime than others. Generally, leaders of non-intervened unions, leaders from unions outside of Buenos Aires, and labor activists who had been marginalized from the previous Perónist regime, were anxious to open a dialogue with the regime. These unions made up the initial nucleus of the Commission of 25 when it was formed in 1977. The other major nucleus of the Commission of 25 consisted of small unions which, historically, had not been powerful within the labor movement, labor activists allied to the last Perónist regime, and a number of radical labor groups. With the eventual release of the major labor

leaders, there is growing divergence within the Commission of 25 over who should determine policy direction.

The formation of the CNT in 1978 represented a major schism which was to divide the labor movement until 1983. The CNT represented almost exclusively those unions which were not intervened. A sector of the Commission of 25 joined CNT, and by the end of 1978, the 25 found itself in crisis. During 1978, both the CNT and the Commission of 25 espoused the same goals, but they each claimed to represent different strategies in reaching these goals. The Commission of 25 claimed it was working toward a dialogue with the regime, but it reserved for itself the prerogative of making political statements. The CNT claimed to want nothing but a dialogue with the regime over questions in the labor sphere. In actuality, both groups during this time eschewed political statements for the climate then existent in Argentina precluded any real dissension against the regime. Rather, in a climate of powerlessness, the labor movement was reduced to internal infighting, often encouraged by the regime itself.

One exception to the collaborationist tone put forth by labor was in the annual meetings of the ILO. The critical statements made by the labor delegation in 1978

illustrated the fact that labor was not wholeheartedly endorsing the regime. Rather, the labor leadership used these meetings to attempt to wrest concessions from the regime and to give notice that it was not working hand in glove with it. So too, the labor leadership was seeking to show the rank and file that it was fighting for labor's interests.

For its part, the rank and file continued to strike over labor-specific issues, but this did not at the time serve to seriously undermine the regime. However, the very existence of labor strikes during this period was another illustration of how the regime was not totally successful at imposing its will over labor. In order to end most of the strikes, it threatened force and in many cases actually used force, thereby laying bare its inherently violent nature.

In summary, the first three years of its rule saw the military successful at preventing significant opposition from the labor movement. The ferocity of the repression against labor precluded any dissension from its leadership. Yet the ensuing three years saw the labor leadership factionalized over what to do. Throughout this period, there existed an undercurrent of criticism against regime policy, although not against the legitimacy of the regime itself. By the end of 1978, the regime seemed to be fully in control.

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CHAPTER V

LABOR COMES OF AGE

1979-1983

The Political and Economic Setting, 1979-1983

At the beginning of 1979, the Videla regime appeared to be winning its war against subversion. The repression had succeeded in attaining law and order, but to many outsiders, Argentina had gone beyond the brink of no return, spiraling toward self-destruction. The junta, after three years, seemed satisfied with the state of affairs, and with the economic policies of Martinez de Hoz still taking shape, in general little dissension occurred among the military. However, the complacency of 1979 quickly disappeared as the year 1980 began with the collapse of Argentina's most important banks. This most dramatic failure of a part of Martinez de Hoz's economic policies fostered public disagreements

between factions of the military over the course of Argentina's economic future. For the first time, the heads of the navy and the air force voiced concern over the economic situation. As capital began to flow out of Argentina once again, Martinez de Hoz and his staff were called on the carpet more than once to explain their strategies to the armed forces. Despite this downturn in the economy and despite mounting disagreements from factions of the military over Martinez de Hoz's strategies, General Videla stood firm in supporting his minister of the economy.[1]

However, the worsening economic situation complicated Videla's plan for an orderly transition of power. In 1976, Videla had agreed to serve for only a four-year term and in mid-1980, he sought his successor. Martinez de Hoz tried to get Videla to extend his tenure so that he could continue his economic policies. Videla declined and chose his long-time friend and colleague General Roberto Viola to succeed him. Viola was not the clear-cut choice of the armed forces. The navy was very much against him because they worried about his intentions to pursue a greater political and economic opening. However, the army and air force were behind Viola so Videla's will prevailed. On March 29, 1981, Viola assumed the presidency, but right away opposition surfaced against his policies.[2]

The program set forth by Viola in his first public statements appeared to open up the possibility of an eventual return to civilian rule. Among his proposals were to create a dialogue with the opposition and the gradual normalization of certain groups such as unions and political parties. Indeed, the Viola regime was marked by a decline in the kidnappings and disappearances which had characterized Videla's regime. As for the economic program of Martinez de Hoz, Viola was dubious of his measures to shore up the economic situation and refused to lend support to Martinez de Hoz's more drastic measures.[3]

The political opening hinted at by Viola had several consequences. It mobilized certain factions of the military, who were suspicious of Viola's "democratic" posture to begin plotting for his overthrow. Disagreements within the junta became public with General Leopoldo Galtieri taking a lead role in undermining Viola's authority. Galtieri made public statements concerning the regime without even consulting Viola. The apparent schisms within the junta enabled opposition groups to speak more vocally against the regime. The labor movement leadership became increasingly more militant during this period and the major political parties formed a coalition called the Multipartidaria and began to lobby for a return to

democracy.[4]

The emergence of a multiparty coalition on the political scene was quite disturbing to many of the hardliners in the regime who felt the "political opening" advocated by Viola was at best premature and at worst antithetical to the regime's interests. Given that Viola's power was shaky to begin with, it took little for Galtieri to depose him in December 1981, less than nine months after Viola came to power. Once again, Argentina had failed to provide for an orderly transfer of power.[5]

Galtieri inherited a factionalized military and continuing economic problems. While he made references to a return to democracy at some point, he was really interested in having himself "elected" to the office of the presidency. As a result of this, he pursued erratic policies which alienated him from many within the military. Galtieri began to court sectors of the civilian population such as Perónists and political party leaders, and he purportedly met secretly with several Perónists to gain their support for his continued rule in return for a relaxation of union restrictions. It quickly became clear among those who had supported him that he was seeking his own personal gain above that of preserving the political hegemony of the military. Dissension among the military ranks grew,

which encouraged civilian groups to act more vocally against the regime. The solution Galtieri chose was to distract the nation from its political woes by going to war.[6]

The Malvinas/Falklands war succeeded in unifying all sectors of the population in support of the military, albeit for a brief time. Censorship of the press by government authorities made it appear that Argentina was actually winning. The opposite, of course, was true. The fact was the war was mismanaged from the start. To initiate a conflict in the South Atlantic at the beginning of winter was an error; to send eighteen-year-old conscripts (Argentina requires two years of military service from all males, starting at age eighteen) without adequate training, supplies, or clothing was abominable; and to send battalions into battle without commanding officers was unconscionable. Rather than being a shining victory for the armed forces, the Malvinas/Falklands fiasco laid bare the corrupt and inept nature of the Argentine military. That the military failed at its premier function, its reason for being, was a fault no Argentine could forgive. When it finally had to be made known to the public in June 1982 that Argentina had been defeated, the popular reaction was swift and violent.[7]

Galtieri was quickly replaced and General Reynaldo

Bignone put in power for the purpose of preparing Argentina for elections. The initial date was set for 1984 but as popular dissension became more vocal and younger officers voiced their desire to hasten the transition, the date was moved up to December 1983 and finally up to October 30, 1983.

While military bickering undermined the power of the regime, the economy was going from bad to worse. The liberal economic program of Martinez de Hoz produced drastic consequences for Argentine society. Short-term modest successes led to long-term disasters in regard to inflation, production, deficits, and the standard of living of most Argentines. In an effort to quell inflation, Martinez de Hoz instituted a plan called the "tablita" whereby he allowed the devaluation rate of the peso to trail behind the domestic rate of inflation. His theory was to attract cheap imports due to an overvalued currency and eventually to "induce convergence" between domestic and international prices. He also maintained free interest rates. Neither policy worked to stem the tide of inflation. What occurred was the basic deindustrialization of the Argentine economy. The attraction of cheap imports drove much Argentine industry out of business. The free-floating interest rates encouraged speculation of all kinds, bringing ruin to Argentina's financial sector. The overvalued peso

enabled hordes of Argentina's middle classes to go abroad, as suddenly, the dollar was cheap compared to the peso.[8]

Inflation reached over 200% in 1982, the Gross Domestic Product declined by 12% between 1980 and 1983, and industrial production fell 25% between 1976 and 1980. Average salaries between 1975 and 1978 were reduced in real terms by half. The downturn in industrial production resulted in massive dismissals of workers. The hardest hit was manufacturing whose share of Gross Domestic Product shrank from 38.1% in 1974 to 35% by 1979. Production in textiles contracted by 50%. Many small and medium firms went out of business.[9]

Despite the worsening economic situation and despite the growing dissension by civilian groups (even agriculturalists were unhappy with the economy), Martinez de Hoz pursued his course. In 1980, he attempted without success to convince Videla to remain in power so as to continue the economic program. By then, Videla was beset by discontent within the military over Martinez de Hoz's policies and so he followed through on handing over the reigns of power to Viola. Martinez de Hoz was replaced by the end of 1981 but the following two years proved to be no better for the Argentine economy. The Malvinas/Falklands War and the subsequent elections gained center stage as inflation

proceeded to spiral out of control once again.[10]

Labor Militancy Rekindled

The year 1979 witnessed the first strike action by a leading faction of the labor movement leadership. Owing to the worsening salary situation and to the imminent passage of the new Law of Professional Associations, labor militancy against the regime made its first appearance since the start of military rule.

At the beginning of January, the government released its plans for wage increases in which over an eight month period there would be fixed monthly adjustments of 4%. The wage increase for employees in the public sector would be fixed at 40%. Almost immediately, the two leading factions of the labor movement, the Commission of 25 and the CNT issued statements denouncing the government's salary policy. The CNT issued a statement saying that such an economic policy was leading "inexorably" to a confrontation among the Argentines. The Commission of 25 issued a statement calling for a state of emergency on the part of all sectors of labor in regard to the economic situation. A few days into February, the government released a report on the cost of living index which showed a rise of 12.8% for the month of January. This news was not received well by labor, and both the CNT and the Commission of 25

calculated that the buying power of workers had fallen by 8.8% in one month alone. Demands for modifications of the salary increases became more vocal, especially by the Commission of 25 which was becoming more militant in its criticism of the regime.[11]

Two other events in February served to aggravate an increasingly tense labor situation. One was the release of Lorenzo Miguel, head of the 62 Organizations and displaced leader of the Metalworkers union, from prison to house arrest, and the other was a change in the minister of labor with General Liendo leaving to be replaced by a General Reston. The release of Lorenzo Miguel, the most powerful and influential of Perónist labor leaders, enabled him to start recouping his power after almost four years in jail. He would attempt to reign in the various factions of the labor movement under a Perónist banner.[12]

The departure of General Liendo from the Ministry of Labor signified a hardening stance on the part of the regime toward labor. As will be recalled from chapter 4, General Liendo had pursued a more moderate line with labor throughout his tenure as labor minister. In his dealings with Economics Minister Martinez de Hoz, Liendo usually lobbied for greater wage increases and for liberalizing some restrictions on labor activity. In his last meeting with leaders of the Commission of 25

and the CNT, Liendo stated that the time "was ripe" for moving toward normalization of the labor movement and for a reinitiation of labor activity. His successor thought otherwise. General Reston began his tenure by declaring that the government would in no way modify its salary policy. Both the Commission of 25 and the CNT continued to call for adjustments to salary increases.[13]

In March 1979, the government decided to enact the new Law of Professional Associations, which the labor movement had lobbied hard against for the past three years. Recall that this new law, first proposed in 1976, called for the abolition of the CGT, prohibition of union activism in political matters, and the proscription of labor control over internal economic and organizational matters. Final passage would not take place until November 1979. The CNT reacted to this news by seeking audiences with the heads of the navy and air force. They hoped that they could convince the navy and air force to appeal to the army-dominated regime for modifications in the law. This effort failed.[14]

On the 27th of March, the CNT and Commission of 25 held a meeting in which "programmatic unity" was reached by various members of both groups. At this meeting, both groups established a list of concerns each had in common: salary situation, union freedom, freedom for detained unionists, investigation of the disappeared

unionists, and the defense of national and industrial interests. Negotiations followed with the ostensible goal of fostering unity between the two groups, but after several days, negotiations were broken off by the Commission of 25 over what they viewed to be the lack of "positive results" offered by the CNT.[15]

The Commission of 25 decided to call a general strike for April 27, the first political strike called by the labor movement leadership since the advent of military rule in March 1976. The strike called "The Journey of Protest" was called to seek the following:

1. Salary increases to keep pace with cost of living increases.
2. Opposition to reform of the old Law of Professional Associations.
3. Opposition to the newly enacted repressive labor legislation.
4. Normalization of union activity.
5. Liberty for detained unionists.
6. Expediency in investigating the cases of disappeared unionists.
7. Defense of the economy, production, and national industry.[16]

From the very start, plans in preparation for the strike were beset by serious obstacles. The CNT opted not to participate in the strike on the grounds that the

decision to strike was taken unilaterally by the Commission of 25, but it stated support for the Commission of 25's demands. The most serious obstacle came from the military authorities who were not disposed to any form of public protest at that time. Their solution was to jail all the principal leaders of the strike several days before the strike was to occur. Liberty for the detained leaders was not gained until July of that year and in the case of six leaders, not until March of the following year.[17]

On the day of the strike, activity appeared normal in downtown Buenos Aires and other cities. Where the effects of the strike were most noticeable were in the industrial sectors just outside of Buenos Aires. There, industrial activity was almost at a standstill. So too, railroad service in Buenos Aires was severely limited as the railworkers' union adhered to the strike call despite the jailing of many union leaders and despite the illegality of the strike. The military-censored press played down the strike and portrayed life as normal in Buenos Aires. Several reports from foreign presses, in Mexico and Spain for instance saw the strike as the first significant display of opposition to the regime.[18] In hindsight, union leaders from the Commission of 25 viewed the strike with mixed feelings. On the one hand, the turnout was small and the strike

did not succeed at paralyzing the economic activity of the nation. On the other hand, the strike was a clear-cut statement that labor was unhappy with the economic situation and that protest would continue despite threats of military reprisal.[19]

It is true that labor rank and file did not turn out in great numbers for the strike. The fact that the CNT reneged on participating in the strike and the detention of the strike's planners can be attributed in large part to this lack of response. However, despite these obstacles, the strike did occur and did have some noticeable impact on daily routine in Buenos Aires. The most important aspect of this strike was that it was the first political action taken by a sector of the labor movement leadership in three years of military rule. The years of attempting to achieve a dialogue with the military regime over salaries and labor legislation proved unsuccessful as the events of early 1979 showed the economic and political situation to be getting worse rather than better. The decision to call a strike was all the more daring because in 1979 the power of Videla and Martinez de Hoz appeared stable and secure. No other sector of Argentine society up till then had voiced opposition to the regime. The strike of April 27, 1979, was a watershed in Argentine labor history, taking place as the political situation began to unravel

(albeit slowly at this point), and the labor leadership began to take more militant stands.

The Continuing Importance of the International Labor Arena

As it had in the three years prior to 1979, in 1979 through 1982 the annual June meeting of the International Labor Organization enabled labor to voice criticism of the regime in an international setting without fear of reprisals by the military authorities. Far away from Argentina, labor leaders could condemn the labor situation in their country and appear to be in the vanguard of the opposition. This strategy helped them to make friends abroad and demonstrated to the rank and file that the leadership was truly working for its interests. The situation in 1979 and subsequent years was a bit different in that the existence of two rival groups jockeying for control of the labor movement made preparations for the ILO meetings all the more heated.

On the heels of the April 27th strike, preparations were begun to form a delegation to the ILO meeting in Geneva. Within the Commission of 25, disagreement arose over whether or not to attend the meeting. Members from the Verticalist faction of the 25 argued that labor should refuse to send a delegation as protest over the labor leaders still in jail for the April 27th strike.

The other groups of the 25 disagreed, and after some negotiations with the CNT, a delegation was chosen to attend the June meeting with Jorge Triaca, leader of the CNT being appointed the leader of the group.[20] Several days before the group's departure, Minister of Labor Reston, announced that he would not be attending the meeting. In his stead would go his deputy, General Daher. Reston's stated reasons for not attending was the many matters he had to attend to at home, but the real reason was to avoid being criticized by the ILO for labor violations. In early May, the ILO had named Argentina as one of twenty-three countries in violation of labor rights and Reston knew he would be criticized at the meeting. To offset this criticism, he decided not to appear, thereby marginalizing the importance of the conference to the regime.[21]

In a speech delivered before the ILO, Jorge Triaca issued a stinging criticism against the Argentine regime's economic policies. He used the term "economic terrorism" to describe the regime's policies in destroying the fabric of the labor movement, and he constantly brought up the names of disappeared labor leaders to illustrate the severe repression the labor movement had suffered under the military regime.[22]

The harshness of Triaca's words resonated back to Buenos Aires where General Reston was attempting to

minimize the importance of the ILO meeting. General Daher, as representative of the government, made no rebuke to Triaca's speech but upon his return to Buenos Aires, he remarked that Triaca did not represent the majority feeling of workers.[23]

In 1980, the Commission of 25 and the CNT again fought over representation to the ILO meeting. Initially, the Commission of 25 stated it would not be attending; the CNT formed a delegation, again to be headed by Jorge Triaca. Several weeks before the meeting, the government decided not to send the usual tripartite delegation; because, it claimed, the labor delegation only represented one faction of the labor movement. The real reason for not sending an official delegation was the government's fear of another stinging rebuke for labor's rights violations. Despite the fact that the government would not be represented at the meeting, the CNT decided to go to Geneva. At the last minute, the Commission of 25 also decided to send a delegation so that two contending groups of labor delegates appeared in Geneva. Again as in the previous year, Triaca delivered a stinging critique of government policies toward labor. Other labor leaders called for sanctions against the Argentine government for violation of labor rights. The government was so incensed over the situation that it seriously considered

pulling out of membership in the ILO.[24]

In 1981, the government formed a labor delegation to the ILO meeting (made up solely of members of the CNT) and the Commission of 25 (now using the name General Confederation of Labor) sent its own group of delegates. This meeting was not as tumultuous as by then General Viola had come to power and there was respite from the repression of the Videla era. The year 1982 was different as Argentina was engaged in the Malvinas/Falklands conflict against Great Britain, and the ILO convention witnessed several skirmishes between the Argentines and the British and U.S. delegations. The main item of this meeting was the Argentine labor delegation's calling for support of Argentina's claims to the Malvinas. In both 1981 and 1982, the two rival labor factions were less harsh in their criticisms of the government. However, this is in direct contrast to their actions at home. By 1982 they had become more vocal against the regime's policies.[25]

The years 1979-1982 once again showed how labor used the international labor setting to serve its goals vis a vis the standing regime. As 1979 and 1980 were years of continued repression by the Videla regime, and as Martinez de Hoz's policies were making the labor situation increasingly worse, labor leaders found it necessary to criticize the regime, at least from outside

the country, so as to appear as if they were doing something about the situation. The brief political opening proffered by the Viola regime in 1981 and the Malvinas/Falklands conflict in 1982 made labor appear less critical of the regime. In all these cases, the politicking at the ILO meetings was geared toward domestic consumption to win the hearts and minds of labor rank and file. This was particularly important at the time as the labor movement was divided into two contending factions.

A Failed Attempt at Unity

Meetings of the ILO witnessed repeated negotiations between labor leaders concerning strategies to deal with the situation at home. In 1979, Commission of 25 and CNT leaders held negotiations to bring about the unification of the two rival sectors of the labor movement. The imminent passage of the new Law of Professional Associations made negotiations all the more urgent as the year wore on. Also, the re-emergence of Lorenzo Miguel, who was a persistent advocate of unification, prodded both groups into finding common ground.

On September 11, 1979, the CNT and the Verticalist and Orthodox factions of the Commission of 25 agreed to form the "Unified Drive for Argentine Workers" (CUTA).

However, as with every other labor coalition, each group in this alliance retained their separate identities (e.g., the CNT remained the CNT although it had agreed to be a part of CUTA). The other factions of the Commission of 25 --the Participationists, the Independents, and the Group of 8--decided to form their own separate coalition. They took the name "Commission of 20" and argued that the newly formed CUTA represented "pernicious extremes" of suicidal sindicalism and "domesticated and complacent" sindicalism. What the Commission of 20 claimed to represent was a middle way in finding solutions to labor problems.[26]

The first activity undertaken by CUTA was to gain an audience with the Organization of American States' Commission on Human Rights which was in Argentina investigating alleged violations. In its meeting, the CUTA representatives stated their concerns over the fate of detained and disappeared unionists and the economic situation. In a document published a little later (October 1979), CUTA stated its aims to be:

1. The immediate relaxation of military control over intervened unions.
2. The immediate release of detained unionists.
3. An investigation into the cases of the disappeared.
4. The derogation of the proposed new Law of Professional Associations which was about to be passed.

With respect to the latter, CUTA argued that the new Law of Professional Associations would "atomize" the labor movement and would annul the achievements it had made in labor rights. If passed, CUTA warned, there would be confrontations with the government.[27]

On November 16, 1979, the new Law of Professional Associations was passed. CUTA issued a condemnation of the new law and began to approach the political parties and the Episcopacy to gain support against the new law. It also proclaimed a "National Program of Action" to lobby for the unconstitutionality of the law. The strategies for this National Program of Action were to be the point of contention within CUTA. In meetings held at the beginning of 1980 to formalize strategies for combatting the new Law of Professional Associations, divisions emerged concerning whether one or two plenaries should be held. Those who argued for two separate plenaries represented the former unions of the CNT; those who argued for one plenary represented the former unions of the Commission of 25. It would appear that the CNT unions were attempting to stake out their own territory again as they were not pleased at the hardening stances of the Commission of 25 unions. The CNT unions won out in holding a separate plenary from that of the Commission of 25 unions, but divisions between the two groups became more pronounced as the

year progressed.[28]

Conflicts within CUTA over labor representation to the ILO and ICFTU meetings revitalized the differences between the CNT and the Commission of 25 unions. On May 1st, in honor of International Workers' Day, two documents were made public by the two separate groups. One document signed solely by members of the CNT unions called on the armed forces to discontinue their economic policies which had led to speculation and economic ruin. The other document, signed by members of the Commission of 25 was more aggressive in condemning the economic situation. At the June ILO meetings, two separate delegations of labor leaders attended and each attempted to be more critical of the government than the other.[29]

On August 15, 1980, a new Law of Obras Sociales was passed which effectively annulled union control over monies collected for social welfare benefits. The result was another flurry of labor activity against this newest defeat of labor. Several union leaders, all from the CNT faction of CUTA met with Minister of Interior Harguindeguy to express their concerns over the increasingly worsening situation. While a statement issued by the labor leaders, among them Jorge Triaca, again stated criticism over the handling of the economy and of labor in particular, the very fact of the meeting caused tensions to explode. The Perónist party, Partido

Justicialista, at that time expressly forbade members from engaging in any talks with the military regime. Triaca and his colleagues were severely rebuked for meeting with Harguindeguy, at which point Triaca openly espoused his belief in dialogue with the regime. This stance caused several members of the CNT to break with the group. The Commission of 25 unions decided also to discontinue attempts to reconcile with the CNT group of unions. On November 24, 1980, the Commission of 25, with several other unions, decided to form a new General Confederation of Labor in open defiance of the Law of Professional Associations which banned such a group. The CUTA alliance was ended permanently, and once again, the labor scene was dominated by two rival labor factions.[30]

The urgency for labor unity brought about by the imminent passage of the new Law of Professional Associations and by Lorenzo Miguel's prodding resulted for a short time in a singular voice for the labor movement. It is interesting to note that in pushing for labor unity, Miguel convinced the hardliners of the Commission of 25 to agree to a compromise with the moderate CNT. Given that the CNT curried more favor with the standing regime, Miguel probably felt that if any pressure could be brought to bear on modifying the soon to be enacted new Law of Professional Associations,

it would lie with the CNT rather than with the Commission of 25. To Miguel, a divided labor movement served little purpose, save to enable the regime to manipulate the contending factions to its interests. Only through a unified effort, could labor promote any substantive change.

The fragile unity created with CUTA however, could not ameliorate the long-standing differences between the various factions of the labor movement. CNT and Commission of 25 unity did not prevent or delay the passage of the new Law of Professional Associations so that the desire to remain in alliance was no longer of urgent concern. The CNT faction of CUTA pursued independent actions on its own, much of which could be interpreted as "collaborationist" as it argued that dialogue was the only way to promote labor's interests. The Commission of 25 faction consistently followed a more critical position regarding the regime's policies and, given the worsening labor situation, it finally saw the need to split from CUTA and to found a new CGT.

A CGT and Renewed Labor Militancy

From the time of the newly created CGT in November 1980 through 1981, an increased militancy on the part of all the labor movement factions developed. The creation of a new CGT in direct defiance of the newly passed law

served notice to the regime that labor was no longer disposed to negotiation. Months of lobbying against the new law had achieved nothing. Thus, the Commission of 25 faction, rejecting the moderate line of the CNT faction of CUTA, decided on a more confrontational stance. At an end of the year dinner, hosted by CGT sympathizers, Saul Ubaldini, elected head of the new CGT, severely criticized the state of affairs in Argentina. He called for a return to the rule of law in the nation and spoke of the kidnapped and disappeared. On the other hand, the CNT and Commission of 20 factions of the labor movement refused to recognize the new CGT as representative of labor as a whole. In response to the CGT, these two groups decided to form the "Intersectorial CNT-20."

The Intersectorial argued for a strategy of "concertation and social truce." It viewed the ascendancy of General Viola as an opportunity to curry favor with the regime. The belief that the new regime would be more susceptible to labor's demands was not totally misguided on the part of the Intersectorial. At the time of Videla's departure from government, the major waves of repression and disappearances had ended. General Viola, in his short tenure, attempted to decompress the political situation somewhat by holding talks with political parties, among them the Perónist

party. He also demonstrated greater pragmatism by recognizing the need to open a dialogue with labor and other groups in society.[31]

No doubt, the leaders of the Intersectorial viewed the regime change as an opening to pursue their own personal ambitions. Remember, the groups which made up the Intersectorial could be called the moderate wing of the labor movement in that they consistently pursued a strategy of seeking dialogue with the regime in power. These leaders assessed the political situation in 1981 as one where negotiations with the government would produce fruitful results for the labor unions they represented and for themselves personally. However, their assessment of the political situation proved wrong and this group began to distance itself more from the regime as the year wore on.

The CGT, made up of the Commission of 25 and various other factions of labor groups pursued a more confrontational stance. The departure of Martinez de Hoz from the Ministry of Economics and his replacement by Lorenzo Sigaut did not result in any improvement of the labor situation. The CGT decided to call a national strike for July 22nd to protest the salary and industrial situations. The political opening proffered by Viola certainly played a part as labor leaders felt it "safer" to express opposition to the regime. The

economic situation in 1981 witnessed the dire fruits of Martinez de Hoz's policies. Factory after factory was closing up shop, leaving thousands unemployed. It is estimated that the industrial workforce shrank by 30% during the Proceso. The hardest hit was the manufacturing sectors. Where there was an estimated 1,030,000 manufacturing workers in 1976, the number had fallen to 790,000 by 1980.[32] Inflation was once again out of control and salaries were not keeping pace. According to a government survey, only 40% of the population was engaged in productive labor, and strikes by rank and file continued unabated.[33]

A week after the not-too-successful national strike, the Intersectorial held a meeting with the Argentine Union of Industry (UIA) and Minister of Labor Porcille to negotiate a social truce between labor and industry over the economic situation. With their rivals of the CGT in jail and the partial failure of the national strike which the Intersectorial had boycotted, the leaders of this group hoped to gain the upper hand in the rivalry over control of the labor movement. Again, their attempt at wresting concessions from the regime failed.[34]

Factions within the Intersectorial became increasingly disillusioned with their lack of success and several leaders decided to negotiate with the CGT

about a possible accommodation between the two groups. The CGT leadership declined these overtures, most probably because they mistrusted the intentions of the Intersectorial and perhaps because they were still recovering from the latest bout of government repression.[35]

Bear in mind that while the CGT and the Intersectorial CNT-20 represented the two dominant factions in the labor movement, there existed a multiplicity of lesser factions within these groups as well as outside of these groups. A labor leader's power is always unstable for he must seek both government and rank and file recognition in order to maintain his status as leader. Complicating the matter are the existence of others, always waiting in the wings to replace him if he proves ineffective at walking the tight rope, balancing rank and file demands with the political situation at hand.

Undoubtedly, the rivalry between the CGT and the Intersectorial CNT-20 impeded the efforts to create a united labor front. However, the public schisms within the military junta provided both groups with opportunities to pursue their own separate goals. That the junta continued to remain deaf to labor's problems forced the more moderate elements of the Intersectorial to recast their strategies. Open confrontation with the

regime was still rejected but the public discourse of the group took on a harsher tone against the regime. Coupled with the continuing militancy of the CGT, the situation began to heat up by mid-year 1981.

In July 1981, five political parties (Radicals and Perónists being the dominant ones) formed a coalition called the "Multipartidaria." Taking advantage of Viola's political opening this coalition sought to lobby for a return to democratic rule. Their appearance on the political scene gave the labor movement more allies with which to build a larger opposition. Both wings of the labor movement sought the support of this group. For the next year, labor and the coalition would often work together or give support to each others' activities.[36]

At the beginning of November 1981, the CGT called for a national demonstration organized under the theme of "peace, bread, and work". The march garnered the support of human rights groups, the Multipartidaria, and most importantly the Catholic Church. Over 15,000 people, mostly from labor marched through the streets chanting anti-government slogans. The march culminated in a mass at the Church of San Cayetano in which the plight of labor was among the topics highlighted in the sermon.[37]

The demonstrations of November were the first time

that several groups in opposition to the regime had coordinated efforts to make a public statement. The political parties, as mentioned, only resurfaced on the political scene in July of 1981; the Catholic Church had for the most part refrained from criticizing the regime's excesses; the human rights groups had suffered severe repression and their ranks were constantly decimated by disappearances. The coordinating efforts were successful at this time as General Viola appeared to be losing control. Disputes between him and General Galtieri were becoming increasingly more public, enabling opposition forces to take greater strides in criticizing the regime.[38]

The political situation became volatile when two days after the demonstration, General Viola fell ill and entered the hospital. Amid rumors that he had cancer, General Galtieri began his machinations to take over. In December, he formally ousted Viola and proclaimed his intention to remain in power for the long term. The Multipartidaria renewed calls for a democratic liberalization. The CGT, in an end of the year statement, called for social and economic changes, among them the need for elections. The language of democracy began to filter into the public discourse of the CGT.[39]

The events of the latter part of 1980 and of 1981 illustrate the labor movement's increased militancy.

The creation of the CGT in November 1980 signalled a hardening tone by the Commission of 25 faction of the labor movement in its defiance of the new Law of Professional Associations. From the 1940s on, the CGT was the central organ of labor and the principal spokesman for labor's interests. Successive military regimes had banned the CGT from meeting, but Videla actually outlawed its existence. In defiance of the regime, the new CGT was created, expressly to agitate for labors' rights. CGT promotion of national demonstrations throughout 1981 signalled the end of conciliatory attitudes by this faction of the labor movement.

The machinations of the Intersectorial faction also took a turn toward greater confrontation, albeit at a much slower pace. The Intersectorial viewed the Viola government opening as an opportunity to pursue substantive negotiations with the regime over the labor situation. In their rivalry with the CGT, leaders of the Intersectorial calculated that a strategy of dialogue and negotiation would garner more concessions from the regime than one of open confrontation. They hoped that if their gamble worked, they would be able to wrest control of the labor movement from the CGT. However, after several attempts at dialogue with the regime failed, leaders of the Intersectorial called for

a more confrontational stance. It continued to eschew any sort of massive demonstration against the regime, but its public tone took on a harsher character as the year wore on. It began to move away from just labor-specific concerns and began to voice criticism over the regime's repression.

The lack of consensus between the two rival labor factions no doubt hindered labor's effectiveness in influencing regime policy, but on one level, these divisions encouraged greater militancy. The rivalry between the two factions in seeking to be the sole voice of labor was played out in a setting where massive dismissals, eroding salaries, and repression was taking place. Rank and file put constant pressure on their leadership to take action in ameliorating the situation. In order to gain adherents to its side, the CGT felt compelled to act more militantly, not only because the labor situation was so dire, but also to undercut the support of the Intersectorial.

Labor and the Malvinas

The first three months of 1982 were quite busy for both factions of the labor movement, each heading toward confrontation with Galtieri's regime. The first significant labor action took place with the Intersectorial. Leaders of this group held another

round of discussions with the Minister of Labor, with little result. A second round of discussions in early March was accompanied by 250 labor activists who congregated outside the Labor Ministry with banners. This was the first quasi-public protest undertaken by the Intersectorial.[40]

Relations between the CGT and the regime turned violent at the end of March. The CGT decided to call a national day of protest for the 30th of March, without the support of the Intersectorial (although words of support were proffered by this group). The purpose of the strike was to call for an end to the "Proceso" which the CGT claimed had caused the destruction of the fabric of Argentine life. On March 30th, protests were held all over the country denouncing the military regime. Police brought out to break up the demonstrations engaged in bloody battles with the protesters. An estimated 1,000 people were detained and scores were injured. It appeared that labor was no longer willing to remain acquiescent to the regime's policies and it showed the growing lack of control Galtieri had over the domestic situation. The leaders of the strike were jailed and the Intersectorial began plans to call another national strike. They condemned the authorities for jailing the strike leaders. However, Galtieri still had one more card to play.[41]

Two days after the bloody clashes of March 30th, the Argentine armed forces invaded the Malvinas/Falklands Islands. All political activity against the regime stopped as everyone mobilized for the war effort. The heightened confrontational tone of the previous two days was quickly turned into a popular outpouring of patriotism. The labor movement leadership, especially the Intersectorial, called rallies in support of the Malvinas invasion. The Multipartidaria and the Catholic Church also did the same. When the leaders of the CGT were let out of jail, they too promoted support for the regime's actions, although they countenanced their support of the Malvinas takeover with continued concern over the domestic economic and political situation.[42]

When the Argentine government established itself on the islands, both Saul Ubaldini of the CGT and Jorge Triaca of the Intersectorial were there to witness the swearing in of the governor. At international labor meetings in April and May, labor leaders expounded on Argentina's right to the islands. As during the World Soccer Championships held in Argentina in 1978, Argentines used the Malvinas as a means of forgetting their problems. Being highly nationalistic and laboring under the misconception that Argentina had a history of losing land, Argentines embraced the invasion as a reassertion of national pride. This, of course, was

precisely what Galtieri had intended would happen.[43]

It would be misleading to say that the invasion of the Malvinas was undertaken solely for the purpose of appeasing growing domestic strife. Negotiations with Great Britain over the islands had been going on for decades, with Great Britain remaining more or less intransigent to Argentina's claims. The plans for invading the Malvinas had been on the drawing board since early 1977 when Videla took office. The navy and air force were particularly partisan to an invasion as each sought to demonstrate the particular prowess of their weapons. Galtieri came to power with the backing of navy General Anaya on the condition that there would be a retaking of the islands.[44]

Due to a great deal of misjudgment by the military concerning Great Britain's reactions and U.S. loyalty, the military actually believed that the Malvinas operation would be swift, short, and successful. That it underestimated the historic and symbolic importance of the islands to Great Britain and the historic ties between the U.S. and Great Britain, illustrates how misguided Argentina's view is of itself as a member nation of the industrialized West.

While the desire to retake the Malvinas was a traditional foreign policy goal, the decision to invade on April 2nd was based purely on domestic concerns. The

regime was very much alarmed by the demonstrations of March 30th and with subsequent threats by labor of more demonstrations. Coupled with increased dissatisfaction by some military factions over the domestic situation, Galtieri launched an invasion. He gambled on quelling the clamoring voices of a dissenting public and in this he succeeded. However, wars are not won on popular support and when the British reacted to the aggression, Galtieri's gamble was lost.[45]

Throughout most of the three-month-long war, the regime maintained strict censorship so ordinary Argentines were deluded over the military situation. To labor's credit, the CGT attempted to separate support for the Malvinas from outright support for the regime. As such, when the defeat was made known on June 14th, labor was swift to change from a conciliatory tone to outright opposition.

The System Unravels

The period from June 15, 1982, up to the elections of October 30, 1983, was turbulent indeed for Argentina. The day of the announced defeat, violent acts occurred in the streets of the cities. Soon afterward, Galtieri was deposed and General Bignone put in his place to ostensibly prepare the country for elections. General Hector Villaveiran became the minister of labor.

As ever, the labor movement continued to be divided by two principal factions: the CGT and the Intersectorial, which during the height of the Malvinas conflict in May had decided to form a rival CGT, named CGT-Azopardo. The first CGT took the name CGT-Brasil. Unity would not be achieved until October 1983.[46]

A week after the ascension of the new regime, the CGT-Brasil issued a statement claiming the "Proceso" was finished and the time had come for a return to the rule of law. In mid-August, General Bignone held talks with leaders from both factions of the labor movement in an effort to defuse some of the hostility being generated by that sector. Little was resolved.[47]

In September, the CGT-Brasil called a national strike in protest of the salary and labor situation for the 22nd of the month. CGT-Azopardo also called for a national strike (its first one during the military regime) in protest of the salary increases offered by the government. The government, upon hearing of these plans, attempted to head off the strikes by offering higher salary increases, a raise in the minimum wage, and a promise to lift the ban on trade union activity in sixty days. The CGT-Brasil rejected these proposals and on the 22nd, between 20,000 and 30,000 workers demonstrated in front of the Casa Rosada under the banner of "bread, peace, and work."[48]

CGT-Azopardo, for the most part, viewed the government's proposals as good faith efforts to negotiate so they called off the strike. However, several leaders were very unhappy with the decision not to strike. Jorge Triaca felt CGT-Azopardo abstention from striking would work to the CGT-Brasil's advantage. He was right. The success of the strike even without CGT-Azopardo support strengthened the hand of Saul Ubaldini.[49]

A month later, in October, a massive mobilization took place in the province of San Juan. More than 25,000 people gathered in the capital city and thousands of tractors surrounded the central plaza, all demanding an end to military rule. At the end of the protest, demonstrators spilt 5,000 liters of wine around the plaza.[50]

The end of the year also witnessed more demonstrations against the regime. Jorge Triaca managed to convince his CGT-Azopardo colleagues to call a strike for December 6th. The strategy of seeking concessions from the military had failed and CGT-Azopardo was losing support among the rank and file. It was hoped that the strike would stem the tide of defections. CGT-Brasil, not to be outdone, supported the strike of December 6th and over 90% of the productive activity in the country was paralyzed. On December 16th, the Multipartidaria

called a "March for Democracy" at which CGT-Brasil sent over 5,000 workers. Over 100,000 people marched on the Plaza de Mayo demanding the end of military rule. At Christmastime, fearing another strike, the government issued salary increases in both the public and private sectors.[51]

Aside from the wrangling between the two CGTs, in the latter half of 1982, another important player emerged on the labor scene--Lorenzo Miguel, leader of the 62 Perónist Organizations. Miguel represented the verticalist wing of the labor movement which advocated loyalty to Isabel Perón and to the closed hierarchical structure of organization. He had been very close to the Peróns from 1973-76 and was labor's premier leader then. Because of this, he was one of the first leaders jailed after the military coup. He was later put under house arrest.

In assessing the political situation at the end of 1982, Miguel sought to regain control over the labor movement. He was particularly concerned about the rise of a more militant group of union leaders who advocated greater openness and democracy within the movement. He was also very much an accommodationist to the regime. In September 1982, he was reported to have held talks with General Nicolaides, commander-in-chief of the army, about a possible rapprochement between labor and the

military government. The government at that time was pushing for "concertation" talks with labor. Ubaldini, head of CGT-Brasil rejected the overture. Miguel, on the other hand, expressed public support for the armed forces at a 17th of October Peronist rally. His words caused much violence amongst the crowd.[52] The message was loud and clear-- Miguel's tactics were not appreciated by the rank and file. However, Miguel would continue to play an important role in 1983.

The year 1983 began with a shift of alliances. CGT-Brasil had been negotiating with a group of unions called the "non-aligned." The "non-aligned" group wanted to join forces with the CGT-Brasil and after many drawn-out negotiations, it was incorporated as part of the CGT-Brasil. CGT-Brasil thereupon changed its name to CGT-Republica Argentina. Strike activity continued unabated with varying degrees of effectiveness. CGT-Azopardo called a national strike for March 28th which was followed two days later by a strike called by CGT-Republica Argentina.[53]

Several significant events occurred in the first part of 1983 which led to the final demise of the military. The most important of course was the establishment of a date for national elections. October 30th was chosen and the political parties galvanized into action. The second important event was the slow but steady

relaxation of military control over the labor unions, which would spark a scramble for power among many in the labor leadership.[54]

In March, the government drew up draft amendments to its restrictive trade union legislation. It indicated that it would allow unions to organize on the confederation level and allow them some control over social security. It also said it would repeal the ban on strike activity. This meant that the CGT would be legal again. In April, the government indicated that it would be starting the process of "normalizing unions." This meant it would return union leadership positions to unionists as the military personnel would be pulling out. To facilitate this process, the military set about creating normalization committees to oversee the transition back to civilian control.[55]

These actions set off a flurry of activity among labor leaders. Union leaders who had been relieved of their duties in the last military regimes sought to regain control. Leaders who had emerged to fill the vacuum attempted to stay in power. The military used the normalizing committees as carrots to gain cooperation from the labor elite. General Nicolaides held negotiations with the CGT-Azopardo but they stalled, so he reinitiated talks with Lorenzo Miguel.[56]

What Nicolaides wanted from Miguel was an

understanding. In return for Nicolaides's allowing the Perónists to retake control of their unions (most of the displaced leaders were hard-line Perónists)--and therefore be assured of winning the presidential elections--the Perónists would not investigate the military for human rights abuses committed in the past seven years. The logic of this was flawed. Nicolaides assumed that the Perónists would win the elections. As labor was the backbone of Perónist support, he thought he could enter into a pact with the most conservative wing of the Perónist labor movement. Miguel saw this as an opportunity to re-assert his control over labor.[57]

This attempt at an alleged "military-sindical" pact backfired for both of them, but it hurt the Perónists the most. Saul Ubaldini condemned these actions and so did Perónist party leaders. Already strife-ridden as to who to nominate for their presidential candidate, the Perónists did not need this behind-the-scenes conspiracy to further taint their reputation. Miguel denied any such negotiations had taken place. (It is still unclear whether such negotiations ever occurred).[58]

What was happening on the political scene mirrored much of what was happening within the labor movement. Factional infighting was endemic as the Perónist party attempted to organize for the elections. In general, the main factions were those of the ultra-hardliners,

hardliners, and the moderates. The ultra-hardliners wanted Isabel Perón to take up the leadership role of the party. The hardliners were intent on exorcising the leftist elements out of the party and advocated the candidacy of old-time Perónist Italo Luder. The moderates wanted greater internal democracy, less identification with Perón, and were partial to Antonio Robledo. The key figure here again was Lorenzo Miguel. He counseled the party to wait and see what Isabel Perón wanted to do, although by April he was favoring Luder's nomination. When several months passed without any sign from Perón, Miguel threw his lot in with Luder who became the nominee.[59]

Meanwhile, on the labor front, repressive labor legislation was being repealed. Military interveners were leaving unions and the CGT building once again was placed under the control of labor. By July, the two factions of the CGT were negotiating the possibility of uniting once again. In late July, both CGTs came out in support of a Plan of Emergency which appealed to the military authorities to do something about the worsening economic situation. On October 4th, both CGTs held a labor strike over the salary situation. Finally, on October 14th, the two factions united into one CGT.[60]

On the traditional 17th of October rally held in honor of Perón, Lorenzo Miguel was booed off the stage.

Ubaldini was given a standing ovation.[61] The verdict was clear. Labor rank and file was rejecting the old way of doing things. Lorenzo Miguel was past his prime; he was of a generation which ran things by fiat and by bowing to the powers that be, even if it meant selling out labor's interests. Ubaldini represented the new generation, being much more open and having proved himself in leading the hardline faction of labor against the regime. Unfortunately, the candidacy of Italo Luder represented Miguel's generation of Perónists, and so, the rank and file defected from their party, not so much out of support to Alfonsín but in repudiation of the excesses of Perónism.

The last fifteen months of military rule bore witness to a level of social protest unprecedented in Argentine history. Riding on the defeat of the Malvinas/Falklands War, labor and other groups embarked on concerted campaigns to force the military out of power. Strikes by individual unions coupled with national demonstrations gave notice that Argentines were no longer willing to put up with military rule. Attempts by the military to exacerbate differences among labor failed as the leaders who were negotiating a military-sindical pact were severely rebuked for their actions.

The scheduling of elections and the normalization of unions provided opportunities for all sectors of society

to exercise newly recaptured freedoms. The divisiveness in the Perónist party cost the party the elections. The divisiveness in the labor movement was eventually resolved, as two weeks before the election, both factions of the CGT united into one.

In the last months of military rule, Lorenzo Miguel and the moderate CGT-Azopardo finally jumped on the bandwagon of democracy. Their efforts at negotiating with the military had failed and had cost them rank and file support. Before it was too late, they joined their CGT-Republica Argentina colleagues in clamoring for a return to civilian rule.

Conclusion

The years 1979-83 saw the decline of military rule, punctuated by increasing social protest and a needlessly destructive war with Great Britain. After a period of prolonged repression, which served as the regime's raison d'etre, the greater task of governing and managing the economy seemed to be eluding the regime. The policies of Martinez de Hoz were failing to provide long-term stability in the economy and instead were causing the de-industrialization of the industrial sector and rampant speculation in the financial sector.

The issue of presidential succession arose in 1980 as

Videla committed himself to an orderly transfer of power after four years in office. That his chosen successor, General Viola lasted in office only nine months illustrated the growing schisms within the military over the course of Argentine politics. While an eventual return to civilian rule was hinted at by Viola, most of the armed forces were still dead set against it. This and the desire of General Galtieri to become president made the political situation volatile by the end of 1981 when Galtieri succeeded in ousting Viola from power.

From the very beginning, Galtieri's rule was tenuous as he was intent on aggrandizing his power, thereby alienating factions of the military. The growing civil strife perpetrated by the labor movement, the political parties, and others made the situation intolerable. His solution was to launch a campaign for retaking the Malvinas on the assumption, of course, that Argentina would win. His failure to obtain victory all but sealed the fate of the military. After a year of intense domestic opposition, the military called elections and Argentina returned to civilian rule.

Given this backdrop of palace intrigue, the labor movement sought to capitalize on the seeming dissension in the ranks of the military. However, it too was racked by continuous conflict which expressed itself in the existence of two dominant competing factions. One

faction consistently took a more confrontational stance toward the regime and the other took a more conciliatory tone. The first political action taken by the hard-line Commission of 25 was the national strike of April 27, 1979, which was partially successful in paralyzing the nation. This strike was the first public display of opposition to regime policy since the inception of the regime and was held in response to the proposed passage of the new Law of Professional Associations.

This strike paved the way to a short-lived reconciliation between the two labor factions but as the regime enacted the new Law of Professional Associations anyway, reconciliation led to outright opposition with both groups claiming the other was trying to exploit the labor situation to its own gain. Not soon after the final passage of this new law in November 1979, a new CGT was formed in direct defiance of its ban. From this coalition of labor groups emerged the demonstrations and confrontations of 1980 and 1981 culminating in the bloody battles of March 30, 1982.

The more conciliatory wing of the labor movement coalesced into the Intersectorial and pursued negotiation with the military regime. However, as the regime remained more or less intransigent to this group's demands, it too began to take a more confrontational posture and began to call for national

demonstrations. At meetings of the ILO and ICFTU, leaders of the Intersectorial voiced harsh criticism against the regime in efforts to appear to be working for labor's interests, rather than to appear collaborationist. This was important given that throughout this period, labor rank and file continued to hold strikes against the economic situation.

Up through 1979, both factions of the labor movement concentrated on labor specific issues in their dealings with the regime. Issues such as salaries, dismissals, control of obras sociales, and union freedoms were always at the top of labor's concerns. Starting in 1980, the hardline faction began to emphasize particular "political" concerns. Words such as "elections", "rule of law", and "justice" became prominent in labor's public discourse. The plight of jailed unionists and the disappeared also became more prominent and labor leaders' characterization of regime policies took on a condemnatory tone. In the period after the Malvinas defeat, the weakened regime began to capitulate to long-standing labor demands. The CGT was relegalized, strike activity and union elections permitted again, and intervened unions became free of military control.

The months before the elections continued to be plagued with divisions among labor and the Perónist party. Lorenzo Miguel, long-time Perónist union leader

apparently attempted a behind the scenes military-sindical pact with General Nicolaides. This severely hurt the Peronist effort in the eyes of labor rank and file. The two dominant labor factions distanced themselves from him and were able to bridge their differences to form a unified CGT right before the elections. A new generation of labor leaders had come of age.

The activities of labor from 1979 to 1983 illustrate the difficulty of maintaining a bureaucratic-authoritarian order. Once the use of repression had been exhausted and the "threat" which brought the military to power had been dealt with, the next order of business was to maintain order. Another essential part of the military's goals was to de-politicize the labor movement. This attempt at "exclusion" became difficult to accomplish as consensus within the regime began to break down giving labor an opportunity to repel the assault.

Schisms within the ruling elite were exploited by labor and other groups in their attempts to regain some political footing. The discontent of labor became so severe and problematic to the regime that it went to war to quell the domestic situation. When that failed, the military attempted to play divide and conquer by conspiring with certain elements of the labor movement

in negotiating a military-sindical pact. The majority of the labor leadership condemned such actions and stood firm in calling for a return to democracy. In the end, labor turned a deaf ear to the military and civilian rule triumphed. The experiment with exclusionary bureaucratic-authoritarianism was over.

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CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST FOUR AND A HALF YEARS OF CIVILIAN RULE 1983-1988

The election results of October 30, 1983, were a surprise to everyone, both to those inside Argentina and to outside observers. What was assumed to be an easy Perónist victory turned out to be the party's first defeat in an open and free election. Instead, a nearly 100-year-old party, the Radical Civic Union (UCR) won 52% of the vote and achieved its first fair victory against the Perónist party since the latter's founding in the mid-1940s. (Previous Radical presidents Frondizi and Illia came into office under conditions where the Perónist party was outlawed, thereby tainting the legitimacy of these Radicals as governors.)

The man at the helm of the Radical victory was Raul Alfonsín, a member of the left-of-center wing of this

broad-based middle-class party. A son of immigrants from Spain, Alfonsín was born and raised in Chascomus (famous for its dulce de leche), a small town seventy miles southwest of Buenos Aires. A lawyer by training, Alfonsín had always been a politician, active in the reformist wing of the Radical party and in local regional politics. Building a reputation on his gift for fiery oratory, Alfonsín was a party maverick, continuously doing battle with the Radical Party old-guard. When elections were called by the military junta in March for October 30th, Alfonsín managed to recruit thousands of newcomers to the party, mainly from among the young urban middle classes. In the party primary, he successfully won the right to run for president under the party banner, thereby bringing into dominance the left-of-center wing of the party.[1]

The party platform which brought him to victory consisted of several key issues which touched the core of Argentine life. Of foremost concern was the issue of human rights violations committed by the outgoing military junta. Alfonsín promised an investigation into the thousands of disappeared, kidnapped, tortured, and murdered. He also promised that there would be no amnesty for those responsible for the atrocities of the military's "dirty war." Of course, in 1983 with the military in disarray, all political parties claimed that

an investigation into human rights violations would be ordered, but for Alfonsín, the concern with human rights long preceded the democratic opening. He was a co-founder of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights and he attempted to publicize the cases of families of those who had disappeared. He spent some time in jail for such activities, but he came away with a solid reputation for honesty and commitment to justice.[2]

A second key issue was to highlight the failure of both military and Perónist rule. Throughout his campaign, he constantly played on Argentines' memories of the turbulent days of Isabel Perón and the terror of the military regime. He stressed the corruption, ineptitude, and moral bankruptcy of these past regimes and he sought to link them together.[3] When reports surfaced at the end of March concerning a military-sindical pact, Alfonsín was quick to condemn this all too familiar aspect of Argentine political life. Alfonsín used the specter of a military- sindical pact to point to the corruptness of certain sectors of labor, but he did not condemn the labor movement as a whole. Rather, he called on labor to reject such a pact, in repudiation of the military regime and to build anew a democratic labor movement.[4]

Finally, not any less important in a nation where personality has always dominated politics, was the fact

that of all the major candidates, Alfonsín, was a new and untried politician. Italo Luder, the Perónist candidate, had been closely associated with the last disastrous Perónist regime so he fared badly trying to prove that the Perónists represented change and innovation. Alvaro Alsogaray, the candidate for the small but significant Christian Democratic party, had been associated with past military regimes and was therefore suspect for his military sympathies and his rabid anti-Perónism. Alfonsín, although a Radical, was not from the "old guard" of the party but represented the reformist, more popular wing. His ascendancy to the national political scene represented to most Argentines a break from the past, although not with tradition.[5]

Upon taking office on December 10, 1983, Alfonsín immediately called for the former leaders of the military junta to be arrested. Alfonsín asked the military courts to investigate human rights abuses but they came up with nothing. Alfonsín thereupon decided to have the former leaders tried in civilian courts. The trials began in June 1985 and lasted almost nine months with the result that former presidents Videla and Viola, along with Admiral Massera of the navy, were convicted of human rights crimes during the "dirty war." This was and remains the only case of a South American nation where former military rulers were tried and

convicted for their excesses.[6]

On another front, Alfonsín attempted to reform relations with the Perónist-dominated labor movement. Unlike his Radical predecessors, Alfonsín had little desire to destroy the political power of the Perónist labor movement, but he was intent on reforming its most authoritarian proclivities. He sought neither tactical accommodation nor all-out war, but rather a middle way fraught with periods of tension and resolution. Early in 1984, Alfonsín introduced a bill to congress which would mandate court-controlled union elections and guaranteed minority representation. This ambitious bill sought to enforce new elections without the time-honored practice of union oversight, but it was soundly rejected by the Perónist-controlled senate. However, a milder bill was passed which allowed the standing union leadership to organize elections based on existing constitutions.[7] In this instance, each side gave in a little: the Perónist union bosses realized the need to call elections to legitimize their positions in the new democracy, and Alfonsín mediated his initial zeal for massive reform of the labor movement.

It was in keeping with the tenor of the times that the labor movement, as a whole, lent initial tacit support to the Alfonsín government. Although the labor union bosses in the newly united CGT of 1983 had

supported the Perónist Italo Luder for office, his loss at the polls due to working-class rank-and-file defections forced the movement leadership to reassess its role in Argentine political life. Indeed, the factionalism which had existed within the labor movement throughout the past military regime resurfaced soon after the elections were over.

Without a doubt, the biggest beneficiaries of the Radical victory were those unionists who had consistently agitated against the military regime, namely those allied with the CGT-Brasil headed by Saul Ubaldini. Ubaldini emerged into prominence in the winter of 1978 when, as press secretary of the Brewery union, he was called upon to deliver a scathing speech condemning military rule at an end-of-the-year dinner for the Commission of 25 faction of the labor movement. Other more prestigious union leaders declined to give the speech for fear of persecution by the authorities. Ubaldini, however, was willing to read the speech, even though policemen were outside the entrance, waiting to arrest them all. The incident catapulted Ubaldini to union fame and enabled him to come to power outside of the more traditional channels of union mobility. Being the head of the Brewery union, a minor union, Ubaldini was not a CGT insider, nor was he as dogmatic a Perónist as many of his peers. His strategy of confrontation

with the military authorities paid off when democracy returned.[8]

After the end of military rule, Ubaldini inherited a labor movement that was once again factionalized internally and weakened politically and economically. The military's concerted campaign to de-industrialize the economy and to de-politicize the labor movement had caused drastic results for labor socially, economically, and politically. Along with a drastic reduction in wages, real income, and working hours, the size of the overall urban labor population was reduced. In manufacturing, where there were 1,165,000 employed in 1975, in 1982 the numbers had decreased to 740,000. Industrial output as percentage of GNP declined from 29% in 1975 to 25% in 1980. This decline in the sheer size of the industrial labor sectors and in the power of workers constituted a challenge for Ubaldini in recouping labor's political power in the new democratic regime.[9]

Complicating the process of labor consolidation was the resurfacing of old rivalries and contending interests within the labor elite. In the initial aftermath of the October 1983 elections, the four major factions of the labor movement attempted to create a coalition to run the CGT. Ubaldini, the only one to have popular Peronist support allied with the 62

Organizations, the political arm of the labor movement. He was clearly the most vocal union critic of the past military regime. Jorge Triaca, head of the Plastics union, is considered the businessman's unionist. He was one of the leaders of the "dialogue" wing of the labor movement during the military junta. Osvaldo Borda, secretary-general of the rubber industry, represents the Commission of 25 group of unions. Ramon Baldassini, secretary-general of the postal clerks' federation represents non-aligned unions.[10]

Ubaldini claims to be seeking a new reformed meaning to Perónism in which people's voices are heard. He considers himself a worker's unionist and, by all accounts, lives an austere life-style. His goal of more reform within the labor movement has alienated him from Lorenzo Miguel, who represents the old guard of the labor movement. The Commission of 25 is considered the "renovationist" wing of the labor movement. They claim to truly represent the workers and dispute Ubaldini's stance as the worker's unionist. The non-aligned or independent unions are a small but significant group of unions which are non-Perónist and which seek to carve out a role for themselves in the labor elite. Jorge Triaca's faction is considered the most accommodating to the new government. Espousing a familiar tune, Triaca's faction has sought dialogue with the Alfonsín

government.[11]

Clearly, with such contending interests, the process for labor movement consolidation has been fraught with conflict. In October 1985, Ubaldini succeeded in being named the sole leader of the CGT. To many analysts, this signalled that his faction had attained dominance over all the other interests within the CGT. Ubaldini's election represented a significant move away from the older conservative Perónist labor leaders. While still clearly identifying with Perónism, Ubaldini was of a new generation of labor leaders, less tied to dogmatism and to the strong-arm tactics used by his predecessors. He was not implicated in the alleged military-sindical pact negotiations and he had a clear record of criticizing the past military junta. His ascendancy to the presidency of the CGT in 1985 represented change, although still within the traditional Perónist framework.

Relations between Ubaldini and the Radical government have oscillated between cordial and confrontational. The imposition of a state of siege in October 1985 in the wake of several right-wing sponsored bombings was supported by Ubaldini. In the November 1985 congressional elections, Ubaldini stayed apart from partisan politics. While he of course supported the Perónist party candidates, he did little electioneering

on the party's behalf. The Radicals won a comfortable majority.

The year 1986 however, proved to be less cordial and more confrontational. In February, Ubaldini called a general strike to protest the lack of progress in the economy under the Austral Plan. This general strike which effectively shut down the country (it was called for a Friday in the middle of a summer heat wave) served two purposes. One was to demonstrate to all the seeming control Ubaldini held over the labor movement. The ability to rally massive public support is critical to the credibility of any labor leader. The second was to serve notice to Alfonsín that the economic situation needed to get better. Not only did labor feel that the country had somehow stalled, but nearly all sectors of society felt the same way. Every political party (with the exception of the Radicals) and every major business and social group in Argentina voiced their support for this general strike. It should be noted that this strike in no way called for the removal of the Radicals, but rather, it called for Alfonsín to take greater strides in improving the economic welfare of the nation.[12]

At the end of May, Ubaldini decided to pull the CGT out of "concertation" talks between the government and business groups. In 1985, Alfonsín had created the

Economic and Social Conference (CES) which was designed to bring together labor, business, and the relevant state agencies to discuss economic and social problems. The ostensible purpose of the CES was to create a tripartite pact between government, labor, and business which would work toward incorporating the latter two sectors into policy-making and -implementing matters. Issues which were immediately put on the table were wages, collective bargaining, and social welfare programs. Alfonsín hoped the CES would be a vehicle whereby he could win labor support for his policies. By holding these concertation talks, he hoped to demonstrate to labor his sincere commitment to dealing with their concerns while at the same time attempting to moderate their growing militancy.

After a stormy year of negotiations, the CGT pulled out of the talks claiming bad faith on the part of the government in continuing a dialogue. While the reasons for the walkout are still unclear, it happened after a salary adjustment policy had already been hammered out by the three sectors. Without formal CGT acceptance, the salary adjustment was decreed into law. It appears that the Alfonsín government calculated the divisiveness within the labor movement would enable it to negotiate directly with more accommodating unions apart from the CGT.

Its calculations proved correct as many unions opted to negotiate with the government directly, the most important of which was the Metalworkers (UOM) headed by Lorenzo Miguel. Unhappy with Ubaldini's increasingly confrontational stance toward the government, Miguel had followed his own strategy of dealing directly with the government over wage increases for his union. The importance for the government of garnering UOM support cannot be underestimated as this powerful union maintains a leadership role in affecting how other unions determine their strategies for dealing with the government.

Other fallout from Ubaldini's growing militancy was to reignite the factionalism still endemic in the labor movement. Jorge Triaca ran for congress and is now a deputy. He retained leadership of the Plastics Union and argued for greater collaboration with the Radical government. The Commission of 25 and the independent unions have continued their pressure to reform the labor movement and have argued that Ubaldini is too personalistic. Indeed, by 1986 a new group emerged called the Ubaldinistas, once again testifying to the importance of personality in Argentine politics.

The year 1987 began with a general strike called by the CGT. On January 26th the CGT struck over a series of demands which they argued the Radical government had

not taken adequate action to redress. These included an increase in the minimum monthly wage, revision of collective contract agreements, a target date for a return to collective wage bargaining, and a return of control of obras sociales funds to the unions. The strike appeared to be 85% successful in industrial areas. Ubaldini stressed that the strike was over policy and not for the overthrow of the government.

The strike had little impact on government policy, with the Radicals continuing to deal with unions on an individual basis. Ubaldini's power appeared to be weakened, and in March, a new group formed to rival his control of the labor movement. The "Commission of 15" (although encompassing about 50 unions), led by Jorge Triaca, among others, declared it would seek an alternative to Ubaldini's confrontational strategies. Claiming not to rival the CGT for power, the Commission of 15 began independent talks with the government. The Radical government seized upon the opportunity and opened its doors to negotiation.

At about the same time (March 1987), Miguel's UOM successfully negotiated with the government for a wage increase which was above the ceiling the government had previously set. This wage increase set off a crisis for the Minister of Labor Hugo Barrionuevo who had been against the wage hike. He lost, and therefore resigned.

The Radicals used this opportunity to appoint a Perónist, Carlos Alderete, to the position. Alderete was allied with the Commission of 15 and it seemed clear that the Radicals had opted to court the more accommodationist Commission of 15 over that of the confrontational CGT.

Not long after news of labor dominated the headlines, there occurred a severe crisis in the Argentine experiment with democracy. Ever since the trials of the former rulers of the military juntas had taken place, the military had embarked on a public relations campaign to cleanse its image and to limit the prosecutions of men currently on active duty, especially those in the lower and middle ranks. The military claims that the war against subversion waged in the 1970s made democracy possible today. They also feel that those men who were only following orders should be exempt from prosecution.[13]

At the end of 1986, Alfonsín decreed what was called a "full stop" law in which after February 22, 1987, no more cases would be accepted against military men accused of human rights abuses. After the conviction of the principal leaders of the past regimes, a large number of lawsuits against particular military personnel had been lodged by civilians. Alfonsín argued that this process could go on for years and prevent the nation

from moving forward, so he set a date for a final end to when cases could be lodged. From the time of the announcement to February 22nd, several hundred complaints had been lodged, far more than had been anticipated by all sides. The military became a little restless.[14]

On April 15, a major in the army stationed in the provincial city of Cordoba refused to appear before a federal court to be questioned concerning his role in human rights abuses committed between 1976 and 1983. He was automatically dismissed from the army and took refuge in the Air Transport Infantry Regiment in Cordoba where he found supporters. The crisis came when the commander of the Cordoba troops told Alfonsin that his troops were unwilling to obey a government order to arrest the major.[15]

This sparked a similar mutiny at the far more important Campo de Mayo Infantry School just on the outskirts of Buenos Aires on April 17th. Both groups demanded full amnesty for their actions during military rule. The Cordoba problem was resolved when the major decided to give himself up to the authorities, but the Campo de Mayo crisis gripped the nation for several days. Reports flew about as to who was participating and whether the army commanders were in control.[16]

This crisis touched off a massive outpouring of

support for Alfonsín and public condemnation of the army. Thousands of people took to the Plaza de Mayo to voice support for democracy. Hundreds flocked to the military garrisons to voice their repudiation of the military actions. After much negotiation with the army high command, Alfonsín decided to personally go to the Campo de Mayo to ask the rebel military men to surrender. It worked, with Alfonsín promising to appoint a new army commander and to consider their complaints.[17]

Immediately following the crisis, a new army commander was appointed and Alfonsín introduced a bill, called "due obedience," which would exonerate lower-ranking military men of all wrong-doing if they had only been following orders. This law went into effect at the end of May, effectively reducing the number of military men who would face prosecution.[18] However, this does not necessarily translate into renewed strength on the part of the military. Recalling Robert Potash's observation, the army takes power when it has received widespread popular support. The events of May and June 1987 demonstrated the public's commitment to the Alfonsín regime and public repudiation of the army. Despite having won a victory in gaining passage of an amnesty law, the army was still far from regaining its past political power.

The second half of 1987 was dominated by the by-elections scheduled for September in which half of the national deputies and twenty-two governorships were up for contestation along with a host of provincial and municipal seats. Perhaps concerned about the Radicals' showing in the elections, Alfonsín's government drafted several laws which dealt with long-standing union grievances. Among the draft proposals were included the establishment of a certain number of union delegates per factory, the creation of special labor courts, the legalization of work stoppages and work to rule tactics, and salary concessions.[19]

The conservative Union of Argentine Industrialists (UIA) raised objections to this legislation and were successful in having the legislation stalled in the senate. Alfonsín was unable to capitalize on gains for labor by September. Instead, his party lost to the Perónists, with the latter capturing 41.5% of the deputies vote and sixteen of the twenty-two governorships. The Radicals lost their majority in the Chamber of Deputies. It was not just the labor sector which had caused Alfonsín's loss, but also what seemed to be his inability to refuel economic growth and to deal with the debt crisis.[20]

The Perónist victory of September 1987 has led to a seemingly more accommodationist tone by Alfonsín toward

labor. In the months since September 1987, the Radical government has signed a minimum wage law, legalized certain union activities, and signed a free collective bargaining law. Wage negotiations between government and labor in the latter part of 1987 were successful at getting the CGT to call off threatened strikes, as the unions decided to adopt a wait and see attitude toward government economic policy.[21]

In February 1988, the government set up a minimum wage council, which was another attempt at a tripartite pact between labor, business, and government over economic issues. The four CGT members on the council represented the Ubaldinista and Commission of 25 factions of the CGT.[22] The Commission of 15, had of sorts, re-entered the fold by allying with the 62 Organizations led by Lorenzo Miguel. Their strategies of collaborating with the Radical government had failed to win them power and influence.[23]

Meanwhile, the nation was shaken by another military revolt at the beginning of 1988. The leader of the revolt was the same colonel who had led the Easter uprisings of the year before. This time, the army was able to quell the revolt (there were an estimated hundred sympathizers) without a great deal of effort. However, this incident and the continuing contention by some military sectors that their war on subversion was

justified reminds us all that the military remains a force to contend with in Latin American politics.[24]

Conclusion

When Alfonsín was elected in October 1983, many long-time observers of Argentine politics took bets on how long he would last in power, dubious of the survivability of civilian rule in a nation racked by fifty years of internal conflict. At present, after four and a half years in power, most analysts see Alfonsín serving out his term through 1989. Indeed, the nation is already gearing up for the 1989 election. Alfonsín has named his successor to the Radical party and the Perónists are continuing their internal struggle between the orthodox and renovationist wings.

The campaign for the 1989 presidency will undoubtedly determine the nature of the political game for the next year and a half. There are already signs that Alfonsín is seeking greater accommodation with certain groups, such as labor. On the heels of the September 1987 electoral defeats, Alfonsín delivered on several long-standing labor demands. In February 1988, he called for a minimum wage council as a way to once again create a tripartite social pact.

Along with Radical policy, the internal politics of the labor movement have shown change. Factionalism

continues to rack the CGT, but in the past several years, the more reform-oriented factions have gained increasing leverage. The hard core Perónists, such as Lorenzo Miguel, while still very powerful, are no longer dominant. The factions led by Ubaldini, the Commission of 25, and the Independents have proven effective at winning support.

The trend toward reform within the labor movement will undoubtedly be slow and turbulent. However, that it is happening at all speaks to the nature of change within Argentine society. Perónism will continue to be the major force in the labor movement, but what Perónism will mean and look like to new generations of labor will be different. Change will occur, although there is always the risk of reversals, but it will be change within certain set parameters. Those parameters are at present being negotiated under the democratic regime.

One analyst of the current Argentine political scene, Paul Buchanan, has argued that much work needs to be done in analyzing labor-state relations within a democratic framework. He argues for the need to look at corporatism within a democratic context, i.e., how are inclusionary corporatist strategies for mediating labor demands different for regime types--authoritarian, populist, and democratic.[25] This would be a fruitful area for research on what exactly is democracy--Latin

American style.

Apart from the labor scene, the greatest threat to civilian rule continues to be the military rather than civil unrest. The military continues to assert its displeasure over certain Radical policies but its campaign to rehabilitate its image has not won widespread adherence. The political health of the nation remains critical as Argentina attempts to carry on with the business of democratic rebuilding.

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The transition to civilian rule in Argentina was the result of a complex web of actors, events, and policies situated within the context of the nation's own particular culture and history. There was no singular cause, no chain of events, no particular individuals which definitively caused the breakdown of authoritarian rule. Rather, the breakdown of authoritarian rule proceeded by fits and starts, and involved a diverse cast of characters and a series of bad political judgments which culminated in the political opening toward democracy. What the preceding pages have attempted to do was to explore one facet in that transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, namely the role the labor union movement played in this process. This thesis sought to argue that the labor union movement did play a significant role in the demise of the military, despite the many rivalries and divisions which plagued its ranks. And it has sought to

illustrate how a supposedly entrenched authoritarian regime was ultimately incapable of maintaining civil order.

The point of departure was the idea that the military junta in Argentina from 1976 to 1983 shared many of the characteristics of O'Donnell's bureaucratic-authoritarian state. There was a military committed to its project of managing the country. It pursued an economic program which sought to weed out inefficient national firms and to contract a burgeoning state bureaucracy. To fuel economic growth, it sought foreign capital investment. The military in power saw as its primary obstacle the highly organized and politicized labor unions. Its strategy for dealing with labor was to "exclude" them from their economic project through the use of repression.

Under General Videla, the regime had no intention of leaving power once law and order were restored. It saw its role as going beyond restoring civil peace to the institution of an economic program which would develop and modernize a beleaguered nation. To revitalize a stagnant economy, this regime sought to encourage foreign capital investment while at the same time cutting back on social welfare expenditures. An attempt was also made by the civilian Minister of the Economy Martinez de Hoz to pull the state out of vital

industries, but this met with resistance on the part of the military, so that the military's influence over the running of the economy remained strong.

To carry out its economic program, the military junta resorted to repression and terror. The ferocity of this repression could be attributed to the high level of political mobilization on the part of social groups prior to 1976, namely labor. Since the 1940s, labor had shared a role in influencing the politics of the nation. Peron had incorporated this group into the political system and created a class of labor leaders whose power sometimes rivaled those in political office. Along with the military, landed elites, and urban bourgeoisie, labor came to be a significant political force. To the military, labor's identification with Peron and the need to ensure a docile labor force in order to attract foreign investment, necessitated that labor be singled out for special treatment. While no group of people was immune from the military's repression, labor was particularly attacked in the junta's attempt to undermine the labor movement's very existence.

The attempt at "exclusionary bureaucratic-authoritarianism" was initially successful in silencing the opposition, although labor rank and file continued to strike over bread-and-butter issues. Combined with economic policies which were not working as planned, the

military junta's hegemonic vision began to crack. The problem of presidential succession which came up in 1980 also complicated things as it revealed dissension within the three branches of the armed forces. The alliance which had brought the military to power was having a difficult time maintaining itself in power.

From 1980 onward, the authoritarian system began to unravel. The economy began once again to spiral out of control with high inflation. The banking system collapsed and unemployment rose to unprecedented levels. The first major demonstrations against regime policy were called by the labor union elite despite continued repression. The ascension to power of General Viola inaugurated a series of moves by other military factions to unseat him. At the same time, there was the mobilization of other groups in society, such as the political parties and human rights associations, against the regime.

When General Galtieri came to power in a coup d'etat in December 1981, the stage was set for disaster. Committed to staying in power at whatever costs, he paid off old debts by taking Argentina to war. Faced with opposition both from within the junta and from the public, Galtieri decided the time was ripe for an invasion of the Malvinas. All strategic considerations aside, the war was a political ploy to gain time for a

faltering regime. When the ploy failed as Argentina lost the war, the regime came tumbling down and the generals' quick exit left them no time to cover their tracks.

One of the keys to understanding how and why this course of events took place was to look at a certain aspect of military-civil relations, the relationship between the labor union movement and the junta. It is the argument of this thesis that the literature on bureacuratic authoritarianism and authoritarianism in general have ignored the substantive role which civilian groups can play in the breakdown of authoritarian regimes. In analyzing the political activities of the labor elite from 1976 to 1983, the thesis has attempted to demonstrate that authoritarian controls imposed by the militay were in the long run ineffective at creating a docile labor force. It is also argued that the labor elite constantly sought opportunities to recast its position within the political arena and that eventually, it aided in destabilizing the authoritarian military regime.

Recent studies on the policies carried out by the junta have shown that one of the junta's main goals was to strip the labor movement of its political power and its economic control over worker-related issues such as collective bargaining and social welfare benefits. To

do this, the junta applied physical, legal, and obstructive means in dealing with labor. Labor leaders were jailed and many were tortured and murdered. Laws were promulgated which outlawed strikes, freedom of assembly, and the existence of the CGT. Policies were put in place to remove labor leaders from their offices (to be replaced by military intervenors), to put the control of labor union funds into the hands of the military, and to prevent labor influence in matters concerning wages and other work-related issues.

This attack by the junta was successful initially in repressing labor activism and opposition to regime policy. The immediate jailing of the principal labor leaders, the intervention of the principal unions, and the immediate implementation of labor laws restricting labor activity gave labor little chance to formulate strategies for dealing with the regime. Instead, with the major labor leaders in jail, there emerged a new group of men who came to fill the void left by those in jail. Leaders of the non-intervened unions (which were for the most part the smaller less politically influential unions), also began to exercise muscle in the now very confined parameters of political action.

This development had the effect of creating and exacerbating divisions among labor leaders once the detained labor leaders were let out of jail.

Differences of opinion centered around the issue of how best to deal with the junta on labor-related matters. One faction called for a strategy of negotiation and dialogue with the junta on strictly labor issues, with no mention of other pressing political matters such as the extent of the repression and the mounting number of disappearances. Another faction, fresh from jail and seeing their union power eclipsed by military intervenors, advocated a strategy of greater demand making and confrontation.

The preoccupation of the contending factions in the first three years of military rule was of recouping the power lost in the initial repression, most especially to prevent the new Law of Professional Associations from being passed. Both sides recognized the inherently debilitating effect this new legislation would have on the structure and power of the labor union movement, and claimed to be working against its passage. Both sides also claimed to be seeking solutions to labor's growing economic crisis.

While the labor elite factions were busy jockeying to gain dominance over the labor movement, labor rank and file was busy voicing its demands through strikes. The existence of these strikes made it imperative for the labor elite to demonstrate to rank and file that it was taking steps to alleviate the dire economic situation.

It initially did this by using the forums of international labor organizations to criticize regime policies. However, this was not enough and the labor elite had to become more critical of the regime, especially those labor leaders who were predisposed to dialogue and accommodation.

It bears remembering at this point that historically, the Argentine labor elite was a "conservative" group of leaders, disinclined to call strikes except to prove the extent of their own power. It is also a pragmatic group, liberal in its economic outlook, and highly nationalistic. Yet, it was caught in a bind when mediating the state's interests with those of rank and file demands. Because the state had the power to recognize a union and its leaders as being "representative" of a group's interests, any union leader necessarily had to tow the state's line to some extent. This was in keeping with the corporatist paradigm whereby the leaders of special interests were beholden to the state and must "educate" their constituency to accept state policies. An important indicator of the control a labor leader had over his rank and file was the ability to control strikes--without this power, a labor leader was useless to the regime. However, to be able to control strikes, the labor leader had to necessarily satisfy or appear to be

working for labor's interests in some way. What happened was that the labor leaders were often forced to represent rank and file demands over the interests of the state.

In this particular case, the lack of improvement over the economic situation forced the labor elite to harden its stance against the regime, especially on the part of those who were initially willing to cooperate with the regime. The bread-and-butter issues of labor rank and file made it easy to organize strikes, so strikes persisted throughout the regime's tenure. The existence of a faction of the labor elite calling for greater confrontation also played a role in pushing labor to be more critical of the regime. It was therefore in the labor elite's self-interest to demand greater concessions for labor so as to appear to be in control of the situation.

What labor leaders always dreaded happening was to have strikes called without their support, for this would signal to the regime that they had lost control and influence over the rank and file. In such a case, the regime would have little reason to negotiate with them. This was especially dangerous as within the labor movement there were always others waiting for the opportunity to come to power. This, by the way, continues to be a dilemma for the labor elite.

Labor leaders, in effect, found themselves in that proverbial bind between a rock and a hard place. If it is accepted that Argentine labor leaders sought to safeguard their own self-interest primarily, then given the economic situation, they were forced to agitate for greater concessions for labor and against the wishes of the regime. This was especially so because the regime remained impervious to labor demands between 1976 and 1982. Those labor leaders who attempted to negotiate with the regime saw their efforts continually stymied as time went on, forcing them to take more critical stands. Granted, several labor leaders sought accommodation with the regime to the very end, but those who had consistently opposed the regime obtained dominance over the direction of labor activism, thereby marginalizing the others' efforts.

No less important to the notion of self-interest was the concern with institutional survival. The military had embarked on a program to dismantle the structural and economic base of the labor movement. Its ultimate goal was to force the labor movement back to pre-Peron days when labor was fairly inarticulate of its demands and not much of a political presence. This attack on the institutional existence of the labor movement, as personified by the outlawing of the CGT, was another reason for why an otherwise pragmatic labor elite took

to opposing the regime, even at great personal risks to themselves.

It is apparent from my argument that the labor elite, as a group, had little choice but to take an opposing stance against the regime. Because of the nature of labor's demands and because of the unstable influence with which the labor elite yielded its power, they could not be as easily disenfranchised from political power as a group. Labor leaders were continually called upon to prove themselves and their loyalty to labor. Even before schisms within the armed forces became public, factions of the labor elite had taken the bold step of calling a political demonstration against the regime. The attempt at excluding labor from the bureaucratic-authoritarian project never succeeded in silencing this group. When the door was opened in 1980 to allow some relaxation of the repression, labor jumped right in and became more vociferous in its criticism of the regime.

The impact this labor agitation had over the regime was troubling at the very least and destabilizing in the end. The demands of labor constantly brought into question the effectiveness of the regime in maintaining law and order and in managing the economy. The lack of long-term success in muting labor's demands caused rifts within the junta and pressure to bear over policy decisions. The fateful decision to go to war on April

2, 1982, was a direct response to the bloody labor demonstrations of March 30th. As the regime tottered, labor got stronger.

* * *

The fact that the labor union movement helped to destabilize the military regime does not necessarily translate into helping to bring about democratic rule. The process of regime breakdown does not inherently lead to the instauration of another regime type, although in this particular case, a democratic government came to power. While still in its tentative stages, the past four and a half years of democratic rule illustrate some of the important consequences of regime transition and liberalization.

The labor union movement remains divided and contentious over who should lead and in what way labor interests should be pursued. What did occur once the military was finally out, was the emergence to dominance of the labor leaders who had fought against the regime. This meant, in most cases, that younger, less dogmatic men came into the labor elite, men who espoused the need for reform. There continues to be however, those who are committed to maintaining the closed vertical structure of labor organization, but this generation of

men have much less influence than before.

What is especially interesting is the fact that many of the leaders who advocated negotiating with the military are now at the forefront of pushing for negotiation with the Radical government. These men are clearly pure opportunists seeking to maximize their individual self-interests by currying favor with whomever is in the Casa Rosada. It could therefore be argued that these individuals play a neutral role in matters of regime change. The fact that they collaborated with the military makes them no more authoritarian than the fact that they are collaborating with a democratic regime makes them inherently democratic. What becomes important therefore is to gauge the extent of the changing alliances within the movement.

To date, those in control of the CGT have followed a middle of the road course vis-a-vis the Radical regime. There has been give and take on both sides, despite an economic situation which is slow to improve. The labor union elite, as with most every other group in society, is giving the Radicals the benefit of a doubt. While conflict exists between government and labor, it centers around economic issues and not on the legitimacy of the Radicals to make policy. Nor does the Radical regime aspire to destroying the institutional existence of the

CGT. While Alfonsín seeks reform, he is astute enough to seek this reform slowly and with caution.

Perhaps what Argentina has finally realized is the need to seek accommodation and compromise among contending interests. As a nation, it is still recovering from the shock of those dark days under military rule. It needs the time and space to breathe new life into its culture and politics. As such, when the military uprisings occurred last year, the population rose up in a wave of disgust against the military. This was important in light of how in the past, military coups were always supported by the public. That these particular actions by the military had the opposite effect is encouraging for the future of democracy in Argentina.

It is as yet premature to judge whether Argentina's experiment with democracy will survive into the next decade. If the O'Donnell and Schmitter elements for a successful transition are taken into consideration, then there are several encouraging signs that Argentina may be on the road to democratic instauration.

In the first instance, analysts of the Argentine transition have agreed that the outgoing military regime was an unmitigated disaster. The clear-cut failures of the Argentine junta stripped the military of credibility as effective governors. The military option, for the

time being at least, was no longer viable. This enabled the civilians to take over the reigns of power.

A second element, related to the first, for successful transition is the idea of pacts. The outgoing military junta was unable to negotiate a pact with civilian groups before leaving power. Instead, Argentina remains the only South American nation which has successfully tried and convicted its former military leaders for their policies. The absence of a military-sindical pact and the successful trials further stripped the military of any substantive role in governing. Contrast the Argentine case with that of Brazil, where Sarney's government has been much more tied to military interests. Also, the record of the Brazilian military has been mixed, so that the military option has remained a greater threat there than in Argentina.

O'Donnell and Schmitter also argue that pacts negotiated between civilian groups speak well toward democratic instauration. In Argentina, there have been several attempts at pact making between civilian groups. The first one, the Social and Economic Conference, ended in failure. However, the creation of a minimum wage council in 1988 was another effort at pact making and negotiations continue. This is a healthy sign as it appears that business, labor, and government are committed to working together.

A third element for successful transition is elections. The free elections of 1983 broke the time-honored tradition of a much expected Peronist victory. The failure of the Peronists to win (they'd won every election in which they'd been allowed to participate) signalled to all that abiding by the procedural aspects of democracy did not lead to foregone conclusions. Not only was this significant for the transition, but the elections did not give the Radicals a landslide victory. The Peronists and several smaller parties won enough votes to be significant players in the democratic game. The by-elections of 1985 and 1987 spoke to this as well. The loss by the Radicals of a congressional majority in 1987 could be interpreted to mean that party politics is truly taking off. The uncertain outcome of the 1989 presidential elections has galvanized all key civilian groups to play the game of open political competition. In short, the elections of 1983, 1985, and 1987 have given all civilian groups a stake in continuing the democratic game.

In light of the upcoming presidential elections of 1989, the next year and a half will be critical for Argentina. Along with the encouraging signs for democracy, there continues to persist several important danger signs as well. Alfonsín has been unable to solve Argentina's economic problems, and it was this fact

which cost him the 1987 elections. Perhaps it is in this area that external forces (e.g., the U.S., the IMF) could play a role. The military continues to be a problem, although less so than in other Latin American nations. For now, Alfonsin is in control, but the rumblings from the barracks continue.

However the experiment with democratization works out, Argentina will have taken some bold strides in dealing with its legacy of authoritarianism and civil strife. The democracy Argentina so sorely desires is in its infant stages, and it is still far from clear whether it will blossom into full bloom. The nation is seeking to develop democracy in its own way, on its own terms. The challenge for Argentines is to test whether democracy can lead to social peace and economic prosperity. The decision is theirs and theirs alone.

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