THE PERONIST LEFT

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by

Richard Henry Charles Gillespie

June 1979

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the left-wing tendencies which emerged within the Peronist Movement during the 1955-76 period. Based upon 16 months of research in Buenos Aires, the project was designed to examine the factors which gave rise to radicalisation within Peronism, the political performance of the major Peronist Left tendencies, and the guerrilla methods employed by most of the organisations studied.

Socio-economic decline, the impact of external events such as the Cuban Revolution, and exclusion from the political system (especially in the 1966-73 years of military rule) were found to have been major factors in the radicalisation of sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and working class in this period. However, it is clear from the evidence that the radicalism of these class fractions assumed very different forms. Though it is argued in the thesis that the Argentine national bourgeoisie has demonstrated that it is no longer capable of leading a significant and sustained "national liberation" process, the great problems encountered by those attempting to forge an alternative revolutionary alliance composed of the working class and petty bourgeoisie are also illustrated.

The investigation revealed that whereas the petty-bourgeois component of the Peronist Left tended to practise reformist politics, be influenced by radical nationalist ideologists, and employ the methods of the urban guerrilla, the working-class sectors, though not typical of their class, tended to practise revolutionary politics, were far more open to the indirect influence of Marxism, and used collective methods of class struggle. While the petty-bourgeois element tended to embrace the theory of revolutionary stages, temporally divorcing struggles for national liberation and socialism, the proletarian sectors tended to see the

two goals and the struggle for them as inseparable. A clear correspondence between class, ideology, politics and forms of struggle thus became evident, though the study led to a critical questioning of the notion of petty-bourgeois "proletarianisation".

Examination of Peronist Left guerrilla initiatives revealed an inability of urban guerrillas to overcome their fatal isolation from the labour movement. This was a product of the social composition of guerrilla organisations and of the individualistic and ultimately elitist nature of urban guerrilla warfare itself. As the scale of urban guerrilla actions grew, they became increasingly remote from the mass struggles of the labour movement. In some cases the adoption of urban guerrilla methods let to the total militarisation of Peronist Left organisations, with military considerations overshadowing political judgement in strategic and tactical decision-making. Finally, the recent Argentine experience confirmed that of other countries in illustrating how urban guerrilla actions can be used by the Right as a pretext for introducing draconian methods of political repression.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE v

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter

I. JOHN WILLIAM COOKE AND EARLY PERONIST LEFT IDEOLOGY 16

II. NATIONALIST AND CATHOLIC INFLUENCES UPON THE PERONIST LEFT 79

III. THE FIRST 'TENDENCIA REVOLUCIONARIA' 160

IV. 'MOVIMIENTISMO': THE MILITARY FRONT 249

V. 'MOVIMIENTISMO': THE POLITICAL FRONT 329

VI. 'ALTERNATIVISMO' AND 'ALTERNATIVISTAS 413

CONCLUSION 496

. . . . . .

APPENDIX A: ARGENTINE GUERRILLA SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUNDS 509

APPENDIX B: EARLY RADICAL PERONIST PROGRAMMES 514

APPENDIX C: SOURCES 516

BIBLIOGRAPHY 519

GLOSSARY OF SPANISH TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS 543

PREFACE

Existing studies of Peronism have mainly concentrated on the pre-1955 period and have had little to say about the two decades which followed. Yet Peronism survived as a vibrant political force in Argentine politics after the 1955 overthrow of Perón and experienced a number of important changes. In particular, a strong left-wing had arrived on the scene by the late 1960's and led many commentators to speculate about the possibility of Peronism once again becoming a force for radical social change in Argentina. Hopes and fears on this score in the long run proved to be misplaced; nevertheless, the Peronist Left were the protagonists of spectacular struggles both inside the Peronist Movement and nationally, and certainly made their mark on recent Argentine political history.

The Peronist Left deserves to be studied in its own right in order to explain why these hopes and fears were abortive. Analysis of it is also essential to an understanding of more general developments within Peronism since 1955 and of national political trends. Moreover, the Peronist Left spawned an urban guerrilla organisation, the Montoneros, which rapidly became the strongest of its kind yet seen in Latin America, and is thus of interest to all of those students, scholars and political activists who grapple with the perennial question of how social change and national development can be brought about in Latin America.

In studying the Peronist Left and in writing this thesis, my main aims were to account for the emergence of the Peronist Left and to suggest an explanation of why, so far at least, its ambitions have been thwarted, despite its numerical potency. No claims are made to providing a definitive history of the Peronist Left, for key activists and leading figures will have to reveal far more than they have to date

before such a project becomes feasible. Nevertheless, despite this limitation and the inadequacy of existing published works in such crucial areas as political economy, enough material is available for the rendering of competent analyses of the rise and fall of the Peronist Left.

At the same time, this thesis is concerned with examining the possibilities of guerrilla success. Having gone through rural and urban phases, the novel feature of the recent Argentine guerrilla episode was the attempt by some organisations to fuse urban guerrilla methods with mass struggles. The failure of this attempt, demonstrated below, leaves theories of guerrilla warfare in something of a cul-de-sac, at least as far as Argentina is concerned. Requiems, however, are very much premature, for many protagonists of recent campaigns still retain their faith in the efficacy of the armed man of combat.

The basic structure of this thesis is quite straightforward. Two initial chapters are devoted to the multifarious ideological influences on the Peronist Left, treatment of which has been totally ignored to date. A third chapter examines the emergence of the Peronist Left as a tendency in the early 1960's and the reasons for the collapse of the first initiative; and the remaining three chapters evaluate the performance of the political and military organisations of the Peronist Left since the late 1960's.

It must be emphasised that this thesis features the Peronist Left and not the Argentine Left generally. The traditional Left (Socialist Party and Communist Party) had declined before the Peronist Left appeared, partly due to their open hostility towards Peronism, and they along with the Argentine "New Left" are only dealt with tangentially below. A comparative study of the Argentine Left might well be

fruitful if undertaken in the future, but at the time when this project was embarked upon a detailed analysis of the Peronist Left was an essential prerequisite. Anybody interested in my estimation of other Argentine left-wing forces is referred to my three papers: The ERP: An Obituary? (on the People's Revolutionary Army); "The Lion is not as Fierce as it is Painted" (on the Argentine Communist Party); and The Argentine Socialist Party, 1896-1958. The latter two are only tentative outlines based upon secondary sources, written prior to my departure for Argentina, but copies of all three are available upon request.

The sources used in researching the Peronist Left were largely primary; very few other works on the Peronist Left and indeed on post-1955 Argentine politics in general exist at the present time. Of greatest value were the political reviews and other publications issued by the Peronist Left themselves, as well as a number of interviews with members of Peronist Left political and guerrilla organisations. Much time was also devoted to newspaper work in order to construct a chronology of events, and several weeks were also spent poring over dusty volumes of the Congressional Diary for texts of speeches and other parliamentary interventions. Finally, books were valuable in the case of those providing illustrations of the political thought of the influential ideologists discussed in the first two chapters. Further details about sources are to be found in Appendix C.

More than one hundred organisations are referred to in the text. Rather than present readers with a jungle of initials, their names have been Anglicized where possible after using the Spanish name plus translation when they are first mentioned. Initials are periodically repeated in brackets throughout the text for those who are more acquainted with the organisations through their initials. To avoid monotony, however,

where a whole section deals with one particular organisation, its name is abbreviated to its Spanish initials. If readers do lose their way, a list of abbreviations is provided along with a glossary of Spanish terms right at the end of the thesis, after the bibliography.

A number of people helped me with this project and their contributions deserve recognition. Dr. Walter Little proved to be an excellent research supervisor. My sincere thanks go to him for his establishment of impeccable academic standards, for his stimulating ideas and his useful suggestions. Apart from many valuable comments on my work, he gave me that periodic encouragement which is so important when one sets out on a "Long March". I would also like to express my thanks to Danny James for the loan of his precious collection of Compañero and a couple of scarce documents, as well as several fruitful discussions in Buenos Aires. Since his work, mentioned in the text, deals mainly with the labour movement since 1955, whereas my own concentrates on the political and military formations of the Peronist Left, our work should to some extent be regarded as mutually complementary.

Thanks are also due to the Social Science Research Council for providing me with a research studentship, without which this study would not have been possible. In addition, both the Department of Political Theory and Institutions in the University of Liverpool and the Department of Politics in the University of Newcastle upon Tyne are to be thanked for providing me with facilities during the writing-up phase of the project. Several former Newcastle colleagues made valuable suggestions on technical questions.

Unfortunately, I am not able to mention by name a considerable number of Argentines who helped me in so many ways. They range from

academics to journalists, from authors to lawyers, and from urban guerrillas to personal friends who helped me to establish contacts. In the present Argentine political situation, naming them would amount to the conferment of a death sentence.. Their contribution was absolutely indispensable, whether it took the form of personal interviews, informal but informed discussions, the provision of underground political material or introductions to further contacts. Apart from the time which they invested in my work, I would like to express my thanks to them for the risks which they took and the confidence which they placed in me.

Finally, my typist Mrs. E. Wallace deserves thanks for her efficient work, her magnificent efforts to meet my dead-line and her cheerful cooperation.

Richard Gillespie

Department of Politics

The University of

Newcastle upon Tyne.

June 1979.

INTRODUCTION

The term "Peronist Left" is employed in this thesis to denote those Peronists who were left-wing in both the original and modern sense - i.e. those who were both proponents of popular sovereignty and anti-capitalist. It embraces all those who posited Socialism as either an immediate or long-term goal. "Left-Wing Peronism" is avoided due to its possible inference that orthodox Peronism was or is itself left-wing. Official Peronism, the Peronism of Perón and Peronist leaders, has never challenged capitalism, except rhetorically, and has only been committed to popular sovereignty in an indirect sense. Though Peronist governments have come to power with the aid of popular votes and have extended popular participation in political power and national income, Peronism has never introduced mechanisms through which direct popular control of the State or Movement could be exercised. This being so, one can say that the Peronist Left was less "leftist" to the extent that it was Peronist and vice versa.

Under the early Peronist governments of 1946-55, a left-wing tendency was only present in the most embryonic of forms, mainly composed of John William Cooke and his collaborators on the review 'De Frente'. In characterising that group, one can speak more accurately of militant Peronists than a Peronist Left. They were militant with regard to the methods which they proposed for the defence of Peronism in government and also differed from more conservative sectors in the fervour of their nationalism. The Peronist Left, in the fullest sense of the term, only really developed in the late 1950's and early 1960's and crystallized into a revolutionary tendency in 1963-64. It then declined for several years before it re-emerged strongly in the late 1960's and early 1970's with the growth of the Peronist Youth and

Peronist politico-military organizations. The development of the Peronist Left was thus irregular and by no means characterised by steady growth.

Most of the theoretical discussion contained in this thesis is to be found in the substantive chapters themselves, directly linked to the principal sections into which the thesis falls. There are, however, certain theoretical assumptions which underpin the thesis as a whole and they are the subject matter of this introduction. They seem more pertinent as an introduction to what follows than a derivative, truncated history of post-war Argentina. The reader, rather than be presented with yet another potted history as an introduction is referred to existing background.sources. [1] This introduction will discuss three themes: the decline of the national bourgeoisie as a strong, independent national force after 1955, the radicalisation of the petty bourgeoisie, or sectors of it, in the same period and the economism which has characterised broad sectors of the Argentine labour movement for decades. Each could, and it is to be hoped will, be the subject of research projects in their own right. In discussing them one is constrained by the present inadequacies of research into Argentine political economy and social structures but one can at least clarify one's assumptions and cite some of the existing, though not definitive, evidence on which they are based.

The weakening of the national bourgeoisie as an independent

---

1. For an outline of the background political history, see Angel Cairo, Peronismo claves (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Centro de Estudios Aporte, 1975; Ernesto González, Qué fue y qué es el peronismo (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Pluma, 1974); & Donald C. Hodges, Argentina 1943-1976. The National Revolution and Resistance (University of New Mexico Press, 1976). On economic trends, see particularly Mónica Peralta Ramos, Etapas de acumulación y alianzas de clases en la Argentina, 1930-1970 (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1972).

political and economic force has been a product of the growing penetration of foreign capital into key dynamic areas of manufacturing industry since the 1950's. Evidence of the tendency towards "denationalisation" of the Argentine economy has been provided by Niosi's study which cites data for the leading 100 companies. The number of national companies among the top 25 fell from 16 in 1957 to 8 by 1966; among the following group of 25 companies, from 21 in 1957 to 13 by 1966; and among the final 50, from 49 to 29 over the same period. [1] According to Ramil Cepeda, U.S. companies in Argentina grew at a rate 3-5 times superior to the average growth of nationally-owned industries during the 1960's. [2] The stake of foreign enterprise in industrial production grew from 8% to 40% between 1955 and 1972, with U.S. capital accounting for 70% of new direct foreign investment in the decade from 1959-1969. [3]

Statistics on ownership and direct control of companies by foreign capital clearly reveal the decline of the national private sector, a decline which appears even more pronounced when one takes indirect control and influence into account. N.A.C.L.A.'s study of the leading 120 companies, using 1971 data, showed that 66 were owned or controlled by foreign capital and that of the remaining 54 formally Argentine corporations, 10 were state-owned, 2 were mixed (state-private) and 18 were clearly linked to foreign interests. [4]

---

1. Jorge Niosi, Los empresarios y el estado argentino, 1955-1969 (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1974), p. 215.
2. Carlos Ramil Cepeda, Crisis de una burguesía dependiente (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Rosa Blindada, 1972), p. 26.
3. N.A.C.L.A. (North American Congress on Latin America), Argentina in the Hour of the Furnaces (U.S.A.: N.A.C.L.A., 1975), p. 24.
4. Ibid., p. 29.

National capital, now generally operating medium- and small-sized enterprises, has become increasingly dependent on foreign capital for its technology, patents, credits, purchases and sales. The pro-monopoly policies of the Onganía government, especially Krieger Vasena's 40% devaluation, generated a spate of bankrupcies and purchases of local companies by multinationals. According to N.A.C.L.A. bankrupcies increased from 1,647 (valued at 324.7 million new pesos) in 1968 to 2,982 (valued at 1.15 billion new pesos) in 1970, as national companies proved unable to compete with the advanced technology of the multinationals. Between 1963-71, 53 Argentine companies were purchased by foreign interests, 9 of them being among the top 120 companies operating in Argentina. [1]

Attempts by the national bourgeoisie to resist this trend were weak and short-lived, both the Illia 1963 and Peronist 1973 initiatives collapsing in just three years. Illia's restrictions on profit expatriations, part of an attempt to stimulate the domestic market, only led foreign corporations to use their profits to buy up local companies. Peronist "national" measures in the 1973-76 years were far more limited than those of the late 1940's. Seven important commercial banks were renationalised and foreign trade diversified. However, the promotion of trade links with Third World and "Socialist" countries did not always have an anti-imperialist significance. The establishment of commercial ties with Cuba, for instance, enabled the U.S. car subsidiaries operating in Argentina to by-pass the official U.S. economic boycott of Cuba.

What the recent Peronist experience demonstrated was that for the national bourgeoisie to improve its position vis-à-vis foreign capital

---

1. Ibid., p. 24.

during a period of economic crisis, sacrifices were required of the working class and other popular sectors, with income distribution being postponed until the national cake grew larger. The main contradiction present in the 1973-76 Peronist project lay in the fact that, in order to promote independent development or at least improve its own position, the national bourgeoisie needed both minimal increases in consumption and minimal income redistribution in the interests of capital accumulation and the support of the workers and petty bourgeoisie to make up for its own weakness as a class fraction. In fact, as will be seen, the leading figures in the Peronist economic team of 1973-74 were not representative of the national bourgeoisie in general, mainly operating non-monopolistic concerns, but of its monopolistic elite which had less cause (though greater strength) to rebel against foreign capital than had small businessmen.

The relevance of this discussion to an analysis of the Peronist Left resides in the questions of whether or not the national bourgeoisie is to be incorporated into a system of alliances supported by the Left and whether or not a phase of independent capitalist development is still viable in Argentina. Given the weakening of the national bourgeoisie as a class fraction of the bourgeoisie in general and the decline of the Argentine economy as compared with the "golden years" of the middle to late 1940's, there appears no reason to expect a strong and consistent nationalism to emerge from this sector unless, possibly, there is some major crisis in the advanced metropolis, leading foreign capital to reduce its participation in the Argentine economy.

In courting the national bourgeoisie, a major sector of the Peronist Left was to look to its real or imaginery "national" status

while playing down its bourgeois class membership. The Peronist Youth and Montoneros accepted the given class composition of Peronism in 1973, including the bourgeois sectors, their radicalism only being evident in their calls for working class hegemony in the Movement and postulation of Socialism as the ultimate goal. Resistance to these calls on the part of bourgeois Peronists only demonstrated that the latter were unwilling to sacrifice their class position in the name of nationalism. Moreover, the majoritarian Peronist Left project, renouncing an immediate struggle for Socialism on the grounds that revolution must proceed in a series of stages, reduced the potential appeal of this Peronist Left sector to the working class. Taking their position to its logical conclusion, the Montoneros and Peronist Youth were to initially support a Social Pact designed to hold down wages for two years and practically outlaw strikes. They considered that foreign ownership and control of dynamic sectors of industry would lead a Peronist Movement seeking nationalist reforms along the road towards Socialism. In fact, it only made the national bourgeoisie even more timid in its nationalism, having learnt from the Cuban process where a vigourous nationalist programme was likely to lead.

When examining the petty bourgeoisie and the radicalisation of some of its members, one is greatly hampered by the almost total lack of published data dealing with this class. This is a result of the lack of official statistics dealing specifically with this group and a reflection of the infancy of theoretical sociological studies of this class in general. All too often this important intermediate class between the bourgeoisie and working class is referred to fleetingly and loosely as "the middle classes", "the middle sectors" or "the intermediate strata", without discussing its specific role within the overall class structure. Nowhere in the literature on Argentina does

the petty bourgeoisie receive adequate attention and glib assertions about the "proletarianisation" of this class are left as articles of faith.

In analysing the petty bourgeoisie, it is important to differentiate between the traditional or old petty bourgeoisie (small traders, independent craftsmen, etc.), which is doomed to decline or disappear in the epoch of monopoly capitalism, and the new petty bourgeoisie (commercial and bank employees, office and service workers etc.) - the white collar or tertiary sector workers who grow in numbers in this epoch, especially with the expansion of the economic and administrative role of the State. Though differentiated, Poulantzas has argued that together they constitute a social class which is neither bourgeois nor proletarian. Members of this class are not bourgeois, in that they do not exploit wage labour or are not primarily involved in the exploitation of wage labour. On the other hand, while mainly employees of capital and exploited by capital, they clearly do not form part of the working class which for Marx at least was composed of productive workers. [1]

More work could be done on what constitutes the unity of the old and new petty-bourgeois fractions, but here discussion will be limited to the new petty bourgeoisie for what data there is on the class membership of Peronist Left organisations strongly suggests that it is this fraction which was mainly involved in petty-bourgeois radicalisation during the 1960's and early 1970's. [2] The most numerous petty-

---

1. Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism (London: Verso, 1978), Part 3.
2. See below, chapters 4, 5 and 6 plus Appendix A on the social backgrounds of Argentine guerrillas.

bourgeois component here would appear to have been the employees, with students representing, in most cases, a pre-petty bourgeois element of even greater magnitude. Even amongst the new petty bourgeoisie, however, there is great heterogeneity, explicable in terms of the degree of exploitation experienced, subdivisions into bureaucratised and non-bureaucratised sectors, etc. Moreover, as an intermediate class, the new petty bourgeoisie is greatly influenced by the behaviour and ideas of the two main classes and their relative strengths in class conflicts.

The notion of petty-bourgeois "proletarianisation" must be treated with care. While true that major sectors of the traditional petty bourgeoisie may join the ranks of the working class when crushed as a result of capital concentration in the era of monopoly capitalism, it is a mistake to equate a decline in the living standards of the new petty bourgeoisie with its "proletarianisation". Living standards may be reduced in certain cases and under certain conditions to levels experienced by privileged working-class strata but this does not remove the fundamental class barrier separating productive from non-productive labour and manual from mental activity.

It must also be remembered that the new petty bourgeoisie has vertical social aspirations - its members generally hope to become bourgeois, occasionally do become bourgeois or otherwise regard themselves as already bourgeois. Their class interests are not identical to those of the working class and they have a tremendous fear of "proletarianisation". They tend to feel superior to and more intelligent than the working class, often displaying contempt for manual labour. This, however, is not applicable to all fractions of this highly diverse class. Sectors can and do adopt working class positions under certain circumstances, entering into revolutionary alliances, especially when society is in crisis and when the labour movement appears

strong and inspires confidence in its capacity to transform society.

Employees and self-employed persons represented something like 25% of the economically-active Argentine population in 1960. [1] There is evidence of a fairly rapid increase in the number of state employees relative to the rest of the population over the past forty years. The number of state employees grew by 45% in the 1945-50 period, as the State extended its economic activities, remained relatively static from 1950-55 and then grew again by between 50-65% in the 1955-66 years. One reason for the radicalisation of petty-bourgeois sectors in the late 1960's may well be provided by the reversal of this trend. There was a 3% fall between 1966-1970 as a result of "rationalisation" in state enterprises, especially the railways. [2]

At a more general level, one can detect indications of petty-bourgeois socio-economic decline from the early 1950's. N.A.C.L.A., comparing the distribution of family income in Argentina between 1953-61, have shown that only the top 10% increased their share in this period, whereas the "upper middle sector" (71-90%) suffered a very slight cut, the "middle sector" (21-70%) a 1.2% cut and the lowest 20% a 5% cut. [3] Obviously, more empirical work needs doing here and, though it seems less important in relation to the Peronist Left, on the demise of the traditional petty bourgeoisie. The latter suffered particularly as a result of Onganía's deflationary policies, with bankrupcies, as has been seen above, rising sharply.

---

1. C.I.C.S.O. (Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales) Los asalariados. Composición social y orientaciones organizatives (Buenos Aires: C.I.C.S.O., n.d.), p. 124.
2. Ibid. p. 223.
3. N.A.C.L.A., op.cit. p. 28.

Radicalisation of petty-bourgeois sectors was also effected by the ban on party activity from 1966. The military, attempting to consolidate the hegemony of monopoly capital, politically expropriated the petty bourgeoisie, denying it institutionalised participation in the State through the Radicals and other parties. This led significant sectors to turn towards the labour movement and Peronism - the only mass opposition force - and towards direct action as a form of protest and rebellion. The provincial risings and revolts of 1969-72 saw workers being joined by students in the streets with the support of sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, resisting the aims of the 1966-73 "Argentine Revolution".

However, once again, one must question whether this really represented a mass "proletarianisation" of the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie resorted to militant methods of protest and sectors entered into a loose alliance with combative workers but their interests did not become identical. Nor, as will be seen, did most of the radicalised petty-bourgeois sectors adopt working-class positions. Their individualism, rooted in their isolated situation at work and on the labour market (at least in the case of the non-bureaucratised sectors) found expression in urban guerrilla warfare, in elitist small group actions in which working-class participation was minimal.

Here, Poulantzas' discussion of the content of the "petty-bourgeois ideological sub-ensemble", examined at a general level, is highly relevant to the Argentine case, pointing as it does to the limitations of a certain type of petty-bourgeois radicalism. [1] It displays a tendency, he argues, to be full of "reformist illusions" because the

---

1. Poulantzas, op cit., pp. 287-299.

petty bourgeoisie experiences its exploitation mainly in the wage form, the structure of the capitalist mode of production remaining hidden from it. While hostile to the "rich", it defends the idea of wage differentials, limiting its demands to calls for income distribution without challenging the economic system globally. Moreover, rather than questioning the mental/manual labour division, it seeks a re-evaluation of mental labour, desiring a more meritocratic society in which mental labour will not be constrained by the profit motive. "Social justice" often means little more than a left-wing technocracy to petty-bourgeois radicals.

Finally, Poulantzas comments that petty-bourgeois radicalism is generally limited by its attachment to hierarchy, even though it wants it to be reordered. One is reminded of Orwell's vision of England being "a family with the wrong members in control". Many petty-bourgeois radicals seek to democratise the State and educational structures, rather than renovate them completely, assuming that the State is neutral and feeling that they, or their progeny, can rise thereby. As Poulantzas succinctly puts it, the petty bourgeoisie "does not want to break the ladders by which it imagines it can climb". [1]

This general theory accurately portrays some of the key attitudes of major sectors of the petty-bourgeois component of the Peronist Left and in particular of the Montoneros. As will be seen, the above stereotype petty-bourgeois attitudes were very much in evidence in their failure to question the structure of the State, in their hope of inheriting the leadership of the Peronist Movement through a "generational rejuvenation" of its personnel, in their faith in the efficacy

---

1. Ibid., p. 292.

of urban guerrilla warfare and in their preparedness to postpone the struggle for Socialism until a stage of "National Reconstruction" had been completed. Though one can point to individual Peronist Left cadres of petty-bourgeois class membership who genuinely adopted working-class postures, it has to be said that objectively, in terms of short-term self-interest, many of the petty-bourgeois sectors which participated in the Peronist Left had more to gain from a political rather than a social revolution.

"Proletarianisation" of the petty bourgeoisie, in the fullest sense of the term, was far less extensive in the late 1960's and early 1970's than many radical writers have assumed. Apart from the economic aspects of this, which require specialised treatment, a key explanatory factor here was the economism of the working class. That the radicalised petty bourgeoisie did not embrace Socialism in a more unequivocal manner owed a lot to the fact that only a fairly small minority of the labour movement was organising and proselytizing with Socialist goals in mind. Broad sectors of the working class in these years demonstrated a readiness and capacity for militant struggle around economic issues and even against the military regime, while stopping short of offering a clear Socialist alternative to the petty bourgeoisie. They did not appear to the latter as a class bearing the future of Argentine society in their hands.

The economistic trait which has characterised a large part of the Argentine labour movement over recent decades is by no means an exclusively Argentine phenomenon. Economism was regarded by Lenin as the "natural" ideology of the working class when left to its own devices,

a spontaneous response to industrial exploitation.[1] It is both a cause and effect of the weakness of left-wing influence in the labour movement and also indicates the success of bourgeois socialisation processes. In Argentina, it aided the rise of a strong reformist trade union bureaucracy, prepared when pushed to fight for economic conquests but rarely for political objectives. The "participationism" of the Argentine unions, the readiness of their leaders to negotiate with governments of the day and to attempt to reconcile the interests of labour and capital, goes back to the early Peronist period when the healthy economic conditions for such cooperation between the industrial classes briefly existed.

Once these conditions subsided, the ideology of class conciliation upheld by labour leaders did not simply disappear. Peralta Ramos has pointed to three reasons for its continued influence.[2] Firstly, there was the inability of Peronism to structure itself politically - partly a product of repression but also of the desertion of non-working class sectors from the Movement in and before 1955 and the failure of Peronism in government to tolerate a vibrant political party, all of which left the trade unions as the principal organisational bastions of Peronism after 1955. Trade unions have never been revolutionary political instruments, their essential role being to defend and promote the interests of labour regardless of ideological differentiation. To be successful, they have to be as broad and as legally-tolerated as

---

1. "Class political consciousness can be brought to the worker <u>only from without</u>, that is, from outside the economic struggle, outside the sphere of the relations between the workers and the employers. The only field from which it is possible to extract this knowledge is the field of relations of <u>all</u> classes and strata to the state and government, the field of interrelationships between <u>all</u> classes." - V.I. Lenin, <u>What is to be Done</u>? (London: Panther Books, 1970), p. 123.

2. Peralta Ramos, op. cit., pp. 58-63 & 163-170.

possible, quite unlike the narrow, clandestine Leninist revolutionary party.

Secondly, the continued strength of reformism and economism in the labour movement can be seen as a product of the traditional Left's failure to pose a real alternative to Peronism. Both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party had misinterpreted the significance of the rise of Peronism , joining Liberals in identifying it with the European fascist movements of the 1920's and 1930's. The Communist Party's characterisation of Peronist workers as "peronazis" contributed to the decline of its working-class base.

Finally, Peralta Ramos points to the growing heterogeneity of the working classafter 1955 as the wages of workers in dynamic industrial sectors grew and differentials separating them from workers in declining areas of production increased. By 1966, unskilled metal-workers were better paid than skilled workers in other sectors of production. Wage differentials became less a question of the skill of the individual worker and more a question of the dynamism and vitality of the productive sector in which he or she worked. The well-remunerated workers, whether considered a "labour aristocracy" or not, became an important base for the "participationist" trade union bureaucracy of the 1960's, with the Metal Workers Union (U.O.M.) not surprisingly being its main axis.[1]

However, as will be seen, this relatively privileged labour stratum was never monolithically reformist or economistic. The well-paid Córdoban car workers led important battles against government policies, both under the 1966-73 military regime and again in fighting

---

1. Ibid.

to resist Peronist attempts to hold down wages in the 1973-76 period. Many of these struggles had overt political connotations and support for both the Peronist and non-Peronist Left was certainly high in this sector. As will be argued, in a wage freeze situation, the "labour aristocracy" is relatively harder hit than less privileged worker sectors and the response can be exceedingly militant, with Argentine car workers not being an exception to this international phenomenon.

All of these three themes, and particularly the latter two, are in urgent need of more detailed theoretical elaboration and empirical research. The supportive evidence for the above assumptions which underpin this thesis is at present only suggestive but considered conditionally valid in the light of the absence of contrary evidence. In this introduction, the assumptions have merely been clarified, some of the existing evidence referred to and fruitful areas for future research suggested.

CHAPTER I

JOHN WILLIAM COOKE AND EARLY PERONIST LEFT IDEOLOGY

When one examines the origins of Peronist Left ideology, one figure stands out as its principal inspiration and elaborator: John William Cooke. If not the only ideologist of the Peronist Left, Cooke was certainly the earliest, most important and most comprehensive. Lesser theoretical contributions were to be made in later years by militants like Carlos Enrique Olmedo, leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias - FAR), and Gustavo Rearte, founder of the 17th October Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento 17 de Octubre - MR17), but both men owed ideological debts to Cooke.[1] Whereas in the next chapter other major elements of Peronist Left ideology will be examined as ideological currents, a biographical approach is employed here. Such an approach is considered suitable due to Cooke's outstanding individual contribution to Peronist Left ideology and his leading political role.

Cooke's political life fell into four main phases. Firstly, there were his youthful years spent in the Force of Radical Orientation of the Argentine Youth (Fuerza de Orientación Radical de la Joven Argentina - FORJA), the militant nationalist organisation of Radical "young turks" founded by Arturo Jauretche in 1935, before he along with most forjistas transferred his allegiance to Peronism in 1945. FORJA was a middle-class intellectual movement within the Radical Party which challenged the deviations of party leaders from national-popular principles but which lacked a mass base. Peronism, which possessed a powerful mass base, inherited many Radical ideas,

---

1. See Chapter Six.

leading many forjistas to consider that their own tendency and the Radical Party were historically redundant. [1] The movement of Radicals towards Peronism was important with regard to the staffing of the latter's political apparatus but only some of the converts, including Cooke, were to carry with them a commitment to democratic principles into the Peronist camp.

The second phase of Cooke's development corresponded to his years as a deputy under the first Peronist government and then as editor of the moderately influential Peronist review De Frente . This period saw Cooke going through a transitional stage, still influenced by some Radical ideas, already a fervent Peronist but beginning to accept analyses which had socialist implications. Cooke's activism during these years is studied below so as to demonstrate that what existed in the 1946-55 period was a militant Peronism, chiefly led by Cooke, but not a Peronist Left tendency. A small splinter from the old Argentine Socialist Party, led by Enrique Dickmann, joined the Peronist Movement in the early 1950's but failed to win support for socialist ideas there. [2]

In the third phase, that of the early Resistencia [3] years, Cooke remained the leading representative of militant Peronism. He

---

1. For the ideas of FORJA, see Arturo Jauretche, FORJA y la década infame (Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo Editor, 1962). Forjistas were, of course, FORJA members.

2. For an account of this 1953 splinter, which became known as the Socialist Party of the National Revolution (Partido Socialista de la Revolución Nacional - PSRN), see "La Izquierda, sus grupos y tendencias," Cuarto Poder (Buenos Aires), August 1972, pp. 3-24.

3. "La Resistencia" refers to the Peronist resistance movement and struggles during the period between the 1955 military coup and the 1959 General Strike, though some writers use the term in referring to the whole 1955-1973 period of Peronist opposition.

became Perón's official representative (or "delegate") in Argentina and leader of the National Command which attempted to coordinate and direct resistance activities. However, Cooke's influence in the resistance movement should not be exaggerated - other, more conciliatory, leaders had credentials endorsed by Perón and Cooke's authority was generally weak in the labour movement. His main support lay in the resistance comandos, the small clandestine groups which engaged in sabotage, bombings, daubing slogans on walls, etc., but which lacked effective coordination and often operated independently. It was this experience of clandestine warfare, later reinforced by the impact of the Cuban Revolution, which led Cooke to become the earliest Peronist proponent of urban guerrilla warfare.

Finally, there were the years from 1959 until his 1968 death, during which Cooke openly embraced the cause of the Cuban revolution and its strategic ideas, while adapting the latter to Argentine conditions. Cooke's conversion to Cuban-style Marxism while retaining a Peronist affiliation represented the earliest example of the Peronist-Guevarist convergence which was to be an important feature of the Argentine Left a decade later.

Since Cooke was both a key Peronist leader and the most important individual ideological influence upon the Peronist Left, this chapter will briefly examine his life and then analyse his political speeches and written works. Treatment of the latter will refer to his parliamentary interventions of 1946-51, the De Frente editorials of 1954-55, his published correspondence with Perón and, lastly, to the books and articles in which Cooke's characterisation of Peronism, estimation of Perón and views on revolutionary strategy were further developed. Though true that his works were, in the main, published only in the early 1970's and became most influential then, Cooke's ideas were

known to activists via clandestine publications and personal contact before then and were crucial to the ideological development of important sectors of the Peronist Left.

COOKE'S POLITICAL LIFE

John William Cooke was born in La Plata on 14th November 1920 into a family of Irish origin. It was due to this Irish heritage that John's brother, Jorge Cooke, attributed the key features of his personality when he described him as "a rare mixture of bohemian and nomad, with a total passion for politics". [1] During John William's upbringing, his family was ardently Radical and maintained a close friendship with leading Radical, Ricardo Balbín. Cooke himself began his political life during the 1930's as a Radical fighting against the Conservatives in secondary school and then at university through the Argentine University Federation (FUA). After his death, Cooke's widow Alicia Eguren described his early politics as "Radical, Nationalist, Popular, Forjista, full of a secret and contradictory admiration for those struggling in the name of the great October Revolution".[2]

The 1943 military coup was viewed by Cooke as just another cuartelazo , but his attitude changed with the rise of Perón within the new regime. Cooke's father, Dr. Juan Isaac Cooke, was Minister of Foreign Relations in 1945, engaged in a diplomatic and political battle against the US ambassador, Spruille Braden, and John William was his father's closest and most revolutionary advisor in resisting the pressures of the latter. At the time of the decisive popular

---

1. Alberto Szpunberg, "El pensamiento vivo de un militante," La Opinión Cultural (Buenos Aires), 9th September 1973, p. 2.
2. Alicia Eguren de Cooke, "Notas para una biografía de John," Nuevo Hombre (Buenos Aires), no. 9 (15th-21st September 1971), p. 10.

mobilisation of October 1945, Cooke was graduating as a lawyer. He immediately recognised the importance of Perón's detention on Martín García when it was announced on October 12th and accurately predicted the response: "They are going to see within a few days", he commented. [1]

In the ensuing 1946 elections, Cooke was elected as a deputy at the age of 25. From the start, he was one of the most vehement Congressmen and rejected the notion that loyalty to Perón demanded servility on the part of Peronists. He immediately made his mark in Congress by being the only Peronist deputy to stand out against ratification of the Treaty of Chapultepec and the United Nations Charter. In a firmly anti-imperialist speech explaining his dissidence, Cooke argued that national sovereignty could not be guaranteed by international acts and charters. In fact, he declared, the latter were a challenge to Argentine sovereignty, which could only be defended by the Argentine President and Foreign Minister through practical measures and material solidarity with other liberation movements. For Cooke, the agreements were based upon "a dangerous sophism: that of the equality of States. It is a sophism because juridical equality has its counterpart in material inequality which tends to outweigh the former". [2] Here, Cooke showed himself to be a man of principle, a man of great integrity who was not prepared to toe the party line when it clashed with his deep-felt convictions.

Cooke's legal training enabled him to play an important role as a member of the Congressional Committee on Constitutional Matters, but he refused to be quiescent. In 1951, he paid for his dissidence by not being re-adopted, yet the following year again stood out, this time

---

1. Szpunberg, op. cit., p. 2.
2. "Fundamentación del voto de John W. Cooke contra la aprobación del Acta de Chapultepec y la Carta de las Naciones Unidas," Diario de Sesiones (Argentina: Cámara de Diputados, 1946), III, p. 580.

by opposing the Productivity Congress - seen by later Left Peronists as an antecedent to the 1973 Social Pact due to its emphasis upon increased productivity as the key to economic salvation. For Alicia Eguren, he had been "a young solitary jacobin in a timid and heterogenous parliament" seen as the "rearguard" of the mass movement. [1] John William Cooke did not appear to be particularly dismayed at leaving parliamentary life, for he saw both its limitations and its seductive temptations. He later spoke of the Peronist deputies of that era as "aspiring to integrate themselves into the regime. They went to the Colón (Theatre) to show that they were men of the world". [2]

During the second Peronist term of office, Evita Perón offered Cooke the editorship of Democracia but he rejected it, seeing that it would bridle his political independence: "I don't want to end up fighting myself with that kind of obsequiousness". [3] Instead, after taking up a University of Buenos Aires lectureship in political economy, Cooke brought out his own publication, De Frente, self-styled "incorruptible witness of world reality". In it he initiated his critique of the trade union bureaucracy and opposed Perón's signing of a contract with the Argentine branch of Standard Oil of California. For many Peronists, De Frente became the moral and political conscience of the Movement, living up to its claim to being incorruptible. Cooke himself became a figurehead of the more militant tendency within Peronism, not challenging the political objectives of Peronism at that time but adopting a hard line on how to defend the

---

1. Eguren, op. cit.
2. Szpunberg, op. cit.
3. Ibid.

government as opposition to it grew.

Cooke was the first person to be summoned by Perón after the aerial bombardment of June 16th 1955. When offered a job as Secretary for Technical Affairs, he refused ("It is not the time for technology but for politics") [1] and instead was appointed Interventor [2] of the Peronist Party in the Federal Capital. There, according to his widow, Cooke found a corrupt and bureaucratic structure which could not be changed overnight. He searched for the means to defeat the coming military intervention, visiting trade unions and unidades básicas, the base-level Peronist Party units, in an attempt to win support for his strategy of popular mobilisation and armed resistance. This aroused strong opposition among the military and the Peronist bureaucracy, both of which apparently called for his arrest even before the September 1955 military coup.

Cooke's plan, according to one writer, [3] was based upon the Spanish Resistance to Franco, this experience reaching him through Civil War veteran Abraham Guillén, a friend and collaborator on De Frente . The basic idea was to organise a clandestine urban guerrilla force which would defeat a military revolt through guerrilla actions backed up by popular mobilisations and support. Clandestinity was essential since the Superior Council of the Peronist Party had rejected the idea of creating popular militias, due to a firm veto from even the

---

1. Ibid.
2. Here, "Interventor" means a trustee appointed by the Peronist leadership to take over the running of a party branch. The same term is used to refer to trustees appointed by the federal government to replace provincial authorities and to trustees sent by national trade union leaderships to replace local union officials.
3. Donald C. Hodges, Argentina 1943-1976, The National Revolution and Resistance (USA: University of New Mexico Press, 1976) pp. 191-196.

"Peronist" generals who feared the creation of a dual command structure. Despite this rejection, Cooke and Guillén were prepared to go behind the backs of the leaders and secretly organise guerrilla contingents. Little had been achieved in practice by September, but the strategy subsequently came to fruition when adopted by Perón, though not exclusively, in January 1956.

This readiness of Cooke to fight should not be confused, as it is today by the Peronist Left, with the view that Cooke, at that time, was also seeking to extend the political and social dimensions of the "Peronist Revolution". The editorials in De Frente in mid-1955 drew a sharp distinction between how to deal with legal and violent opposition. After the June 16 events, Cooke called for peaceful co-existence between the political parties based upon "reciprocal concessions."[1] After Perón announced the end of the revolution, Cooke was to argue that this meant the end of the stage in which Peronist objectives were to be achieved "by revolutionary methods"; a new stage was opening up in which opposition parties could participate, critically but constructively, " in the solution of the great national problems".[2] Following Perón's own zig-zags of the June-September period after the "truce" was officially ended, Cooke spoke in favour of the masses seeking "drastic and violent measures" but showed his commitment to constitutional legality in relation to the opposition parties: "While they adhere to legal norms, it is according to these norms that they must be fought".[3] Violent rebellion, however, was

---

1. Cooke, De Frente (Buenos Aires), nos. 70 & 71 (11th & 18th July 1955), editorials.
2. Ibid. no. 77 (29th August 1955), editorial.
3. Ibid. no. 78 (5th September 1955), editorial.

something else. During the September coup, Cooke appealed to Perón to leave his refuge in the War Ministry, speak to the people by radio, personally take over the leadership of the resistance and install military units in the public plazas of Greater Buenos Aires.

After the golpe, Perón from exile wrote that "Doctor Cooke was the only leader who contacted me and the only one who openly took a position of absolute intransigence....". [1] While a tendency led by Leloir sought to accommodate itself to the new regime, Cooke created a Comando de Lucha (Struggle Command) in Buenos Aires and tried to travel to Paraguay in order to receive orders for the resistance directly from Perón. He was betrayed by a police agent and arrested on October 20th, the day he was due to travel. Significantly, Cooke was captured in the home of the nationalist writer José María Rosa whereas Leloir was arrested in the luxurious Plaza Hotel. While confined in the Las Heras Penitentiary, he demonstrated his courage by spitting in the face of the commanding officer when put up against a wall for a simulated execution. After being put in several prisons, Cooke ended up in the Río Gallegos prison in the South. Despite his imprisonment, Cooke continued to lead and organise the resistance, though forced by circumstance to delegate the task of practically directing the Comando de Lucha to Lagomarsino and Marcos. [2] Perón sent Cooke his full recognition from Caracas on November 2nd:

> "I recognise him as the only leader who has my mandate to preside over the totality of the Peronist forces organised in the country and abroad and his decisions have the same force as

---

1. "Alrededor de John William Cooke," Peronismo y Socialismo (Buenos Aires), no. 1 (September 1973), pp. 10-13.
2. The Comando de Lucha became known as the Comando Táctico (Tactical Command) and, more commonly, as the Comando Nacional (National Command).

mine. In the case of my death, I delegate command to him". [1]

Cooke was able to direct the resistance struggle more personally after his escape from Río Gallegos to Punta Arenas, Chile, and after his release from detention there. Apart from Cooke, five other leading Peronists got out - Jorge Antonio (Perón's former financial advisor), Héctor Cámpora (ex-President of the Chamber of Deputies), Patricio Kelly (head of the Nationalist Liberating Alliance - ALN), José Espejo (former General-Secretary of the General Labour Confederation - CGT) and Pedro J. Andrés José Gómez (head of the petroleum workers union). In addition to outside help, they were reportedly accompanied by the chief guard of the prison, José Ocampo, and simply walked out of the prison using passes. [2] After the Chilean courts rejected attempts by the Aramburu government at extradition, Cooke was released, set up a clandestine radio transmitter and developed the internal and external organisational structures of the Resistance. It was also in Chile that Cooke received the first emissaries from Frondizi, frequently Ricardo Rojo, seeking Peronist support for the 1958 elections. Cooke was not opposed to a tactical agreement which would give Peronism a breathing space in which to reorganise Peronist forces hit by repression and to use a Law of Professional Associations to legalise Peronist hegemony of the labour movement. At the same time, he had no political illusions in Frondizi and was especially dubious about the nationalist promises contained in his book, Petróleo y Política. [3]. He therefore flew to Caracas to gain Perón's final word

---

1. Letter from Perón to Cooke of 2.11.56, Cuadernos de Crisis (Buenos Aires), no. 5 (March 1974), p. 5
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 19th March 1957.
3. Arturo Frondizi, Petróleo y Política (Buenos Aires: Editorial Raigal, 1955).

on the matter and in February 1958 was a signatory to the Pact along with Perón, Frondizi and Frigerio. After this, he flew to Montevideo to set up his general staff there, taking advantage of its proximity to Argentina. During 1958, Cooke made several secret trips into Argentina for clandestine meetings with Frondizi and to consolidate Peronist organisational structures.

In his role as leader of the Resistance, Cooke constantly sought to promote worker cadres and hard-liners and to provide a political leadership for labour struggles. In November 1958, he went to Argentina to support the oil workers' strike but was arrested at the airport and detained on a prison ship until the end of that year. When the Resistencia period reached its peak in the "revolutionary" general strike of January 1959, Cooke was again present to provide political leadership. The strike proclamation issued by Cooke boldly stated that:

> "This strike is political in that it has broader and more transcendent motives than a wage rise or a fixing of the working day. Here the future of the working class and the nation is being fought for". 1

The strike was political because it was in opposition to the government sale of Frigorífico Lisandro de la Torre, this being seen as a government surrender to imperialism and the oligarchy.

Cooke was at the height of his influence in the labour movement, but the moment was short-lived. Not only did he suffer government persecution but also internal opposition from the "soft line" politicians, Leloir, Bramuglia and Albrieu, and some trade union leaders, who joined together in a pincer movement to demand his ouster.

---

1. "La proclama de la huelga del frigorífico Lisandro de la Torre," De Frente, second series, no. 8 (27th June 1974), p. 30.

Alicia Eguren may have been correct when she wrote later that, unofficially, "The first clause of the Pact (was) John's head, demanded by Frigerio and Frondizi", although he was not sacked until the Pact was a year old. She furthermore compared the persecution of Cooke within the Movement, the accusations of him being a "crypto-communist", a "trotskyist", etc., to the first Stalinist purge: "The image of Trotsky invariably appeared before my eyes in that period". [1]

Cooke met the attacks head on, seeing them as a challenge to a revolutionary policy rather than a question of individuals. In November 1957 Perón, pursuing a pendular policy of balancing between the two tendencies, sent a taped message addressed to Bramuglia which arrived in Cooke's hands. The latter refused to pass it on, explaining to Perón that such a tape would create confusion in the Movement. It would appear that the Leader was implicitly recognising the 'soft line', and would thus dishearten the rank-and-file. On that occasion, Perón apologised for his 'mistake' and congratulated Cooke on his action. However, in the middle of 1958, Perón created two new parallel leadership organs, the Superior Command Delegation and the Coordinating and Supervisory Council, making Cooke's strategic leadership of the Resistencia through the clandestine National Command increasingly ambivalent. When Frigerio tried to present the January 1959 general strike as the work of a sector of Peronism allied with Communism, the Coordinating and Supervisory Council issued a communiqúe (28.1.59) congruent with this interpretation. Cooke realised what was happening to the Movement as a result of Frondizi's

---

1. Eguren, op. cit.

integrationist policies: "From now on, there will be much more repression....But there will also be more money and many more opportunities for those who wish to get involved with the government". [1]

The trade union and political tendencies seeking conciliation and legal activity triumphed. Perón remained silent while Albrieu organised Cooke's dismissal shortly after the General Strike. The fall of Cooke showed that despite the militancy and heroism of the Resistance, the "hard-line" of the Movement was still not sufficiently strong to provide Cooke with a solid political base in the Movement. Throughout 1959, Cooke was hunted as the government unleashed its repressive Conintes plan. Influenced by the recently triumphant Cuban Revolution, he increasingly looked to guerrilla warfare to resolve the contradictions within the Peronist Movement and Argentine society at large. The first Argentine rural guerrilla initiative, the Uturuncos, who briefly operated in Tucumán in late 1959, came under Cooke's political influence, but were not under his personal leadership. He was also involved in the creation of guerrilla training camps in Cuba and Argentina in the early 1960's and was an influence upon Ricardo Masetti's People's Guerrilla Army (Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo - EGP) of 1963-4, a Guevarist guerrilla which included Peronists and operated in Salta. Peronist Left-Guevarist convergence dates from this time. Persecution in Argentina forced Cooke into exile in 1960 and it was quite natural that his haven should be Cuba. There, Cooke's ideas found a coherent overall framework in Cuban Marxism and he developed a close personal friendship with Guevara. He became totally identified with the Cuban Revolution and its revolutionary strategy and was soon

---

1. "Apuntes para una historia de la resistencia y del peronismo revolucionario (2a Parte)," En Lucha (Buenos Aires), supplement to no. 15 (April 1974).

active there both as revolutionary instructor and militia man in the Cuban army operations against counterrevolutionaries infiltrated into the Sierras of Escambray.

Perhaps Cooke's most important role in Cuba was in explaining to the Cuban leaders the nature of Peronism, until then generally viewed outside Argentina as a variant of fascism. He therefore paved the way for Cuban aid to left-wing Peronists, starting with the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista - MRP) in 1964, seen as solidarity with national liberation movements.[1] Moreover, his critique of the Argentine Communist Party, written for Fidel Castro, probably influenced the latter in his dispute with the Latin American CP's during the early 1960's over foquismo.[2] The strength of Cooke's foquista convictions led him to openly acknowledge differences with Perón in 1962. However, he never explicitly challenged Perón's overall leadership of the Movement and he continued to fight for his leader's return. Cooke's repeated appeals to Perón to make a revolutionary definition appear to show that he never completely gave up hope that Perón would play a key role in the revolution, even if he were not capable of leading it to its ultimate conclusion. Taking up an offer by Castro, Cooke repeatedly urged Perón to transfer his residence to Cuba, making the latter his revolutionary base of

---

1. Cooke did not participate in the MRP, though he never publicly criticised it. His non-involvement appears to have been due to the fact that he was in Cuba during the immediate pre-history of the MRP and possibly also because many MRP leaders were not really revolutionary.

2. Cooke, "Aportes a la crítica del reformismo en la Argentina," (1961), Pasado y Presente (Buenos Aires), nos. 2-3 (July-December 1973), pp. 373-401.

   "Foquismo" refers to the Guevara-Debray theses on revolutionary warfare, which emphasised the catalytic impact of the operations of guerrilla groups, or 'focos', on the maturing of revolutionary conditions.

operations.

Cooke was only able to return to Argentina after the lifting of a state of seige in October 1963. Most of his published works belong to this last period in Argentina, his most influential book being El Peronismo y el golpe de Estado, [1] an analysis of the 1966 coup, of the Peronist Movement and revolutionary tasks. These works, analysed below, represented the most mature articulation of a revolutionary Peronist ideology to emerge in the early and mid 1960's. However, Cooke always combined his theoretical contributions with political activity. He sought unity between theory and practice, the unity of a revolutionary organisation, a revolutionary theory and a revolutionary methodology. In 1966-67, Cooke led the Argentine delegations to the Tricontinental and OLAS Conferences, after he was unanimously elected by member organisations. As head of the OLAS and Tricontinental committees in Argentina, he promoted the theses of armed struggle and prolonged revolutionary war and attempted to implement them. Cooke created his own organisation, Peronist Revolutionary Action (Acción Revolucionaria Peronista - ARP) to work within the Peronist Movement, developing its revolutionary tendency. Though the ARP never went beyond the preparatory and agitational stages of revolutionary warfare, it can be seen, along with the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Moviemento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara - MNRT) of José Luis Nell and Joe Baxter, as a prototype of the more recent politico-military organisations. Moreover, the ARP was one of the first organisations to work for the unity of the Peronist and non-Peronist

---

1. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe de Estado (informe a las bases del movimiento), (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Acción Revolucionaria Peronista, 1966). Also published under the name Peronismo y Revolución (Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1971). All quotations from this work cite the former text as the reference and use its pagination.

revolutionary Left.

The death of Cooke came in 1968, a year before the important guerrilla groups began to get off the ground and before the germs of left-wing Peronism crystallized into a powerful revolutionary tendency. His major works were not published until at least three years after his death although some of his articles were available. Ideologically, his posthumous influence was greater than his influence while alive. By 1973, Cooke's books had become second only to those of Perón in the best selling Peronist book league. [1] His personal wish was to die fighting like Che Guevara and Camilo Torres. Instead he died in bed of an incurable cancer. As a confirmed atheist and materialist, he rejected any religious ceremony in his will and donated his skin and eyes to a transplant bank. By a strange quirk of history, Cooke died on 19th September 1968, the same day as the Taco Ralo guerrilla group was captured. Shortly before the end, the undismayed Cooke commented: "It does not matter; these comrades have fallen but the guerrilla will go forward and will win". [2]

COOKE'S IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Cooke's parliamentary interventions during the 1946-51 period showed him to be a militant Peronist, upholding the 3 "Banners" of the Movement - economic independence, political sovereignty and social justice - with great conviction. For Cooke, Peronism had taken over

---

1. "Los libros peronistas," La Opinión Cultural, August 19th 1973.
2. Cooke, quoted in "Seguiré vivo en los que luchan," Ya (Es Tiempo de Pueblo) (Buenos Aires), no. 13, 20th September 1973, pp. 10-12.

   The Taco Ralo guerrillas were captured before going into action but their urban support apparatus was reorganised and developed into an important guerrilla organisation, the Peronist Armed Forces - FAP. See Chapter Six.

these banners from a degenerate Radicalism and had taken them to their logical conclusions, transforming them into the programme for a reforming, anti-imperialist Movement. Apart from the Yrigoyenist roots of Cooke's Peronism, one finds in his parliamentary speeches the influence of the lawyer and constitutionalist, firmly defending strict adherence to the democratic norms embodied in the Constitution. Nevertheless, while the image which emerges from this period of Cooke as a democrat, social reformer and anti-imperialist is a valid one, one also finds here a degree of Marxist influence, especially in his treatment of economic questions. Indeed one can say that many of the theoretical bases for Cooke's later conversion to Marxism were already present in this early period.

Historically, Cooke saw himself and the Peronist Movement in general as part of the national and popular historical line upheld by the revisionist school. The popular interpretation of history was presented as an alternative to the liberal interpretation of the oligarchy:

> "which only represents its own or foreign interests, covering this with the cloak of historical 'democratic' and 'civilising' dogmas"...."We believe that national economic liberation can only be achieved through the destruction of those falsely fabricated historical dogmas".

The revisionist school viewed history from an idealised and romantic popular stance, focussed on popular and national struggles and eulogised "the caudillos who represent national sentiments" [1] as their heroes. Thus Cooke, though not a Rosista , shared the revisionists' identification with the Rosas heritage: "We defend Rosas because we

---

1. Cooke, parliamentary speech, Diario de Sesiones (Argentina: Cámara de Diputados), 1949, IV:3139. Future references to Cooke's parliamentary interventions, as recorded in the Diario de Sesiones, will be limited to "DS", year, volume and page(s).

consider that in his moment he represented the democratic opinion of the country, condensed in the great federal masses of the Capital and Interior". [1] Due to his identification with the revisionist historical current and to his familial political background, Cooke owed a considerable intellectual debt to Yrigoyen, "who inspires in so many ways the orientations of my political activity". [2] Though Cooke often referred to the early Radical leader's "limitations" as an anti-imperialist, and even criticised him for getting bogged down in the "disused" constitution of 1853, he clearly derived much of his emphasis upon political democracy and constitutional legality from Yrigoyenist Radicalism and this was to differentiate him from the more authoritarian Peronist legislators.

In parliament, Cooke staunchly defended "the present democratic regime based on respect for human personality and upon the essential bases which make up the Christian dignity of man". [3] As evidence of Cooke's liberal-democratic political views at this time, one can look to his arguments in favour of asylum rights for all shades of political activist - "The right to asylum is indivisible: either it exists or it does not". [4] The democratic rights of the individual were seen as universal, rather than being posed in class terms. Moreover, Cooke stood out in the first Peronist parliament by opposing legislation which provided for the exclusion of political parties from activity for purely ideological reasons. Speaking in 1949, he referred to such a bar as "intolerable"..."a threat to free ideological expression". Defending the free expression of Fascist and Marxist ideas alike as

---

1. DS, 1948, II:1644.
2. DS, 1946, II:293.
3. DS, 1946, XI:232-239.
4. DS, 1949, I:844-847.

beneficial for the country, Cooke maintained that "the opinions of the extreme Right and the Communists can never take root amongst our people because they conflict with the Argentine line of democratic nationalism which is our best tradition". [1] "That strange fauna of monsters", [2] as he described the Communist, Socialist, Radical and Conservative opposition, could be best defeated through clean elections and constitutional methods:

> "We think that only one way is open for the integral realisation of the national revolution, the way of legislative realisation by means of juridical instruments which the Constitution provides for". 3

This should not prevent the State from using its full repressive force against violent opposition, Cooke argued, but while the opposition was prepared to restrict itself to legal forms of opposition, Peronism with its mass popular support could afford to play the democratic game. Of course, it did not always do so and Cooke's occasional silence in the face of extra-constitutional means being used against the opposition shows that he did not always succeed in reconciling theory with practice.

In contrast to his Radical and liberal views of political democracy, Cooke was strongly opposed to economic liberalism, to laissez-faire economics. The latter in practice denied the realisation of liberal ideals, Cooke maintained, with the capitalist system, especially in its monopolistic phase, undermining the liberal values of equality and freedom. Cooke argued that the 'equality of opportunies' was a liberal "myth" due to the existence of economic inequality, while "political liberty is very relative because the ruling class in

---

1. DS, 1949, V:4233.
2. DS, 1951, IV:2382.
3. DS, 1946, I:299.

economics is the ruling class in politics". There was a contradiction here between this belief and Cooke's early liberal constitutionalism - a contradiction only resolved later as the latter Marxist idea displaced the former. Planning was advocated as the instrument with which to partially counteract the anti-liberal practical consequences of capitalism. Though he did not declare war on capital as such, Cooke called for the defence of human personality and dignity through destroying the "mechanisms of this capitalist machinery", upholding the "social function of the State" and practising "intervention in favour of the needy class". [1]

State interventionism was proposed by Cooke in an excellent anti-monopoly speech of 1946, which demonstrated his cognizance of the process of capitalist concentration, the different forms of monopoly and the world-wide legislative attempts to curb monopolistic tendencies. Yet his hostility to the monopolies lay within capitalist parameters and in general terms can be viewed as reflecting the opposition of developing small industrialists to monopoly domination. Cooke supported the anti-monopoly law in order to "attain general well-being through raising the people's living standards", counterposing to the monopolistic order "the existence of the greatest possible number of independent economic entities which compete between themselves and, in this way, ensure a more equitable and individualised distribution of national income". "Free competition" as the "best form of protection for small industrialists and traders and for consumers" was defended, while nationalisation was only deemed necessary and desirable in the basic sectors of the economy "when a certain service or (area of) production

---

1. DS, 1946, XI:232-239.

needs non-competition". [1] In other words, Cooke's project was one in which the State was to intervene to combat monopolistic restrictions on free enterprise and to guarantee decent living standards for the people. He was acutely aware of the way in which the capitalist system, praised by the liberals, negated fundamental liberal ideals in practice, yet he defended that system. With the model of the Soviet Union in mind, Cooke felt that the alternative solution of socialisation inevitably entailed totalitarianism.

Where does this leave Cooke in relation to Marxism? It is clear from his parliamentary interventions on economic questions that he had read Marx, Engels, Hilferding and Lenin on the development and tendencies of capitalism, accepting their analyses but not their conclusions. In his speech on the 1st Economic Plan in 1947, Cooke opined in relation to economic history that:

> "The Marxists have studied the process best. Although their conclusions are not accepted, it is evident that the analysis is correct. Marx never lived to see the full flourishing of the monopoly but he intuitively saw it at its birth and was correct in his predictions". 2

From Marx and Engels came Cooke's understanding of some basic features of capitalism:

> "Marx demonstrated, and in my judgement he was correct, that (...) the problem of cycles is inherent in the essence of the capitalist system" 3 "Marx was wrong on many things but not in his presentation of the problem of the concentration of capital. Crisis is inherent in the capitalist system and so is war. Sooner or later, capitalism becomes imperialism. The struggle for markets brings, on the one hand, the colonisation of economically weak peoples and, on the other, war between the great powers for the first place in the producer markets of raw materials". 4

---

1. DS, 1946, V:454-492.
2. DS, 1946, XI:232-239.
3. DS, 1949, V:3479-3489.
4. DS, 1950, I:614-621.

Here the influence of Lenin's Imperialism was also crucial. Cooke, therefore, even in these early years accepted a considerable degree of Marxist analysis and demonstrated his hostility to a capitalist system which brought about the "accumulation of wealth in a few hands and the increase of the great multitude of economically dependent wage-earners". [1] But he rejected Marxist solutions: "We are not ultra-leftists, because leftism also carries with it some excesses when in power". [2] While seeking a "major advance" towards social equality, he rejected the ideas of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat "exercised by the vanguard, or rather by the Communist Party", due to their international character - "they affirm the supremacy of what is international over what is national, in order later to become imperialisms". [3]

Cooke's early ideas were not short of contradictions. The above quotation rejects internationalism in favour of nationalism but elsewhere Cooke argued that the Argentine situation could only be understood in terms of two principles: the predominance of international factors over national factors; and the primacy of economics in relation to politics. [4] More inconsistency was to be seen in Cooke's solution to economic problems - State intervention and planning - when he recognised that:

> "the bourgeoisie and liberal capitalist State cannot, by means of a simple minimum amount of interventionism, which preserves its essential structure, realise some restrictions on economic freedom: disequilibrium is the very essence of the capitalist system; imperialism is its logical consequence and the monopolies are also the logical consequence of the process of the concentration of production". 5

---

1. Ibid.
2. DS, 1946, I:299.
3. DS, 1951, II:1025.
4. DS, 1946, V:454.
5. DS, 1950, I:614-621.

This places in doubt the adequacy of any capitalist-based solutions, but in these early years Cooke was to draw back from socialist solutions due to the strength of his democratic convictions in a period in which many saw the authoritarian Soviet Union as the only practical form of socialism. Moreover, his ardent nationalism was offended by Stalinist efforts to subordinate international revolutionary movements to the interests of the Soviet great power. Behind Cooke's uneasy and contradictory position, there was the feeling that no viable socialist alternative was possible at that time: "We have made the only revolution that we could make in this 20th century within the structure and organisation of the contemporary world; we have made the revolution of the colony against the imperialist power". [1] The basic dichotomy for Cooke, along with the other Peronists, was therefore that counterposing the Nation and Imperialism. . Class struggle was rejected in favour of social reform. Yet some elements were already present in his thought for his later conversion to class struggle and revolutionary politics, especially Cooke's analysis of monopoly capitalism.

The next available indication of Cooke's ideological development was provided by his editorials in De Frente , published in 1954-5, which revealed that his vision of the "good society" had not radically changed since his Congressional days. There was absolutely no sign here of Cooke advocating a "deepening" of the Peronist Revolution, something which was attributed to him 18 years later by sectors of the Peronist Left. Rather, the picture which emerges from a reading of the review is of an extremely militant but fairly orthodox Peronist. His radical 1955 image owes more to the methodology of mass mobilisation in defence of the government, and more to the opportunism of

---

1. DS, 1951, IV:2382.

other Peronist leaders in contrast to his behaviour, than to Cooke's own ideological development.

The "good society" was still a "3rd Position", rejecting both the dictatorship of capital and the dictatorship of the proletariat while seeking a social equilibrium between the various classes composing the Nation. This was clear from Cooke's argument in 1954 that wage rises should be based upon increased productivity which in turn was deemed the responsibility of employer as well as employee. [1] Cooke propagated the idea of the "social economy", exemplified by the transfer of the breweries of the Bemberg Trust into union hands and supported as the "progressive replacement of a crudely capitalist economy by a socially-progressive economy". Socialist collectivism was explicitly rejected as "combating, with a new injustice, the old injustices of capitalism". Instead, the 3rd way was to enable "the peaceful development and capitalisation of the working class". [2] Cooke saw the '3rd Position' not as a reformed and enlightened form of capitalism but as a totally different system, equidistant from capitalism and socialism. It involved a major interventionist role for the State, with the latter not viewed as an inevitable class instrument: "The Nation is not necessarily a bourgeois superstructure for the defence of the privileged classes", as was demonstrated, it was argued, by the advance of labour under Peronism - "The Argentine workers had access to the political command positions and were able to reform the State structure" to create social equilibrium. [3] In fact, though labour became an important national political force for the first time under

---

1. Cooke, "El equilibrio de los precios y salarios," De Frente, no. 2 (18th March 1954), p. 4.
2. Cooke, "Capitalización de los trabajadores," ibid. no. 48 (7th February 1955), editorial.
3. Cooke, "Patria y proletariado," ibid. no. 60 (2nd May 1955), editorial.

Perón, its power was only indirect and within the Peronist governments ex-Radicals and other professional politicians were always more numerous than were workers.

Internationally, this '3rd Position' was extended to a rejection of both US and Soviet affiliations: "In synthesis, neither the Russian Revolution nor the 14th July....simply nationalism". [1] Cooke rejected Argentine participation in US-promoted continental conferences, calling instead for Latin American unity against the US. He stood out as a vociferous critic of the dealings with Standard Oil of California regarding the exploitation of national oil deposits. Upholding Article 40 of the Constitution, which provided for national patrimony of natural energy sources, Cooke saw the deal as a threat to national sovereignty. However, though he called for the State oil agency, YPF, to perform the main exploitative role here and for State support for national capital in general, Cooke did not oppose the participation of foreign capital in Argentine development so long as it was compatible with Article 40 and respected government legislation. Among other things, he favoured the entry of foreign car firms.

Communism was still rejected as totalitarian and as a new imperialism, but an important advance towards Marxism at this time was Cooke's differentiation between Stalinism and Marxism. He argued that Soviet expansionism had nothing to do with the Marx-Engels conception of world revolution: "Genuine Marxism has suffered at the hands of the present Russian leaders". [2] No longer were the ideas and actions of its epigones used by Cooke against Marxism.

---

1. Ibid.
2. Cooke, "Paneslavismo, comunismo e imperialismo rojo," ibid. no. 37 (22nd November 1954), pp. 18-21.

While not departing radically from Peronist orthodoxy, De Frente was by no means servile. It was a mildly campaigning review which strongly criticised many Peronist policies, such as the unsuccessful government attempt to impose an official students union (the General University Confederation - CGU) upon the students and the appointment of mediocre party dogmatists as lecturers. Other campaign issues ranged from the housing shortage, the vice of usury (a "moral perversion") and the lack of a Latin American news agency, to the starving of jockeys to make them competitive. De Frente campaigned in favour of the "humanisation" of professional boxing and against the way in which the National Library was (and is) run: "cultura para alimentar ratas!" - a reference to the fact that rats have easier access to much of its material than have research students.

More important in relation to Cooke's later political development were the seeds of his critique of "the Bureaucracy". Still pursuing his rodential preoccupations, Cooke argued that in the State bureaucracy, "together with many men who work with determined patriotism, there thrive a number of opportunist rats who must be exterminated". [1] Parasitism and sabotage by elements within the bureaucracy, as well as its enormous size, were targets of De Frente wrath. Parallel to this came the embryo of Cooke's critique of the trade union bureaucracy: "Whether because everything happened too quickly or due to the mistake of choosing leaders according to the "fingering" principle, the fact was that some leaders quickly lost contact with the workers". [2] Some labour leaders had become corrupted by the spoils of

---

1. Cooke, "El sabotaje del papelero," ibid. no. 45 (17th January 1955), editorial
2. Cooke, "El futuro destino de la CGT," ibid. no. 70 (11th July 1955), pp. 4-5.

office and failed to represent their members, but in these years Cooke saw this as a phenomenon of self-seeking individuals and not so much as a bureaucratic system.

Cooke's position on the impending September golpe has been discussed above. Six further numbers of the review were however to appear after the military intervention, maintaining the traditional line of "constructive criticism" but now from a standpoint of opposition to the regime. The editor claimed the moral authority to judge the military government on the basis that De Frente had never portrayed the deposed Perón as infallible. His review continued to defend economic and political independence and fought against the illegalisation of the Peronist Movement. In particular, Cooke chastised the "fauna of political monsters" for preaching democracy and freedom, for invoking the "empty formulae of decadent liberalisms" while systematically denying popular sovereignty in practice. [1]

Despite attempts to appear objective by reiterating criticism of the less desirable aspects of Peronism, statements like "We believe that nothing can be expected from the reactionary forces, always ready to ally with the enemies of the people" [2] hardly endeared Cooke to the hard-liners within the military. After 85 editions, the last one of which reported the arrest of editor John William Cooke, De Frente was closed down. It had been the organ of militant Peronism rather than of a left-wing Peronism. Politically and ideologically, it was rarely more radical than Peronist orthodoxy, often appearing radical because it took Perón's rhetoric seriously while many other Peronist leaders used it for their own opportunistic purposes. As in the case

---

1. Cooke, "Nuestra línea insobornable," ibid. no. 81 (3rd October 1955), editorial.

2. Ibid.

of Evita's plan for workers' militias, Cooke's militancy at this time lay mainly in his readiness to mobilise the masses against violent reaction, to create armed contingents to confront the golpistas. Peronism for Cooke had already produced revolutionary achievements and his militancy in 1955 lay only in his desire for social reform to continue (though gradually and within existing social parameters) and in his recognition that only the mobilised working class could possibly thwart a military coup.

It was in Cooke's correspondence with Perón after 1955 that the former's radicalism first became patent, though it was a long time before Cooke was to acknowledge his differences with his leader. The Correspondencia [1] falls neatly into two distinct sections: pre- and post-Cuban. In the former, Cooke wrote with the authority of being the Resistencia commander, obedient in general to Perón's directives; in the latter he wrote mainly from revolutionary Cuba in a manner which indicated his conversion to Guevarism. This was the decisive radicalising experience in Cooke's life, reflecting initially his practical experience of the Resistance struggle, especially the impossibility of joint political struggle with the "soft-liners", and then the great impact of the Cuban experience, which for Cooke demonstrated that the regular army was not invincible..

In the period up to 1959, Cooke urged an intransigent line for Peronism, looking to an insurrectional solution rather than a golpista or electoral one: "Intransigence maintains and increases our power

---

1. Juan Domingo Perón and John William Cooke, Correspondencia Perón-Cooke, 2 vols. 2d. ed. (Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973). Future references to letters contained in this collection will be limited to "CPC", date of letter when available, volume and page.

while transactions initiate the road to annihilation and destroy the revolutionary dynamic of the Movement". [1] This was highly reminiscent of Yrigoyenism at the turn of the century, before the Radical Party gained office. Cooke was fully aware that the governmental denial of political rights to the Peronists strengthened the case for insurrectionalism. In 1957, referring to the 1955 coup and two years of persecution, Cooke wrote that "The misfortune purified (Peronism), allowed it to create a mystique of combat and a revolutionary dynamic tending towards the insurrectional task". [2] However, he was equally aware of the danger presented by the moderates of a negotiated deal with other parties which would provide solutions for the leaders but not for the masses. He therefore threw his weight behind the clandestine comandos and militant trade union leaders, against the right-wing, hoping that a popular insurrection would resolve the internal contradictions of Peronism in favour of the intransigents.

During these early years of the Resistencia, Cooke described himself as "a maniac with a single idea: organisation". [3] He saw that the workers were militantly fighting for the return of Perón but that the organisations of Peronism, particularly the political apparatus, were not adequate to that level of combativity. The clandestine comandos were described as "the authentic fighters, the true devotees of the movement" but they were almost totally disunited and uncoordinated, having "the defect of exaggerating their forces". [4] Cooke used his time as leader to try to combat these defects and to link up the commandos with the struggle to recover the trade unions, to organise

---

1. CPC, 1:230.
2. CPC, August 28th 1957, I:266.
3. CPC, 5th June 1957, I:145.
4. CPC, 14th November 1957, II:24.

the popular base of the Movement so as to weaken the self-seeking politicians. While Peronist organisation remained "a giant jungle" [1] and failed to develop revolutionary forms, there was the danger that the political wing, where the "soft-liners" were strong, would act as a brake on the Movement with the Justicialist Party, "instead of being an instrument of struggle against the oligarchy, (being) part of the oligarchic mechanism" and "the road by way of which corruption penetrates Peronism". [2]

Part of the problem of the lack of unity of the Movement was the proliferation of orders, often contradictory, and the excessive number of people with letters of authorisation from Perón, which prevented Cooke from being able to speak as the single voice of Perón. Cooke's protestations against this state of affairs seem to reveal, early on, a lack of understanding of Perón's pendular policy of balancing between the different wings of the movement, supporting one when the other became too strong, in order to maintain his own personal authority. Thus while Cooke recognised the disease affecting Peronism, he got the cure wrong - an appeal to Perón, partly responsible for the disunity and factionalism, for greater assertion of his authority, for firmer clarification of the doctrinal and strategic line, while still allowing for "a certain liberty of doctrinal freedom". [3] Naturally, in his letters to Cooke, Perón himself emphasised the insurrectional line ("The more violent we are the better" [4]) and played along with Cooke's mistaken view that the political leaders were in some way "misinterpreting" him, that they were not the other aspect of the

---

1. CPC, II:120.
2. CPC, 5th February 1959, II:148.
3. CPC, August 1957, I:272.
4. CPC, 3rd November 1956, I:35.

pendular strategy which, depending on the situation, also looked to electoral and military coup solutions and the threat of insurrection. Of course, Cooke's appeals to Perón, though possibly naive, are understandable, for Perón's exclusive endorsement of Cooke was the only way in which the Resistance could have become unified and structured on the basis of Cooke's strategy.

Cooke wrote that:

> "A revolution requires a revolutionary party, revolutionary leaders and a revolutionary myth, on the one hand, and the occasion on the other"..."We have the revolutionary leader and revolutionary myth: Perón. Through unification and organisational work we are creating the revolutionary force. Afterwards we will take advantage of the occasion". 1

Cooke viewed Peronism as a revolutionary movement fighting against the system in a "prolonged war" for the restoration and extension of the gains of 1946-55. The revolutionary organisation could not fix a date for the insurrection but could accelerate the revolutionary process and by recognising the revolutionary situation when it arose would be able to take advantage of it. Such was the revolutionary emphasis of Cooke at this time, an emphasis apparently contradicted by his role in the signing of the pact with Frondizi. In 1957, Cooke was strongly opposed to such a deal and broke with Jauretche when the latter courted the Frondizistas. At the same time, he felt that the successful "blank vote" of 1957 could not be repeated, that it could not maintain the unity of the movement and that some kind of a positive political strategy was required for the 1958 elections, since the immediate insurrectional alternative was not open to the Movement. He therefore negotiated with the Frondizi Radicals, initially not to gain an agreement but as a delaying tactic, for while Frondizi felt that an

---

1. CPC, 14th November 1957, II:9-10.

electoral deal with Peronism was possible, Radical disunity would prevail.

Cooke was a reluctant signatory to the Perón-Frondizi Pact and refused to take sole responsibility for it. To Cooke, it was something for Perón to decide, but in his acceptance of the leader's decision there was also tacit recognition that voting for Frondizi, on a tactical basis, was the best way of dealing with the Radical alternative to Peronism: the Movement would have been worse off had Frondizi won without Peronist votes; if Balbín had won, he'd have done the same as Frondizi in power, thereby enabling Frondizi to pose as a popular alternative. Such was the reasoning of Cooke. [1] It shows that while Cooke was an intransigent Peronist promoting an insurrectional strategy, he still at this time defended the unity of the Movement. He appealed to Perón to replace the political leaders with "loyalists", but his goal remained Justicialist and he criticized "those who want to transplant leftisms contrary to the possibilities afforded by historical and geographical conditions". [2] Cooke was always militant but only became socialist-orientated after his ouster by Perón and the "soft-line", when he became an exile in Havana. His letters to Perón from 1960 onwards were full of praise for Cuba, praise without any reservations. Cuba for the former _Resistencia_ leader became the new point of departure for Latin American revolutionaries, offering the first successful socialist revolution in the continent adjacent to the bastion of world imperialism.

Cooke's self-designated mission in Cuba was to explain the nature of Peronism to the _Fidelista_ leadership and to encourage a close

---

1. _CPC_, 30th September 1962, II:255.
2. _CPC_, 28th August 1957, I:271.

ideological and practical alignment of Peronism with the revolutionary regime. While praising Perón's own personal grasp of the Cuban process, Cooke strongly decried the anti-communist position of the Movement's leadership in Argentina. Even militants like Framini had made declarations against the Cuban Revolution. Against those who attacked Cuba for being communist, Cooke argued that, in the Argentine context:

> "we are the communists, in the last analysis, because we are not a theoretical threat but a concrete possibility" 1..."We are the communists in Argentina because Yankee imperialism is not guided by philosophical declarations but by practical events; and the mass movement which endangers investments, social order and hemispheric "security", that is communism". 2

To attack Cuba was therefore a suicidal stance. Peronism was being persecuted as a communist threat, was suffering all the adverse effects of communist movements, but was not openly declaring its "true" nature and therefore not gaining the valuable solidarity of the social and national liberation movements of the world.

The fact that Peronist hostility to Cuba was being cloaked in the guise of Tercerismo led Cooke to redefine that concept: "Tercerismo implies independence vis-à-vis the two blocs - capitalism and communism - but not equidistance"; [3] independence but not neutrality. Cooke, influenced by Soviet aid to Cuba and the liberation movements and by the internal changes in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin, now gave up his former allegiance to the "two imperialisms" thesis, arguing that Soviet expansion was politically rather than economically motivated. Peronism, due to the anti-communism of the leaders was isolated from other national liberation movements at a time when "the new forms being

---

1. CPC, 24th July 1961, II:183.
2. CPC, 18th October 1962, II:274.
3. Ibid. p. 276.

assumed by the division of the world (..) make the fate of the dominated peoples coincide with that of the socialist world", [1] Cooke claimed. He did not call for Peronism to become communist but rather for a clear disassociation of the Movement from anti-communism.

For Cooke, the main "lesson" learnt from Cuba was the indivisibility of national and social liberation:

> "Nowadays, nobody thinks that national liberation can be achieved without social revolution and therefore the struggle is also of the poor against the rich".... 2 "The national revolution is always partly socialist, always a step towards socialism, more or less in accordance with the objective, concrete circumstances that exist in the country"...."I believe that Latin America will emancipate herself being Socialist, that Peronism, which will lead the Argentine liberation, will be Socialist". 3

Peronism, seen by Cooke as a national liberation movement with revolutionary potential, was regarded as belonging to the same tradition as the Cuban movement but they were not viewed as identical, since the liberation of each country would assume its own national physiognomy:

> "Peronism and Castroism are national variations of the continental revolutionary struggle and it is as artificial to pretend that their solutions are automatically transferable as it is to deny their dialectical relationship". 4

There was more wishful thinking than reality behind Cooke's identification of Peronism with Castroism, not withstanding the national variation qualification, for Cuba had never possessed a national bourgeoisie - however, the key to this identification is not to be found in the characteristics of Peronism in the early 1960's but in Cooke's vision of how Peronism could change in the future into an anti-capitalist movement.

---

1. CPC, 24th July 1961, II:199.
2. Ibid. p. 203.
3. CPC, 15th June 1962, II:233 & 240.
4. CPC, 18th October 1962, II:262.

Cooke's letters were therefore concerned with restructuring the Movement in accordance with its revolutionary potential, given by its mass working-class base. For Cooke, the Peronist leaders who still thought in terms of the 1945 alliance were "behind the times, by something like sixteen years". Yesterday's allies were now in the enemy camp: the Army had become part of "the continental police against the revolutionary war and communism"; the Church was siding with imperialism against communism; and the national bourgeoisie had turned its back on Peronism:

> "as it always does in semi-colonial countries because it is not the pioneering, enterprising and progressive class of the capitalist centres, but rather a class which is economically and culturally subjected to imperialism".

Due to this realignment of class forces, Cooke concluded that the reestablishment of the old alliance, were that possible, would mean renouncing the raison d'être of Peronism - "anti-imperialism and social revolution". [1]

However, there remained always in Cooke's position a degree of ambiguity regarding class alliances, rejecting national bourgeois leadership but still hoping to include that class in a multi-class alliance. After the Cuban Revolution, he urged a more revolutionary and decidedly anti-capitalist line for the Movement, while still accepting Peronist 'polyclassism' in some form. Thus, while stating that class conciliation was no longer possible, he argued that "now multi-class national fronts could act, but with the revolutionary classes - workers, peasants, intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie - in command. And however they begin, they will end in Socialism". [2] This

---

1. CPC, 24th July 1961, II:191-195.
2. CPC, 3rd March 1962, II:213.

assumed that the classes deemed non-revolutionary within Peronism would accept the hegemony of those classes deemed revolutionary, something which historical experience suggests is highly unlikely. The key to this paradox lay in the Cuban revolutionary process in which diverse classes composed the anti-Batista movement and which culminated ultimately in the victory of the revolutionary wing. Though Cooke realised that a direct emulation of the Cuban revolutionary model was unrealistic for the rest of Latin America, he was certainly naive in not seeing that the more nationalistic sectors of the Argentine bourgeoisie had also learnt "lessons" from the Cuban experience and would never again support an anti-imperialist movement, or at least not one led by the classes whose hegemony Cooke promoted.

Parallel to Cooke's reformulation of the Peronist alliance came his call for a policy reformulation. Feeling that Peronism had achieved as much social reform and anti-imperialism as was possible on the basis of capitalism, Cooke now advocated socialisation as the fundamental policy for the Movement. To Perón, he wrote:

> "We must have government by the people"..."We must take away the big estancia from the landowners, big industry from the oligarchs, foreign trade and financial management from the representatives of foreign capital. The measures of 1945-55 will not be enough; we must go further, as you have declared. At the same time, one cannot talk of socialising everything, because we must maintain the productive structures which aid development, though we must socialise a lot....."

In the final sentence and in his description of total socialisation as "childish", [1] Cooke left the door open for the survival of some sectors of national capital, this complementing his acceptance of 'polyclassism' for the Movement. This did not mean that Cooke envisaged some kind of Western European-style mixed economy, but rather one in which small and

---

1. CPC, 15th June 1962, II:233 & 236.

medium national capital would be left in private hands, operating within a socialist economy in which the State would own the major productive forces and control the private sector.

Both the restructuring of the Peronist alliance and the left-turn in ideology required basic changes in the Movement. Cooke saw the cardinal problem as being the bureaucracy, the pragmatic and at best reformist leadership of the Movement within Argentina. He attempted to undermine its authority by appealing to Perón for a reassertion of the direct leader-mass relationship and at the same time a clarification of the doctrinal line of the Movement. Paramount among his arguments was the idea that the bureaucracy was in some way "misinterpreting" Perón. For example, Cooke argued that when Perón spoke of the alternative being "us or the communists", he did not mean that Peronism was a barrier to communism, as some bureaucrats maintained, but rather that if Peronism failed to carry through the national and social revolution, the communists would do so. In opposition to the bureaucrats, Cooke claimed "the most rigorous Peronist orthodoxy", [1] yet it was an orthodoxy unrecognisable to Perón. Cooke's "orthodoxy" was one which felt that the 1st Declaration of Havana "totally coincides with our principles" [2] and that the 2nd Declaration "will, in general terms, be the manifesto of the new liberation". [3]

By never publicly criticising Cuba, Perón encouraged the illusions of those who coined the slogan 'Fidel-Perón, una sola corazón' (Fidel-Perón, a single heart). His political actions, though, were far less equivocal. He stayed in Madrid and turned down Castro's offer of

---

1. CPC, 24th July 1961, II:196.
2. CPC, 11th September 1960, II:170.
3. CPC, 3rd March 1962, II:222.

residence in Cuba, never replying to Cooke's ten arguments in favour of the move. The example of Sihanouk in Peking shows that the possibility of Perón experiencing an ideological shift, if not conversion, in a revolutionary centre was not totally unrealistic. What was unrealistic was Cooke's belief that there was any chance of Perón going there in the first place. For Cooke, Perón was "the prisoner of the Puerta de Hierro" (Perón's Madrid residence) - "It is as if Eisenhower had directed and planned the Normandy landing from a German concentration camp" [1] - yet Perón in fact was hardly a reluctant "prisoner". His ideal society was closer, though different, to Franco's Spain than to Castro's Cuba.

While playing a role himself in developing revolutionary theory, with Marxism now as his "guide to action", [2] Cooke relied on Perón to make the major changes necessary for a revolutionary restructuring of the Movement. He saw a move by Perón to Cuba or his return to Argentina as a fundamental step in this direction: "My General, if you put one foot in Argentina, not only will you begin the era of our recovered freedom but also that of Latin America"; [3] he called on Perón to describe the Movement "as it is" - "a national liberation movement of the extreme Left in as much as it proposes to replace the capitalist system with socialist forms"; [4] and he appealed to Perón for the reestablishment of a perfected form of the old clandestine comandos as the basic organs of the Movement.

This reliance upon definitions and actions of Perón to transform the Movement is even clearer from Cooke's insistence upon verticalismo

---

1. CPC, 18th October 1962, II:267-9.
2. CPC, 15th June 1962, II:239.
3. CPC, 11th August 1964, II:297.
4. CPC, 3rd March 1962, II:222.

(a vertical chain of command descending from Perón as leader) and personalism in the Movement. He called for the designation of more "representative" leaders by Perón rather than for the democratic election of leaders from below. This is perhaps where Cooke appeared to be at his most "orthodox" as a Peronist. Behind this loyalty to Perón's leadership were three fundamental reasons: firstly that Cooke did have some illusions in the 1960's supposed "left-turn" of Perón, that he thought that the Leader would play at least some role in coming revolutionary developments; secondly, seeing that Perón's revolutionism was ambiguous, that he was gambling on several horses at the same time, Cooke wanted to appeal to the revolutionary ego of Perón through flattery, through portraying him as the great Liberator of Latin America; and thirdly, a recognition of the fact that militant Peronist workers looked upon Perón rather than Castro as their leader, and that without Perón the Movement would rapidly lose its cohesiveness. The latter was a perennial problem for the Peronist Left - those with socialist orientations saw the need to work in the Movement grouping the working class, but they could not escape payment of the admission fee: some kind of real or synthetic identification with and loyalty to Perón, thus losing complete political independence. The danger was always that they were more likely to strengthen workers' illusions in a revolutionary Perón then to undermine his hegemony. Yet the only alternative for the Left, in the period under discussion, was isolation from the working class and consequential political impotence.

By 1962, however, after successive attempts to gain a real revolutionary definition from Perón, Cooke was finally forced to admit differences with him, while playing down their fundamental nature. Having in July 1961 declared his full agreement with Perón's latest letters and documents, then having criticised Peronist behaviour in

the 1962 elections, Cooke in October 1962 explicitly mentioned differences with Perón for the first time. These, he claimed, were fewer than their areas of agreement, and were partly a question of timing:

> "Essentially, what is at stake is a problem of timing, of how to act upon the action guidelines you have drawn up for the Movement. You see the need for gradual development towards positions which build up our strength and will enhance the final battles against the oligarchy. I consider that that decisive improvement in our strategic position requires of us neither complicated combinations nor long-term policies: it is within our reach and drastic, decisive decisions and a few categoric measures by you are enough to eliminate time and dealings".

It was also seen as a question of location, the argument being that Perón in Madrid could not hope to understand all developments in Argentina, whereas Cooke was in permanent contact with the revolutionary world in Havana and therefore, it was claimed, had a grasp of the "concrete and immediate" possibilities for insurrection. [1]

In other words, Cooke's "Time and Place" argument was that he and Perón were in agreement on basic issues, but that he, due to his proximity to Argentina and his revolutionary links, felt that victory was nearer at hand than Perón realised; that therefore Perón should relegate electoral and legal tactics in favour of an immediate insurrectionary struggle. Still Cooke did not explicitly admit a basic ideological difference with Perón in his writings, but rather tried to pose his new views as a logical development from Perón's own ideas: "I believe that my reasoning does not contradict yours but rather extends it to its fullest ideological, methodological and organisational consequences". [2] In fact, as Perón's final presidency ultimately confirmed, Perón only sided with the Left when it suited his purpose;

---

1. CPC, 18th October 1962, II:263.
2. CPC, January 1966, II:341.

his final political definition was much closer to those sectors whom Cooke and the Peronist Left accused of treachery to the Leader.

If one judges Perón according to his actions rather than words, a lot of his apparent ambiguity disappears. The same is true of Cooke, for while he continued to verbally accept Peronist 'polyclassism', in practice his efforts were aimed solely at the theoretical and organisational development of the revolutionary tendency. His group, Peronist Revolutionary Action, refused to favour either the Vandorist or Isabelist sectors in the internal Peronist dispute of 1965-6. For them this was an inter-bureaucratic wrangle, with neither group representing the will of the masses and presenting a revolutionary alternative. Though Cooke never disallowed for electoral activity on a tactical basis, legal periods for him were always regarded as an opportunity to strengthen the clandestine apparatus in preparation for the next period of illegality, the exact opposite being true of Perón and the bureaucracy who dismantled that apparatus after gaining legality from Frondizi.

After the Cuban Revolution, Guevara became a key influence upon Cooke's ideas about how to wage the struggle, the guerrilla expert having argued that "the modern revolutionary struggle is the confrontation between a small army with many arms and a great army without arms". [1] Cooke adapted Guevara's foquismo to an urban setting, seeing guerrilla warfare as the best way to confront the problem of armed State power. His writings were far less militaristic, however, than those of Marighela and Debray: his insurrectional strategy provided for the use of guerrillas and for them to play an acceleratory

---

1. CPC, 18th October 1962, II:286.

role in the revolutionary process, but at the end of the process, for Cooke, there was to be the "mobilisation of the masses for the seizure of power". [1] Though Cooke never fully developed his views on the key relationship between mass struggle and armed struggle, his basic orientation towards combining the two aspects in an overall strategy predated the strategic thinking of other Latin American guerrilla theorists by a decade.

It was not until January 1966 that Cooke realised the futility of his correspondence with Perón: "My arguments, unfortunately, have no effect; you proceed in a very different manner to that I recommend, and at times in a totally antithetical manner". [2] However, this never produced a clear political break with Perón, the latter still being an indispensable factor in the Peronist Left strategy. Cooke's letters were never totally free of the cloud of ambiguity surrounding them - indeed, the last published item of the Correspondencia, dated February 21st, 1966, ended with Cooke reaffirming his "feelings of personal friendship and political solidarity" with Perón. [3]

The influence of the Cuban Revolution on John William Cooke, evident in the above examination of the Correspondencia, was so crucial that it merits further analysis. Not only did that revolution present Latin America with a practical defeat for imperialism but also, for the Peronist Left, it provided a new line which reconciled nationalism with socialism, this being of key importance in Argentina where the traditional Left had always opposed or at least remained independent of national movements. Cooke, as Juan Carlos Portantiero

---

1. CPC, January 1966, II:343.
2. Ibid. p. 341.
3. CPC, 21st February 1966, II:367.

writes, saw Cuba as "the perfect and prefiguring synthesis of an inevitable process: the fusion of revolutionary nationalism with socialism". [1] It was also a political refuge for Cooke and a source of support for the embryonic Peronist Left inside Argentina. Though the Peronist bureaucracy had not hidden its dislike of the revolutionary regime, Perón himself, by commenting that Cuba "has our same mark", [2] enabled the Peronist Left to adopt Guevarist orientations while still claiming to remain within the vague frontiers of "orthodoxy".

In his unfinished Apuntes sobre el Che, Cooke eulogised "our Comandante of the Andes", recently killed in Bolivia, as an exemplary "New Man". Identification with Guevara's military theses was unshaken by the failure of the Bolivian 'foco', with Cooke writing that "we are convinced that we live in an epoch in which the revolution is mature and in which praxis can accelerate the objective conditions"...."We believe that the (revolutionary) explosion depends on praxis and the modification of the conditions which at present prevent it" [3] Though Cooke admitted the need to study the reasons for this defeat, he was not prepared to conclude that it in any way invalidated the guerrilla theories. Implicitly, therefore, the defeat was due to contingent factors, as too for Cooke were all guerrilla defeats. He could claim that the theories had at least one victory to back them up (not surprisingly, since the practice preceded the theory) whereas those espousing different strategies and rejecting 'foquismo' could point to no such example of their strategies being successful in Latin

---

1. Juan Carlos Portantiero, "Introducción a un inédito de Cooke," Pasado y Presente, op. cit. pp. 369-372.
2. "El Peronismo y la revolución cubana: Reportaje a John William Cooke," Che (Buenos Aires), no. 22 (8th September 1961), pp. 8-9.
3. Cooke, "Apuntes sobre el 'Che'," Compromiso (Buenos Aires), no. 3 (October 1973).

America.

Guevarist guerrilla theory was not applied mechanically to Argentina, but was rather adapted to the predominantly urban character of the country, with the ARP being based in Buenos Aires. Yet the same basic idea was present that a small number of people could initiate a revolutionary struggle, that their actions would have broad repercussions and would raise the collective consciousness of the masses. Only through guerrilla fighters initiating armed struggle, Cooke argued, would the masses see revolution as a concrete possibility and thus join the struggle. However, Cooke's foquismo , far more than Guevara's, emphasised coordination of armed struggle with mass struggle and recognised that the working class was the main revolutionary class in Argentina.

One also finds in Cooke's writings the same cult of the hero and feeling of moral superiority common to most guerrilla literature: "We belong to that new world of heroic men united by the revolutionary ideal". This feeling of moral superiority was vital if one was to get large numbers of people to wage a revolutionary war, but Cooke's justification of violence was also patently humanist, asserting the right of the masses "to use revolutionary violence, which is the affirmation of the humanity of man, against reactionary violence, which is its negation". [1] Peaceful means of struggle, though desirable in themselves, were incapable of achieving victory against a regime prepared to use violence against revolutionary threats. The real alternative, Cooke argued, was not violence or non-violence, but the violence of the oppressors or the violence of the oppressed, a dichotomy which was soon to become common in the literature of radical Catholic circles.

---

1. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe....., op. cit. p. 108.

In the face of repression, revolutionaries could not behave like gentlemen - "We are Peronists, not gentlemen", Cooke reminded the apostles of pacifism. [1]

The moral superiority of the guerrilla fighter for Cooke lay in his selfless dedication to his people and country, in his personal sacrifice in fighting and dying for a superior social order: "a free man in a free land". [2] The moral qualities found in the guerrilla fighter would be the basis for a new revolutionary morality after the revolution - socialism for both Guevara and Cooke was not just a matter of an economic reordering of society. Finally, there was the romanticism and bravado which tends to attract itself to guerrilla warfare and which was voiced by Cooke himself: "Better to be defeated or killed with Che Guevara than to be correct and triumph with Vittorio Codovilla. In particular, it is much happier". [3] This was the alternative for the Left as seen by Cooke - armed struggle or timid reformism justified by an alleged absence of "objective" revolutionary conditions. Guerrilla warfare for Cooke was the revolutionary method, Cuba and the 'Resistencia being the background to this belief. Perhaps one of the reasons why he never appears to have considered a Bolshevik type of strategy is that one of his nationalist assumptions was that each region would develop its own national form of socialism, including its own revolutionary methodology. That is why there is no consideration of international revolutionary models, save the Cuban, in Cooke's writings, Cuba being the one Latin American success story.

---

1. Cooke, La lucha por la liberación nacional, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973), p. 74.
2. Ibid. p. 32.
3. Ibid. p. 105. Vittorio Codovilla was General-Secretary of the Argentine Communist Party (PCA) for four decades.

Though Cooke only saw the general guidelines of the Cuban model as useful for Argentina, rather than seeing it as a prototype, he never specified which elements of the Cuban strategy were suitable for his country and which were not. Nor did he ever discuss, at least in his writings, differences in social structure and levels of development between the two countries. Thus, even though Cooke argued that the Cuban "lessons" had to be qualified with regard to Argentine national specificities, his strategic conceptions were somewhat abstract in the sense that they had more to do with Cuba than Argentina. It was a question of grafting the Cuban model onto Argentine conditions - for example, seeking compatibility between foquismo and the much more important mass workers' struggles taking place in his homeland - rather than devising a strategy which was primarily suitable for Argentine conditions, and which secondarily drew on international experiences while bearing in mind those national conditions, with only the former providing a sure guideline as to which of the international experiences were significant.

Cooke's ideas on revolutionary strategy were further developed in a critique of the Argentine Communist Party (PCA) written for Castro in 1961. This was not specifically directed against the party - they were not important enough for that - but rather against the general conception of the road to socialism held by most of the Latin American Communist Parties. Two basic elements of this were discussed: their views on the formation of broad anti-imperialist fronts and the perennial argument about objective conditions. Cooke disagreed both with the advocacy by the PCA of a "Broad National Democratic Front" and their rejection of revolutionary struggle on the basis that the objective conditions for it were not present.

The popular front desired by the PCA was described by Cooke as an "alliance with the worst forces", isolating the party from the working class, and as "a superstructural front which, if feasible, would only serve as the usufruct of bourgeois politicians with progressive whims". [1] Nothing for Cooke could be expected from the bourgeoisie who only wanted to "privatise the lucre and socialise the sacrifices". [2] Basically, Cooke saw bourgeois-democratic tasks, which the PCA still considered to be on the order of the day, as having gone as far as they could under Peronism which had achieved "the most that could be done without modifying the basic structure of private property". Sectors of the bourgeoisie not linked to imperialism could participate in the revolutionary process but only "on condition that the proletariat leads the process, since it is the only consistently revolutionary class". Since Cooke viewed national and social revolution as a "single, indivisible process", [3] the bourgeoisie could not lead the liberation struggle, as was implied in PCA strategies. In a Leninist manner, the alternative was posed by him as either the dictatorship of the proletariat or the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie: either a workers' government undertaking the national and social liberation of the country, and in the short term also coinciding with the objective interests of the national bourgeoisie, or a bourgeois government which would not only oppose social liberation for class reasons but also national liberation due to economic ties with foreign capital. In this sense, then, an alliance with "democratic forces", as they were termed by the PCA, meant an alliance with objective enemies who would side-track even the timid proposals of the PCA.

---

1. Cooke, "Aportes a la crítica...," op. cit. p. 386.
2. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op. cit. p. 98.
3. Cooke, "Aportes a la crítica..., op. cit. pp. 386 & 399.

Moreover, the PCA strategy was electoralist while for Cooke the vote could not express the fighting will of the people, especially in a situation in which the Armed Forces, rather than the political parties, held the real power. Countering the PCA excuse for its own lack of revolutionary activity on the basis that the objective conditions for it were not present, Cooke argued that:

> "opportunities to seize power do not fall from the sky but rather have to be created; and to focus one's efforts on elections is to conspire against the creation of insurrectional conditions, if these don't exist (already)".

The PCA confused "conditions" with "opportunities" - "Conditions never appear in a wholly completed form with nothing missing" [1] - whereas Cooke saw the difference between a revolutionary situation and a situation in which insurrectionary struggle, though lacking immediate prospects of success, could be initiated, a distinction blurred in PCA formulae.

Instead of imitating the PCA stance of revolutionary inactivity on the basis of determined conditions, Cooke went to the other extreme and emphasised subjective factors in the revolutionary process - for him, conditions for insurrectional struggle existed and "the role of the vanguard is to increase them, to give cohesion to the popular force, offer it a way out, to discover the means of struggle". Furthermore, the PCA in Cooke's eyes, committed the sin of divorcing their goal from their strategy: "There is an insoluble contradiction between that eulogised bourgeois-democratic revolution and the methods offered for its realisation". [2] Classical bourgeois tasks could not be achieved within existing Argentine structures, but only as part of a

---

1. Ibid. p. 380.
2. Ibid. pp. 381 & 385.

permanent revolution which would undertake those tasks but also go beyond them. Like the PCA, Cooke saw that there was a sector of the bourgeoisie whose interests were objectively antagonistic to those of imperialism, but whereas the PCA drew the conclusion that they had to support this "progressive" sector, Cooke argued that their position in the anti-imperialist front had to be subordinate to the working class, the only consistently anti-imperialist force. In one sense, the PCA was more realistic in considering that the national bourgeoisie would only support an anti-imperialist front which they hegemonised, whereas Cooke was more realistic regarding the anti-imperialist limitations of that class.

Later on, writing in 1967, Cooke was even stricter regarding the role of the national bourgeoisie in the liberation struggle, arguing that alliances should only be forged with them in exceptional circumstances, as a mere tactic subordinated to a general national liberation strategy. With the onset of the Onganía military regime, Cooke felt that the old arguments about objective conditions had become outmoded - "now the revolutionary situation is permanent", [1] he argued, feeling that there could be no return to stable bourgeois democracy. The concession of free elections by the praetorians would, he argued, necessarily mean the election of a Peronist government, which, even if it was timid in its governmental measures, would subvert the existing social order. It was an all or nothing situation for Cooke ("Either the Pentagonal military or the power of the people") [2] since class forces were polarised, and therefore revolutionary struggle was not only permissible but vital. Again though, Cooke's practical conclusion was a call

---

1. Cooke, La lucha por...., op. cit. p. 103.
2. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op. cit. p. 118.

to arms which ignored alternative revolutionary strategies, partly because of the success of Cuba and partly because of the historical failure of the revolutionary Left who espoused alternative formulae in Latin America.

Towards the end of his life, Cooke's analysis of the Peronist Movement became much more clasista (class-based) and emphasised the internal contradictions of the Movement as well as external ones. In explaining the 1955 débâcle, Cooke's stress was no longer on imperialism and other external causes of the defeat but rather upon the internal defects of the Peronist Movement. The 1945 alliance broke up, Cooke argued, due to the disappearance of Argentina's post-war prosperity, with this intensifying class struggle; but the Peronist government had ignored this, "posing the country's problem as if the anti-imperialist 'polyclassist' front of 1945 still existed" [1] whereas, in reality, only the workers remained loyal to the regime as a class. In such circumstances, "the original front, an amalgam of diverse forces, became a source of weakness", [2] an alliance of irreconcilable class interests, incapable of positive policies.

In characterising the early Peronist phase, at least in general terms, as "a bourgeois-democratic revolution", [3] Cooke committed the same sin that he accused the traditional Left of - namely, trying to fit Argentine phenomena into schemas articulated on the basis of European experiences. For while Peronism was "bourgeois democratic" in the

---

1. Cooke, Apuntes para la militancia (Buenos Aires: Schapire Editor, 1973), p. 100.
2. Cooke, quoted in Rodolfo Ortega Peña & Eduardo L. Duhalde, "Peronismo Revolucionario en el tercer año de la muerte de John W. Cooke," Nuevo Hombre, no. 9 (15th-21st September 1971).
3. Cooke, "Aportes a la crítica...," op. cit. p. 385.

sense that it was a national force which took some measures against imperialist interests, the pre-existence of capitalism over a long period negated the claim that it was a bourgeois revolution; moreover, it neglected basic tasks of the "classical" bourgeois-democratic revolution such as land reform. In terms of strategy, however, by the 1960's this mistake was not crucial for it was not of vital importance whether the bourgeois revolution had taken place in the 19th century or mid-20th: the next step was still the socialist revolution.

The difference between Cooke and the mainstream of the Peronist Left in evaluating Peronist history is quite clear. Whereas many writers have taken the line that the only solution for Peronism in 1955 was to "deepen" the revolution and arm the working class, Cooke in his final years realised that the nature of the regime permitted no such solution:

> "all the posthumous laments about workers militias for me are just speculative fantasies. Because one cannot arm the working class in order to defend your regime and the next day tell workers: fine, my son, hand back the arms and go and produce surplus value for the bosses". 1

In El Peronismo y el Golpe de Estado , written in 1966, Cooke described the Peronist Movement as "the expression of the general crisis of the Argentine bourgeois system, since it represents the social classes whose demands cannot be satisfied within the framework of the existing institutions".[2] It was made up of classes which opposed the status quo, thus the regime could not institutionalise itself and allow free elections, since Peronism would win and even the most timid governmental measures would upset the social order. The seizure of

---

1. Cooke, Apuntes..., op. cit. p.102.
2. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op. cit. p. 54.

power by Onganía removed the intermediate ground of bourgeois legality between the contending forces, creating an all-or-nothing situation in the battle for power, yet paradoxically, as Cooke pointed out, there was a stalemate between the two forces: "a regime unable to stabilise itself but with sufficient material power to survive and a mass movement powerful enough to submit it to constant harassment but not to overthrow it". [1]

The basic problem as seen by Cooke was that "Peronism is revolutionary but not adequately organised for revolutionary tasks", its revolutionary inorganicity leaving it a "boneless and myopic giant". [2] It was able to check and destroy every strategem attempted by the "Regime", but it lacked the revolutionary methods with which to supplant it. As he wrote to his friend Salvador Allende, Peronism was not structured:

> "as a truly revolutionary party for the seizure of power; it is a movement of popular rebellion which fights on many fronts and which, though led by a reformist and collaborating bureaucracy ever ready to compromise, has a revolutionary potential which is being constantly refined". 3

The problem posed was to move from a state of rebellion to one of revolutionary offensive, since "Resistance is not enough; without counter-attack there can be no victory". [4] Peronism had serious limitations as a revolutionary force, seen as "the limitations of a determined social reality, which conditions its composition". [5]

Cooke's conviction that these limitations could be overcome was based on his view that since Peronism was a multiclass movement, it

---

1. Cooke, Apuntes..., op. cit. p. 29.
2. Cooke, La lucha por..., op. cit. pp. 73 & 54.
3. Cooke, "Carta a Salvador Allende," Cuadernos de Crisis, op. cit. pp. 46-49.
4. Cooke, Apuntes..., op. cit. p. 33.
5. Cooke, La lucha por..., op. cit. p. 47.

could not be immune to the dynamic of the class struggle. He exposed the inconsistency of the non-Peronist Left who, in writing off Peronism as potentially revolutionary due to its multi-class nature, applied dialectical analysis to society as a whole but not to the Movement itself. In other words, the Movement could not be dismissed due to the bourgeois nature of its leadership; it also had a mass working-class base and therein lay its revolutionary potential.

The major obstacle to the development of revolutionary theory, organisation and forms of activity was the dominance of the Movement by the bureaucracy. For Cooke, the latter could not be reduced (as it was by other Peronist Leftists) to a series of individuals who had infiltrated the Movement in order to betray Perón and serve the enemy. Rather it was "a system of leadership of the Movement" [1] which did not fall from the sky but was a reflection of the 'polyclassist' weakness of the Movement. The bureaucracy, due to its class composition, was part of the system, sharing its values and strategies (electoralism and 'golpism'). It was "an intermediary structure through which the regime sterilises the revolutionary impulses which surge from the popular bases" of the Movement. [2] Nevertheless, this pragmatic, reactive, reformist leadership had to make some concessions to the pressures from below in order to maintain its credibility - hence its balancing activities motivated by the need "to convince the power-holders that we are no danger to the social status quo and the need to maintain the confidence of the masses by demonstrating that that danger indeed exists". [3]

---

1. Cooke, Apuntes..., op. cit. p. 34.
2. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op. cit. p. 32.
3. Cooke, Apuntes..., op. cit. p. 37.
Here Cooke was mainly dealing with the political leadership of Peronism in Argentina, rather than the trade union bureaucracy.

At most, Cooke wrote in his Apuntes para la Militancia, the bureaucracy would use violent struggle in order to gain a strong bargaining position, not as part of a revolutionary policy for power - "those who were the rearguard during combat become the vanguard in the truce negotiations". [1] Cooke had come a long way politically since the early years of the Resistencia. Then he identified himself with the duros, seeing the hard-liners' insurrectional strategy as the solution; now Cooke saw that the real alternative was not between hard-liners and soft-liners, duros and blandos, but between revolutionary politics and reformism. The duro-blando antinomy was now regarded as superficial - the duros only distinguished themselves from the neo-Peronist bureaucracy through their tremendismo, their voluntaristic violent actions, divorced from the mass movement, through which they sought to change the balance of forces and become the new vanguard. They did not present a revolutionary theory to the workers nor seek to develop a mass revolutionary organisation. This criticism of the duros, voiced by Cooke in his El Retorno de Perón, is of vital importance since it belies the orthodoxy of those sectors of the Peronist left who claimed Cooke's mantle, yet who reduced his conception of revolutionary Peronism to mere foquismo, and moreover a crude foquismo divorced from the mass movement.

Occasionally, Cooke's explanation of the bureaucratic phenomenon was weak and circular, arguing that the bureaucrats' limits were due to their lack of a revolutionary methodology and theoretical understanding, but in general it was seen as a product of the 'polyclassism' of the Movement, a product of the fact that many leaders had closer class ties with the enemy than with the people they misrepresented.

---

1. Ibid., p. 35.

However, this did not lead to an outright rejection of 'polyclassism'. Cooke felt that clasismo - a revolutionary strategy based on working-class struggle and seeking workers' power - was too narrow a conception for the success of the Argentine Revolution. Clasismo for Cooke meant the isolation of the working class for just ideological reasons while the economic state of the country rendered the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' formula utopian: "To reduce it to the working class would be to ensure the defeat of the Liberation Front". [1]

Instead, Cooke promoted the idea of a National Liberation Front, with Peronism as its axis, composed socially of the "national" classes (rural workers, students, petty bourgeoisie, the part of the industrial bourgeoisie not dependent on imperialism, and the working class), the latter being the hegemonic force since "there can be no nationalistic policy except under the leadership of the working class which mobilises the national will behind the revolutionary task of changing the existing social order" [2] and "since national liberation is indivisible from social revolution, there is no bourgeois nationalism". [3] This is clearly a different type of popular front to that advocated by the PCA, both with regard to which social class is to lead it and its tasks in power. For the PCA the bourgeoisie were included because they were seen as still a progressive class; for Cooke the national bourgeois sectors had only a short-term transitional role to play - they would only benefit from the anti-imperialist tasks of the initial stages of the revolution, but were to be destroyed as a class as the simultaneous social revolution advanced. Cooke left open the question

---

1. Cooke, La lucha por..., op. cit. p. 25.
2. Cooke, quoted in Ortega Peña & Duhalde, op. cit.
3. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op, cit. p. 38.

of whether a speedy transition to socialism was possible in Argentina or whether a period of co-existence with capitalist forms would be necessary, but the example of Cuba suggests that intermediate solutions between socialism and capitalism are inherently unstable and thus tend to go either one way or the other. Thus, the Cooke strategy, while recognising the limitations of the national bourgeoisie, offered them very little in the long run: they were being asked to join a revolution which would sooner or later devour them.

Peronist 'polyclassism' was an existing reality for Cooke, a reality he accepted tactically since he felt that all the "national" classes would play some role in the revolution. What he did not accept was the practical and ideological domination of the Movement by bourgeois sectors, as was clear from the three questions he posed in El Retorno de Perón:

> "Who says that because Peronism has a polyclassist social composition, its ideology is also polyclassist? Since we have said that there is no 'no man's land' between bourgeois ideology and revolutionary theory, why does Peronism have to resign itself to a polyclassism orientated around bourgeois ideology? Why does it have to submit to the schemas of thought of its minority sector, the least combative, especially when that ideology is incapable of resolving the problems of the Argentine community and of the Nation as a sovereign State?".

Opposing the predominant bourgeois ideology and refuting the possibility of a genuine 'polyclassist' ideology, Cooke advocated revolutionary ideology as:

> "the only one which will provide solutions, not only for the working class but also for those sectors of our bourgeoisie who have a constructive role to play in the stages of transition towards new organisational forms of society". 1

Again, the problem lay in getting those bourgeois sectors to

---

1. Cooke, La lucha por...., op. cit. p. 56.

accept revolutionary theory and the proletarian hegemony of the Front which that implied. Elsewhere, Cooke had remarked that "to evade the dilemma between revolution or compromise with the bourgeoisie is escapism", [1] yet this dilemma was never adequately dealt with in his alliances schema and it was the most unsatisfactory and weakest element in his revolutionary Peronism. In 1973, the Montoneros were to pose the formula in similar fashion: acceptance of the class composition of the Front while calling for a change in the class hegemonising the front, as if the composition would not change were the proletariat to attain hegemony.

However, Cooke's conceptions were not static. Rather, they envisaged a future in which Peronism would develop into something qualitatively different through a dialectical process: "The revolutionary army is grouped around its banners and Peronism will not disappear by substitution but through a dialectical progression, i.e. not by negating but by integrating itself into a synthesis". [2] Class struggle within the Movement and the revolutionary potential of the working class provided the basis for such a development; the revolutionary party, the need for which was recognised by Cooke in his Apuntes para la Militancia, would develop out of the rank-and-file and left-wing of the Movement, not independently of it, "for the revolutionary vanguard is the Peronist Left". [3] The non-Peronist Left could play an important role in the revolution, without becoming Peronists, but they had to drop their sectarian attitude towards the Movement for this kind of cooperation to be possible.

---

1. Cooke, "Aportes a la crítica...," op. cit. p. 379.
2. Cooke, quoted in Ortega Peña & Duhalde, op. cit.
3. Cooke, La lucha por...., op. cit. p. 91.

Cooke's evaluation of Perón also changed in the last years of his life. In 1964, Cooke was still playing his old game of presenting Perón as the great revolutionary leader and arguing that the bureaucracy was misinterpreting him. Perón's statement that he was returning with the aim of "pacification", for example, was interpreted by Cooke not as meaning that he was coming to restrain the workers' factory occupations, but rather as a tactical attitude which recognised that an immediate insurrection was impossible. By 1967, however, in one of his last writings, 'La Revolución y el Peronismo , Cooke finally came to make a class judgement of Perón:

> "Perón is the main asset of bourgeois-democratic politics in Argentina, a pre-Marxist who, through intelligence and general knowledge, follows the evolution of history and sympathises with the forces that represent the future, which does not mean to say that he is at the present time the man destined to outline a revolutionary policy..." 1

While publicly recognising Perón's limitations, somewhat belatedly, Cooke realised that the myth of Perón was still very much alive among the masses, not out of ignorance but because the myth represented the positive side of Perón. It symbolised the "revolutionary spring of the Argentine proletariat" and "the only period in which the worker was happy". Due to this symbolic importance of Perón, Cooke saw that at that time his leadership could not be "supplanted due to a superiority of formulations or due to the capacity of political leadership"; it was a myth firmly imbedded in the consciousness of the working class and the best that Cooke could offer to rectify the situation was the development of new myths alongside that of Perón, compatible with the latter. It was of crucial importance, for example, that Perón was no obstacle to the methodology of armed struggle. Moreover,

---

1. Ibid. pp. 50-51 & 92.

the old symbols of Peronism could be redefined and brought up to date so as to correspond to the tasks of the hour. For Cooke, there was "a clear and necessary historical continuity between the process initiated under his leadership on 17th October 1945, with the banners of social justice, economic independence and political sovereignty, and the revolutionary process which is beginning to develop today through other forms of struggle but retaining and integrating the initial banners in a synthesising process" [1] Cooke's final view of the destiny of Peronism was that it would disappear either if it ceased "to express national and popular demands" [2] in which case it would be replaced by another movement, or through dialectical evolution into a new revolutionary synthesis. It is still perhaps too soon to speak of the end of Peronism and its final outcome. At best one can make hypotheses, but there have been tendencies towards both of Cooke's alternative destinies: orthodox Peronism, the Peronism of the 1973-6 governments, ceased to express popular demands and lost prestige in the eyes of workers, but has yet to be replaced by a new mass national and popular movement; revolutionary Peronism has evolved towards a new synthesis, but has not yet reached it nor attained the numerical strength possessed by the old Movement in 1973.

CONCLUSION

Cooke's political thought developed throughout his life, from Radicalism to militant Peronism and from Peronism to Cuban-moulded Marxism. He articulated the most mature theoretical expression of revolutionary Peronism and nearly always maintained a unity between his thought and political activity. His limitations were the

---

1. Ibid. pp. 92-94.
2. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op. cit. p. 72.

limitations of a whole generation of revolutionary Peronists faced with the need to struggle alongside the workers in a bourgeois-led Movement. This vital compromise required them to dress up their ideas in the apparel of Peronism, which seriously damaged their independence. Loyalty to Perón, for example, was a basic requirement for staying in the Movement, for staying with the working class.

In Cooke's case, the fundamental limitation was his acceptance, at least tactically and for the moment, of 'polyclassism'. He had written that one weakness of Yrigoyenism was its multiclass composition, yet he was more ambiguous when it came to Peronism: it was right for a national and popular movement to group all "the revolutionary classes" [1] in society, yet Cooke was fully aware of the internal contradictions between them, and hoped that they would be resolved in favour of the working class. Here, Cooke was a product of his time and personal background. Cuba provided the precedent for a favourable resolution of these contradictions, but also served as a warning to Latin American bourgeoisies. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that Cooke's early development was that of a bourgeois nationalist. His main point of departure remained national liberation, even after he came to see its indivisibility from social revolution. On one occasion, he wrote that:

> "the anti-imperialist struggle - which we said is social revolution at the same time - is 'communism' or 'castrocommunism' for a regime which does not understand that Castroism, Peronism, Brizolism, Caamañism, etc., are the national forms taken by a single process of Latin American and universal dimensions". 2

Socialism for Cooke was the form of liberation for Latin America, both processes being intimately interrelated. Yet conceptually, he always

---

1. Cooke, La lucha por...., op. cit. p. 53.
2. Cooke, El Peronismo y el golpe..., op. cit. p. 111.

started with posing the problematic of national liberation in the Argentine semi-colony; his socialist conclusions emerged from his analyses of practical national liberation movements, especially in Argentina and Cuba. Hence Cooke, unlike a classical Marxist, did not begin with an analysis of class structures but rather with how classes behave in an anti-imperialist struggle and this is the fundamental reason for his acceptance of 'polyclassism'.

Partly because he looked at Peronism through slightly "Cubanised" glasses and partly because of the bourgeois nationalist route he took from Peronism to Marxism, Cooke came to an over-optimistic view of the progressive and nationalist potentialities of sectors of the bourgeoisie. After 1959, he never felt that they could lead a national liberation process to victory, but he did feel that the national bourgeoisie could play a subordinate role in a worker-led struggle for national and social liberation. In other words despite his conversion to Marxism, Cooke never quite left behind his old view of the Nation-Imperialism contradiction being the fundamental one. Such a contradiction of itself suggests some part, whether hegemonic or not, for the national bourgeoisie in the liberation process, and it is this which underlies Cooke's tactical acceptance of Peronist 'polyclassism'. A Marxist analysis starting with class analysis, and making a clear distinction between fundamental (i.e. antagonistic) class contradictions and secondary (non-antagonistic) ones might have removed this area of confusion and ambiguity from Cooke's theory.

Moreover, one must dispute Cooke's view that armed struggle is the only way to make the revolution in Latin America, especially in the light of successive urban guerrilla failures. Cooke argued that "revolutionary methods impregnate the masses with revolutionary

theory", [1] yet guerrilla warfare has in fact tended to postpone the theoretical development of the activists involved, and furthermore, despite Cooke's emphasis upon coordinating armed actions with mass struggle, the feasibility of a combined strategy has yet to be demonstrated in practice. Guerrilla organisations, have tended, despite their expressed wish to coordinate the two forms of struggle, to subordinate their mass activity to recruitment for guerrilla action.

Cooke maintained that the "possibility of revolutionary struggle can only be demonstrated through revolutionary struggle" [2] (sic), but he never applied the criterion of success to this maxim. His faith in armed struggle was unshaken by the failures of the Uturuncos in 1959, Masetti's People's Guerrilla Army in 1963-64, Che's Bolivian foco of 1967 and the Taco Ralo group of 1968 in Argentina. He argued that even the defeat of his own ARP would not prove his critics correct since failures could always be due to contingent factors. Success would vindicate his theories and failure would not invalidate them. Only the triumph of an alternative strategy in practice would do that. Moreover, Cooke declared that the right to criticise Perón could only be earned in combat and was inadmissible from those not engaged in armed struggle. It was thereore very hard for non-guerrilla revolutionaries to break through the near impregnable defences erected by Cooke around his strategy. It meant that the foquista Peronist Left could not be won over by political criticism and debate, but only by a successful alternative insurrectional strategy.

The influence of Cooke on the alternativista tendency of

---

1. Cooke, "Aportes a la crítica...," op. cit. p. 383.
2. Cooke, La lucha por...., op. cit. p. 106.

Revolutionary Peronism,[1] was to shine through on the pages of their reviews, Militancia and the second De Frente, whereas the mainstream Peronist Left, led by the Montoneros, remained closer to orthodoxy and only adopted Cooke's foquismo. The revolutionary limitations attributed above to Cooke were shared by many sectors of the Peronist Left during the 1960's, though it must be said that prospects for a more clearly revolutionary formula triumphing were poor, given the strength of workers' illusions in Perón, which were hard to undermine while he was in opposition and abroad. Despite his limitations, though, Cooke was the only revolutionary Peronist to provide the Left with a fairly consistent and all-embracing system of ideas, the only developed Marxist-orientated analysis of Peronism to emerge inside the Movement. He therefore played the leading theoretical role in moving the Peronist Left towards a more independent and socialist alternative, a process still being undertaken by sectors of the Peronist Left today.

---

1. The "alternativista" tendency is analysed in Chapter Six and its strategy, "alternativismo" is discussed in the introduction to Chapter Four.

CHAPTER II

NATIONALIST AND CATHOLIC INFLUENCES UPON THE PERONIST LEFT

Though attention has been devoted to John William Cooke, as revolutionary theorist, strategist and leading cadre, formative ideological influences upon the Peronist Left cannot be reduced to the inspiration of any one man or woman. On the contrary, such influences were many and diverse and were to be drawn together in only a loose confederation of ideas whose hybrid nature has left many an academic puzzled. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern the principal influential currents and their analysis is the subject of this chapter. The "National Left", the radical tercermundista (3rd World-orientated) wing of Catholicism and, of course, the writings of Perón and Evita will therefore be examined separately and then be followed by a final discussion of how these strands were drawn together.

THE NATIONAL LEFT

Paternity of the term "National Left" (Izquierda Nacional) was claimed by Juan José Hernández Arregui [1] but in fact his 1957 usage was predated by some two years and its origins go back at least to April 1955 when Dickmann's Socialist Party of the National Revolution coined the slogan, "For a New National and Latin American Left". [2] Hernández Arregui, however, was the first to define "National Left," in the context of dependent countries, as referring to:

> "general theory applied to a concrete national case, which analyses the national-defensive and revolutionary contents of the economy, history and culture in the light of Marxism (seen

---

1. Juan José Hernández Arregui, La Formación de la Conciencia Nacional, 3d ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973), p. 475, footnote.
2. Jorge Enea Spilimbergo, El Socialismo en la Argentina II, De la Izquierda Cipaya a la Izquierda Nacional. 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Octubre, 1974), p. 101.

> as a method of interpreting reality, and taking into account primarily the peculiarities and development of each country) and which combines such a theoretical analysis with the practical struggle of the masses against imperialism, at national, Latin American and World levels, and in that order". [1]

As a tendency operating within and outside the Peronist Movement, the National Left includes those parties which have consciously and publicly used the term as a political definition - like Jorge Abelardo Ramos's Popular Left Front (Frente de la Izquierda Popular - FIP) [2] - but not exclusively. It is an ideological and political current which, although at least verbally internationalist, presents itself as an alternative to "international socialism", understood as those socialist tendencies which argue the need for an international socialist centre or party and which subordinate themselves to it. Rejecting the idea of an International, the National Left's fundamental proposition, whether its heterogenous component groups espouse Marxism or not, is that the theory and strategy of the Argentine socialist revolution must be primarily based upon an analysis of Argentine society rather than upon analyses of capitalism internationally and international trends in general. It upholds the idea of different 'national roads to socialism' for each country, though sections of the National Left also draw upon the experiences of other countries in an attempt to learn "lessons" which may be of use in determining the Argentine revolutionary model.

These definitions unite an otherwise diverse group of

---

1. Hernández Arregui, op. cit., p. 475.
2. The genealogy of the FIP goes back through the Socialist Party of the National Left (Partido Socialista de la Izquierda Nacional - PSIN), founded in 1962, and the Socialist Party of the National Revolution (PSRN), created by Dickmann in 1954, to a small Trotskyist group which included Ramos and Ernesto Sábato, formed during the 1930's. See "La Izquierda, sus grupos y tendencias", op. cit.

theoreticians, the most well known and widely read being John William Cooke, Juan José Hernández Arregui, Jorge Abelardo Ramos, Jorge Spilimbergo, Rodolfo Puiggrós, Esteban Rey and Enrique Rivera. The diversity of their works reflects their diverse political backgrounds: Ramos and Rivera had Trotskyist origins, Cooke and Hernández Arregui had their political baptisms in the FORJA and Sabattinista [1] lines of Radicalism respectively and Puiggrós traversed the lonely road from the Communist Party to Peronism. Most, however, were men of the traditional Left or Radical Party who revised their old conceptions when Peronism emerged, all viewing the new Movement in a positive light whether they became a part of it or not, and all rejecting the characterisation of Peronism made by their former parties, who viewed it as a form of fascism. Moreover, though some of them exerted a stronger and more direct influence on the recent Peronist Left than others, they collectively made the very idea of a Peronist Left thinkable and thus helped to re-orientate the Left, if not the Left parties, towards the mass movement.

Hernández Arregui's La Formación de la Conciencia Nacional was one of the most influential books read by the Peronist Left of the 1960's and early 1970's and arguably the key work of the National Left, though it has become somewhat dated since it first appeared in 1960. It provided a critique "inspired by a profound love of the country and faith in the rational destiny of humanity" of "the Argentine Left lacking national consciousness and right-wing nationalism which has national consciousness but which lacks a love of the people", or so the author's prologue claimed. In fact, the "national consciousness" of the Argentine nationalists of the 1930's was considerably overstated - though the author referred to the often dominant fascist influences on these

---

1. A tendency within the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) based in the city of Córdoba.

nationalists emanating from France, Italy, Spain and Germany, he nevertheless asserted their Argentinity. On the other hand, his explanation of the political failure of the nationalist Right was persuasive. It failed because most of its leading exponents were either of oligarchic origin or were middle-class intellectuals who were forced for economic reasons into dependency as bureaucrats on the oligarchic regimes of the 1930's, and these class ties prevented the early nationalists from building a mass popular base and from evolving a political project providing for popular participation. In Hernández Arregui's words,

> "If Argentine nationalism could not reconcile its national image with a political system of the masses, it was because the realization of the national idea which they proposed, carried to its ultimate consequences, implied the liquidation of the oligarchy as a class". 1

From the nationalist works of the 1930's, Hernández Arregui, along with more conservative nationalists such as José María Rosa, resurrected the idea of a historical "line" of national and popular Argentine caudillos. The orthodox Liberal interpretation of Argentine history written by Mitre and others was rejected for viewing imperialist penetration as a progressive, modernising and civilising force, spreading the benefits of the Western World to a previously "barbarian" country. In opposition to it, the revisionist school pointed to a constant conflict throughout Argentine history between imperialist powers supported by their internal allies, fundamentally the oligarchy, and the national forces led by caudillos such as Rosas, resisting imperialist designs and attempting to promote the independent development of Argentina. In its worst expressions, historical revisionism knocked oligarchic heroes off their pedestals and shattered liberal myths, only to offer nationalist heroes and myths as an alternative. This

---

1. Hernández Arregui, op. cit., pp. 19 & 278-279.

made good cinema but poor history. In its better expressions, it attempted to relate the imperium-nation conflict to social structures, as in the case of Hernández Arregui's evaluation of Rosas. [1] However, though the National Left discarded the cruder ideas of the nationalist historians of the 1930's in this respect and also extended the list of national caudillos to include more popular figures such as Yrigoyen, they still stuck to the idea of the fundamental conflict in Argentine history being between nation and imperialism rather than posing the problematic of imperialism in class terms. This viewpoint was inherited by much of the Peronist Left as part of the bed-rock of their uncritical support for Perón as a national leader.

The second National Left contribution to the Peronist Left was provided by its critique of the traditional Left. It has maintained that the subservience of the latter to foreign ideologies and parties (the Argentine Socialist Party being influenced by the German SPD and Social Democracy; the Argentine Communist Party by the CPSU and Stalinism) divorced them from an understanding of the specific characteristics of Argentine development and Peronism. The 2nd World War, for instance, was seen by both parties, after the Nazi invasion of Russia, as a war between democracy and fascism and partly due to the refusal of the 1943 nationalist military regime to enter the allied camp until its victory was assured, Peronism came to be seen as a variant of fascism. The social-democratic orientations of the Socialist Party led to a preoccupation with workers' immediate material interests and this in turn led it to oppose protectionism. Free trade was advocated by Justo and his Socialist Party colleagues because it meant, in the short term, cheaper and often better quality goods than a protectionist policy could offer,

---

1. Ibid., pp. 273-278.

yet this involved the Party sharing the policy of the imperial power on this question. The Communist Party, on the other hand, due to its devotion to mother Russia, had encouraged strike-breaking activities during the War in order to keep the allied war effort provisioned. [1]

Such behaviour by the traditional Left rendered them prone to charges of being "anti-national". Indeed, the Socialist Party's concern with short-term objectives and its increasingly tame socialism did make it "the democratic shield of conservatism in Argentina", or rather one of them. Moreover, many who have followed the behaviour of the Communist Party in recent years will be sympathetic towards Hernández Arregui's jibe at them, "Lenin has been converted into a dead dogma, Stalin into a living death and Marx into a mummy". [2] However, on several occasions, the National Left critique of the traditional Left has come perilously close to charging that the latter failed because it was "foreign". Here, writers such as Hernández Arregui and Ramos have trodden a dangerous path for men who claim to employ a Marxist method of analysis, for such arguments have often been used by their political opponents to suggest that Marxism itself is a "foreign" import, an anti-Argentine doctrine which should be rejected. Though it is true to say that Social Democracy and Stalinism in Argentina have historically opposed national movements and failed to perform a revolutionary role, it is also true that on numerous occasions Social Democracy and Stalinism have been counter-revolutionary forces on the international plane. While correctly pointing to the weaknesses of the traditional Left with regard to the national question, the National Left has never presented anything more

---

1. See Jorge Abelardo Ramos, Historia del Stalinismo en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Rancagua, 1974), pp. 145-184; and Rodolfo Puiggrós, El Peronismo: Sus Causas, 4th ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1974), pp. 35-56.

2. Hernández Arregui, op. cit., pp. 113 & 121.

than a rudimentary critique of the non-revolutionary nature of Social Democracy and Stalinism in general. Indeed, Hernández Arregui and other National Left authors can be seen as having verbally denounced Stalinism while at the same time, because their analysis of it has been so superficial, accepting its central strategic postulate of the modern era: the theory of stages of the revolution, according to which, in the Argentine case, there must first be a national-democratic stage of revolution which must be completed before the stage of struggling for Socialism comes onto the order of the day. The importance of this position is, of course, that it confers great legitimacy on Peronism, even for would-be revolutionaries. It provides a basis for seeing that Movement as the instrument of national-democratic revolution and plays down the need to develop a struggle for Socialism, at least while the present "stage" lasts.

It is hardly surprising then that Hernández Arregui's treatment of the early Peronist Governments amounted to no more than an apologia which showed a National Left writer, by no means untypically, to be more "National" than "Left". Quite apart from propagating the old myths, since destroyed, about Perón's labour base being the workers of provincial origin "without links with the weak, anarchic, foreign-orientated trade union movement of the port city", [1] the apologist was unable to explain the 1955 defeat of Peronism. He maintained that Perón fell for not defending national independence resolutely enough and that Perón committed "errors", but the nature of those errors was left to the imagination of his readers.

By failing to analyse the weaknesses of Peronism which contributed to its demise, such an analysis, or rather lack of analysis, helped to

---

1. Ibid., p. 395.

foster illusions in Peronism as a whole being a revolutionary or at least progressive movement. It by no means provided a viable way forward for the Left but rather harked back to old exhausted Peronist formulae. Thus Hernández Arregui's position by 1960 was still that:

> "the struggle of the masses against their internal and external enemies can only be resolved through the establishment of authoritarian regimes, with control of exports and the means of propaganda, with state support for the popular movement and army participation in this national defence policy".

Even by 1970, in the 2nd edition of his major work, Arregui's call for a renewal of the former "Army-People" alliance was only qualified by a 5-line footnote to the effect that the Army had not exactly lived up to his expectations of it! [1]

Though Hernández Arregui supported the Peronist Left in the early 1970's, he retained his former conceptions of the nation-imperialism contradiction, the idea that Peronism as a whole was revolutionary (at least while the "bourgeois-democratic" stage of the revolution lasted) and a belief in the desirability of resuscitating the old army-people alliance ("Carcagno's army is not the same as Lanusse's") [2] The limits of his radicalism were seen in 1974 when Perón died. Overnight, Hernández Arregui dropped all socialist demands and called for Peronist and national unity against imperialism. Since the Peronist Left were being kept out of the Peronist leadership and were in fact already being persecuted, such a call signified a total capitulation to the Peromist Right masked by the weak argument of the need to unite against the greater evil:

> "The ideological disputes about the differing conceptions of Peronism - moving towards independent capitalism or towards

---

1. Ibid., pp. 38-39 & 490.
2. Hernández Arregui, Peronismo y Socialismo (Buenos Aires), no. 1 (September 1973), p. 5, editorial.

> socialism - though important, extremely important, must be temporarily postponed because the mandate of the hour is not in this particular dramatic moment of Argentine history to quarrel over scholastic words while the enemy is beating on the door". 1

Hernández Arregui surrendered in what he viewed as a war over "scholastic words" by changing the name of his review from Peronismo y Socialismo (Peronism and Socialism) to Peronismo y Liberación (Peronism and Liberation).

The works of Rodolfo Puiggrós share the basic assumption that Argentina under Perón began a stage of bourgeois-democratic revolution or, to dress the same idea in nationalist apparel, of national liberation. [2] They appear at first glance to be more radical than those of Hernández Arregui, Puiggrós having written about the need for working-class hegemony in a national liberation front and for the elaboration of a revolutionary theory to guide this anti-imperialist movement, the absence of both factors being seen as crucial in the 1955 loss of power. However, there are two major weaknesses in this schema which is of course the same old schema of Puiggrós's early Communist Party years, only with Peronism being recognised as a national force and indeed the axis of anti-imperialist struggle. Firstly, the idea of creating an anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist alliance of the national bourgeoisie, middle classes and working class under the leadership of the latter, armed with a revolutionary theory, is totally abstract. The Argentine national bourgeoisie historically has shown no propensity to subordinate itself to working-class hegemony. Secondly, one has to ask, if against all the evidence of Argentine history the working class

---

1. Hernández Arregui and editorial board, "Aclaración sobre el cambio de nombre de nuestra revista," Peronismo y Liberación (Buenos Aires), no. 1 (August 1974), p. 5.
2. See in particular Puiggrós, El Proletariado en la Revolución Nacional (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudestada, 1968), passim.

came to power through leading the kind of alliance outlined by Puiggrós, whether the working class would be likely to restrict itself to merely anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist measures? Would they not make a mockery of the whole theory of stages by proceeding immediately to implement socialist policies? Puiggrós has offered no arguments as to why they should not.

It is also necessary to underline that Puiggrós's conception of the Argentine revolution is not in any way national. To his credit, he was one of the few Communist Party members to recognise the mass working-class support for Peronism but his view of how the revolution would unfold came straight out of the handbooks of international Stalinism. [1] How appropriate is this to Argentina? The idea of national bourgeois revolutions taking place in the underdeveloped world, with the struggle for socialism being postponed to a later and distinct stage, can be successfully challenged by confronting it with various international experiences. The idea of temporally separating national and social liberation into fatalistic stages has been seriously undermined by the revolutions in Cuba, Angola and many other countries.

In the case of Argentina, where capitalism is the predominant mode of production and has been for generations, bourgeois-democratic schemas are out of place. Most people who are interested in the development of Argentina see the need for agrarian reform yet few would claim that feudal structures exist in the countryside. To employ bourgeois-democratic schemas is only logical, and not necessarily politically sensible, where feudalism exists, for as Laclau has correctly stated, "the

---

1. Though Puiggrós has explicitly rejected the Communist Party terminology associated with this question (El Peronismo...., op. cit., p. 44), his underlying conceptions have remained unchanged since leaving the Communist Party.

fundamental task of the democratic revolution is to wipe out the remains of feudalism and to place power in the hands of the bourgeoisie". [1] The nationalism of the National Left has rested more on the vindication of historical national forces than on an analysis of the national specificities of the Argentine social and economic structures, and this has been a major source of analytical weakness.

A modified version of the theory of stages has appeared in the literature of the National Left political tendency led by Jorge Abelardo Ramos. [2] Due to the Trotskyist ancestry of this group, the stages approach has been verbally dismissed and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution counterposed to it. In practice however, the Ramos tendency has occupied an intermediate position which has been used to theoretically support a political line of "critical support" for Peronism. For though they have argued that the tasks of the national revolution (the expulsion of imperialism, national unity, agrarian revolution and incorporation of the Indian into "civilization") can only be achieved fully through a socialist revolution led by an independent workers' party, they have assumed that the Argentine national bourgeoisie can still make some progress along this road, and have argued that it is the duty of Socialists to support it from a critical and independent position until it falters. Thus, though the national revolution has been related here to the social revolution, the stages approach has still been present, though in a modified form.

The problem with this line of argument is that due to the takeover

---

1. Ernesto Laclau, "Peronism and Revolution," Latin American Review of Books (London and Leeds: 1973), p. 125.

2. See in particular Ramos's La Lucha por un Partido Revolucionario (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1964) and El Marxismo de Indias (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1963).

of much of the industrial sector by foreign capital since the mid-1950's, it has become impossible to proceed against the foreign monopolies without the State intervening in the dynamic sectors of the economy. This is what Cooke and other revolutionary Peronists were referring to when they spoke of the "indissolubility" of the national and social revolution. An older objection to the Ramos thesis, but no less valid, is the argument that although the oligarchy and national bourgeoisie are conceptually distinct, when it comes to their social interests this distinction is rather blurred. Due in particular to the existence of significant numbers of land-owning businessmen and business-owning landowners, there is in practice no fundamental antagonism between these classes. Of course, this does not mean that there is no tension and rivalry between industrial and agrarian bourgeois or disagreements over economic policy. Rather, it means that their conflicts of interest are of secondary importance. The national bourgeoisie has not promoted land distribution or its expropriation by the State. It has regarded the oligarchy as complementary to itself, a provider of vital revenue to finance industrial imports. In moments of crisis, when popular pressures are felt and a threat to the existing order is posed, the bourgeoisie as a whole tends to unite against the common enemy.

Despite frequent citations of Lenin and Trotsky and vituperative denunciations of Stalinism, the path mapped out for the Argentine working class by the National Left has been a highly mechanical one. It has to support the national bourgeoisie, seen as represented historically by the Peronist Movement, despite all the limitations and vacillations which the latter force has demonstrated over the past decades, with no indication being provided of when the progressive role of this class is likely to be exhausted. The practical implications of all this were seen during the final months of the 1973-76 Peronist Government when Ramos's

Popular Left Front stationed itself to the Right of the Peronist Left by calling, in the face of the probability of military intervention, not only for the defence of democratic institutions but also for support for Isabel. [1]

The weaknesses of the Ramos tendency of the National Left derive to a great extent from a failure to modify schemas and analyses in accordance with socio-economic developments. As an offshoot from the tiny Trotskyist groups of the 1930's, the Ramos tendency must be credited with being the only socialist grouping to recognise the benefits which were likely to accrue to the labour movement through supporting Peronism. Ramos's characterisation of the Peronist regime, drawing upon the works of Marx, Engels and Trotsky, as an Argentine variant of bonapartism is also useful, in explaining how Perón could be both a historical representative of the national bourgeoisie and a conditional champion of the working class. [2] However, his evaluation of Peronism and his ideas on the nature of the revolution in Argentina, as in the case of most National Left theoreticians, were formulated during and immediately after the 1946-55 Peronist Government and have only been slightly modified since that time. Though verbally the Ramos tendency came to maintain by the early 1970's that Peronism would not be able to resolve Argentina's social problems in a period of economic decline, most of its political activity was geared towards prompting the 1973-76 administrations to carry out national-democratic measures. [3]

---

1. Izquierda Nacional (Buenos Aires), no. 39 (September 1975), p. 4.
2. Ramos, La Era del Bonapartismo, 5th ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973), passim.
3. For example, Ramos's call in Izquierda Nacional, no. 41 (November 1975), p. 4, for the Peronist Government to implement "the programme of 17th October 1945", referring to it as (still) a "revolutionary programme".

This failure to revise conceptions in the light of changes in Argentine society is at least partially to be explained by the limited focus of the National Left school. Puiggrós has dedicated his pen mainly to analyses of pre-1955 history, Hernández Arregui was concerned chiefly with intellectual history and the defence of national culture against imperialist deformations, and Ramos's historical work, though embracing the full stretch of post-Independence history, has mainly operated at a superstructural level. The latter, though attributing class representation to leading political figures and forces in history, has never started with an analysis of socio-economic structures nor has he dealt with labour history. His volume on the 1943-73 period, for example, tells one nothing about the history of the Resistencia. [1]

Though each of the above authors have used elements of Marxist analysis, none of them have based their final recommendations upon an adequate analysis of modern social, economic and political structures. Instead, their advice on strategy has been rooted in the historical analyses of the revisionist school and, even when modified, has retained the old idea of the Nation-Imperialism dichotomy being the key to political action. In the case of the National Left political tendency, this view was to be reinforced by reference to Lenin's distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations. Class analysis has only been present in a subordinate role in the writings of these three authors with the nation all too often being evoked without reference to the social classes which compose it. Thus Puiggrós, for example, drew back from the ultimately bourgeois nature of the Peronist State of 1946-55 when he characterised it as "an unstable and provisional balance between the bourgeoisie and proletariat.....corresponding to a transitional

---

1. Ramos, La Era....., op. cit.

stage". [1]

Another idea imparted to the Peronist Left by the National Left was that of the Patria Grande, of the unification of Latin America which had been pioneered by previous nationalists such as Manuel Ugarte. Latin American unity, both for military and economic reasons, would seem to be an essential item in any liberation project which envisages confronting the North American colossus. Culturally too, Latin American countries have much in common and the idea of developing a strong Latin American culture has particularly attracted National Left intellectuals. What is open to challenge is the view of Ramos that Latin America is an unconstituted nation, [2] a view which goes far beyond the call of his erstwhile mentor Trotsky for a Socialist United States of Latin America, made in 1934. It is highly unlikely that after centuries of balkanisation the Latin American states can ever come together in anything more than a confederation. When faced with this argument, put forward by Debray, that one simply cannot eradicate balkanisation and replace it with a Latin American nation, Ramos's reply was strictly racist: "We knew that the French didn't know anything about geography but we never imagined that they'd try to teach it". The old and new Left were both rejected in the name of "Bolivarian Marxism" which in theory has attempted "to Latin-Americanize Marxism and to make Latin America Marxist" [3] but which in practice led Ramos to support Isabel Perón after her government had been repudiated by the Argentine working class in the General Strike of mid-1975.

The use which the National Left has made of Marxism was neatly

---

1. Puiggrós, El Proletariado...., op. cit., p. 87.
2. Ramos, América Latina: Un País (Buenos Aires: Editorial Octubre, 1949), passim.
3. Ramos, El Marxismo..., op. cit., pp. 273 & 295.

summed up in a manifesto written by Hernández Arregui for the Condor ideological centre in 1964. In it he announced that the centre was going to adopt the Marxist method "without allowing itself to be dominated by it". [1] In practice this has meant relegating Marxism to a secondary and subsidiary role, subordinate to a historical revisionism based upon the nation-imperialism contradiction. This in turn has tied the National Left politically to the national bourgeoisie, even after the latter has ceased to play a "progressive" role. It is because of the weakness of the latter that the National Left have always reserved a place for the army in their projected liberation movement, it having promoted the industrial interests of that class in the past. Thus most of Hernández Arregui's books ended up with an appeal to the military to be nationalist while Ramos has continually reminded it of its San Martinian origins. [2] The reality, however, is that the Argentine army in recent years, both under Onganía and Videla, has shown itself to be favourable rather to the strong competitors of the national bourgeoisie, the foreign monopolic interests. Moreover, one has to go back many years to discover any significant anti-imperialist factions within the army.

Such ideological influences, received by the Peronist Left in the 1960's and early 1970's tended to lead the radical Peronists back 20 years in searching for the model of the Argentine revolution. For the National Left schemas derived from a more or less critical but positive evaluation of the national movement of 1946-55, schemas which in their fundamentals have remained static in their thought and impervious to

---

1. Hernández Arregui, Nacionalismo y Liberación, 3d ed., (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 1973), p. 354.
2. Ramos, Ejército y Semicolonía (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudestada, 1968), passim.

revision in the face of subsequent developments in Argentine society. The most important contribution which the National Left presented to the Peronist Left was the idea of the revolutionary nature of a national movement including the national bourgeoisie, whether working class leadership of such an alliance was demanded or not. This did a lot to vaccinate broad sectors of the Peronist Left against class politics and Marxist ideas. Moreover, it left them unprepared for the polarisation which began to shatter the Peronist alliance shortly after the Peronist restoration of 1973.

These criticisms, however, should not be used to dismiss the National Left perspective completely for it has produced some useful work. In particular, its historical revisionism has gone some way towards challenging the official dogmas of the Liberal school of history. Though this tends to be unidimensional, examining how "national" or "antinational" various historical movements and personages were, the beginnings of a social history are present also. The latter could be developed without abandoning the national perspective but only if National Left authors committed themselves to original historical research - to date nearly all the writers of this genre have based their analyses upon existing historical publications.

A second area in which the National Left has made a partially positive contribution lies in its exposé of the non-socialist aspects of the Socialist Party and the non-communist aspects of the Communist Party in Argentina. If a strong party of the Left is to be built in the future, analysis of the historical failure of the traditional Left will be essential to the avoidance of past mistakes. The volumes by Ramos, Spilimbergo, Puiggrós and Hernández Arregui [1] contain a

---

1. All cited above except Puiggrós, Las Izquierdas y el Problema Nacional (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1973).

critique of the old Left which goes some way towards explaining their inability to gain power. Depicting the Argentine Left as a satellite Left with its ideological foundations in external metropoli certainly reveals one of the main shortcomings of the traditional Left: its distance from national realities. The Argentine Socialist Party in the early years of this century, for example, due to the influence of Bernstein, pursued an electoral strategy which condemned it to political ineffectiveness due to the fact that the majority of Buenos Aires workers were of immigrant origin, largely unnaturalized and thus disenfranchised (only 1.4% of the immigrant population was naturalized by 1914, the figure for the Federal Capital being 2.37% and for Buenos Aires Province 0.99%). [1] In the case of the Argentine Communist Party, devotion to the Soviet view of the 2nd War being a battle between democracy and fascism coupled with the non-interventionist stance of the post-1943 military regime led to Perón being branded a nazi and his supporters as "peronazis".

However, the National Left understanding of the old Left's failure has been significantly limited by its focus. It has criticized the ideology of those Left parties and their attitudes towards specific events and regimes but has failed to examine the more practical aspects of these parties' histories, for such an analysis would require genuine historical research. [2] One would have thought that investigation into the social bases of these parties would be fundamental to a discussion of their failure but all that the National Left have offered in this

---

1. Oscar Cornblit, "European Immigrants in Argentine Industry and Politics," in Claudio Veliz (ed.), The Politics of Conformity in Latin America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 232.

2. The best example of a researched historical analysis is Richard J. Walter, The Socialist Party of Argentina, 1890-1930 (USA: Institute of Latin American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1977).

respect are assertions. Never have these analyses come to grips with the many problems facing the Left in early 20th century Argentina, a society in which the working class was numerically weak, generally unconcentrated and culturally heterogenous. All that the National Left has recommended is that the Socialists and Communists should have supported Yrigoyen, albeit "critically" and from an independent stance. In fact, had the National Left been in the shoes of the traditional Left, it appears that this attitude would have amounted to total subordination to Yrigoyenismo for National Left "criticisms" of Yrigoyen have gone no further than maintaining that he represented only a "weak" expression of the nascent industrial bourgeoisie and national interests. With such a posture, the Left would arguably have been weaker than it actually was, through failing to offer any alternative to Yrigoyen. It is totally fallacious to assume that the Left would have grown through pro-Yrigoyenismo for what the National Left has ignored, through single-minded concentration on the national-antinational dimension, are the important industrial confrontations between the labour movement and the Yrigoyen governments.

Despite the occasional pro-labour policies of Yrigoyen's early years, strikes rose rapidly from 24,000 in 1916 to 136,000 in 1917, 133,000 in 1918 to 309,000 in 1919. [1] Moreover, as Rock has pointed out, when faced with pressures from the Right and the threat of middle-class defection in the Radical Party, Yrigoyen turned his back on the labour movement. [2] Hundreds of striking workers were massacred during the infamous Semana Trágica (Tragic Week) of January 1919. Moreover,

---

1. Vittorio Codovilla, Trabajos Escogidos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Anteo, 1972), p. 96.

2. David Rock, "Machine Politics in Buenos Aires and the Argentine Radical Party, 1912-1930," Journal of Latin American Studies, vol. 4, part 2 (November 1972), pp. 233-274.

the Radical Governments of the 1916 to 1930 period were not particularly "radical" in terms of their development strategy. Peter Smith has shown that the Radicals introduced into Congress 60% of the bills favouring livestock producers during that period [1] while Scobie has pointed out that tariff rates during the 1920's reached the lowest levels for 50 years. [2]

The National Left contention that the Radical Party was significantly more "national" than the Socialist Party, at least on the fundamental question of free trade versus protectionism, is therefore open to doubt. Though they have attempted to evade the contradictions and limitations of Radicalism by portraying Yrigoyen as the national caudillo responsible for all the progressive achievements of his party while painting Alvear as the bête noire representing the anti-national and anti-popular wing of Radicalism, such personalisation involves abandoning the National Left's professed Marxist method. Personalisation of political analyses also infected National Left critiques of the Socialist Party with Manuel Ugarte being presented as the only true nationalist of the Party and as ideological precursor of their own tendency. [3] Justo, Repetto and Ghioldi on the other hand have been vilified as vendepatrias (betrayers of the national interest) and cipayos (a word which originally denoted Indians who collaborated with the British imperial authorities and which has come to mean "imperialist lackeys" in Argentina). [4] To reject the National Left's tendency to personalise

---

1. Peter Smith, cited in Peter G. Snow, "The Class Basis of Argentine Political Parties," American Political Science Review, 63 (March 1969), pp. 163-167.

2. James R. Scobie, Argentina. A City and a Nation, 2d ed. (Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 182.

3. The major National Left work on Ugarte is Norberto Galasso, Manuel Ugarte, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1973).

4. Words first used by Arturo Jauretche of FORJA in the 1930's. The National Left ideological debt to FORJA was considerable.

the history of the Socialist Party in no way necessitates a defence of that party's leaders' timid reformism and poor understanding of the 'National Question', though Emilio Corbière's researches suggest that the "anti-national" nature of the old Socialist leaders is not as clear-cut an issue as the National Left literature implies. [1]

A final area in which the National Left, generically defined, has made an ideological contribution to the development of the Left lies in its critique of liberalism as a form of neo-colonial domination and in its attempt to unite nationalism and socialism in opposition to it. This explains how liberalism, embodied in the Constitution and for decades the main ideology of the dominant oligarchy, has served as a progressive cloak with which to hide the subordination of the country to imperialist centres and their local oligarchic allies. Progressive-sounding ideas such as free trade and myths about the superiority of Western civilization served as ideological tools in harnessing the Argentine economy to the requirements of Great Britain to such an extent that the country was often referred to as "British Argentina".

Though the dispelling of liberal myths has been a vital prerequisite to the elaboration of an alternative revolutionary ideology, National Left attempts to marry nationalism and socialism have been less successful. In an attempt to present an ideology which is at the same time national and socialist, Ernesto Goldar, for example, has devoted his attentions to discovering bases of dialectical materialism in the writings of Perón, Evita, Jauretche, Scalabrini Ortiz and other nationalists. While acknowledging that many Argentine nationalists have been anti-Marxists, Goldar has sustained that many "bourgeois nationalists"

---

1. Emilio Corbière, regular articles published in Cuestionario (Buenos Aires), 1975-76. See also Walter, op. cit.

have in fact been "unconscious materialists" [1] (just as the 4th International once considered Castro an "unconscious Trotskyist"). Indeed, his whole enterprise has been directed towards attempting to establish that Argentine national thought is materialist, in order to build a bridge between nationalism and socialism, between Peronism and the revolutionary Left.

Goldar has even pointed to traces of dialectics in the writings of Perón on political organization. However, what he has ignored, in trying to make Perón presentable to the Marxist Left, is that for Marxists the prime utility of dialectics is in the study of society in general and that in this respect they found no place in the armoury of Perón. Moreover, references to Perón being a materialist only serve to reveal Goldar's equation of materialism with empiricism. Overall, his work can be seen as an attempt to portray Argentine bourgeois nationalist writers as pre-Marxists in order to justify the argument of the majoritarian wing of the Peronist Left that Peronism as a whole was revolutionary and could become even more so.

The National Left also took up the concept of the ser nacional which became widely discussed in intellectual circles in the early 1960's. Broadly speaking, it can be interpreted as national culture and the analysis of it by Hernández Arregui explored its origins and development, upholding it as a force for liberation to be used in ideological combat against foreign-influenced literature. The tension, and ultimately the antagonism, between aspects of Marxist analysis and expressions of bourgeois nationalism filled this analysis with contradictions. The Marxist element in Hernández Arregui told him to reject national essentialism ("In synthesis, the ser nacional is not one but multiple"),

---

1. Ernesto Goldar, La Descolonización Ideológica (Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo Editor, 1973), p. 14.

to argue that different classes, for example, have different conceptions of the national question. Yet in the same work the author used this same ser nacional as a cultural basis of support for the thesis that "The industrial bourgeoisie, the nationalized middle classes and, as pivot, the national proletariat can unite against foreign capital and the anti-national classes". As argued above, nationalism and socialism in no way arrived at a synthesis in the works of this and other National Left writers. Rather, class conflict has been subordinated to the antagonisms between oppressor and oppressed nations in the conceptions of this school of thought, the result being an acceptance, at least temporary, of class conciliation. In the words of Hernández Arregui,

> "since colonial oppression is in specific historical situations more critical than internal social opposition, class conciliation is a dialectical moment in the development of national consciousness". 1

Though the National Left took up the idea of conflict between oppressor and oppressed nations from Lenin, they ignored his qualifications of the thesis. Though Lenin spoke of the need for temporary alliances between Communists and the national bourgeoisie in the colonial world, he strongly warned against mergers, [2] something which might come as a surprise to Puiggrós, who still considered himself a disciple of Lenin after joining the Peronist Movement in the 1940's. Similarly, Ramos and his National Left group, when supporting the Government of Isabel Perón, might have been reminded that Lenin had also argued that Communists:

---

1. Hernández Arregui, Qué es el Ser Nacional?, 3d ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973), pp. 19, 288 & 289-290.
2. V.I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), p. 27.

"should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating the peasantry and the broad mass of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit. If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie..." [1]

Despite the ideological weaknesses of the National Left, their ideas were attractive to important sectors of the evolving Peronist Left. They presented the youthful radicals with a national view of Argentine history, an explanation of why the Left had failed in the past and a socialist justification for their participation in the Peronist Movement. The National Left writers who actually became Peronists, like Hernández Arregui and Puiggrós, tended to be more influential than those like Ramos and Spilimbergo who formed a National Left party. The importance of the former group is reflected in the fact that Puiggrós is today First Secretary of the Professionals, Intellectuals and Artists Branch of the Montonero Peronist Movement's (Movimiento Peronista Montonero - MPM) Superior Council.

The Ramos tendency exercised only an indirect influence over the Peronist Left. Though some might criticise its writers for being Marxcitas rather than Marxistas (Marx-citers rather than Marxists), their Marxist terminology alienated those sectors of the Peronist Left emanating from Catholic nationalism, who viewed concepts like bonapartism as imported leftist schemas. A more critical wedge between the National Left political tendency and the Peronist Left though was the former's implacable opposition to the armed 'special formations' (guerrilla organisations) of the Peronist Left which were charged with "individual terrorism" and blanquism, forms of action considered likely to be used by conservative forces to justify greater repression. [2] Nevertheless,

---

1. Idem, "The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions," (1920), ibid. p. 33.

2. Ramos, La Era...., op. cit. pp. 298-301.

Ramos's popular and highly readable history of Argentina [1] was widely read, especially in university circles, and contributed to a positive reevaluation of Peronism on the part of many students. The Popular Left Front led by Ramos provided a home for those who wanted to support Peronism from a position of critical independence and who considered that the impossibility of changing Peronism from within called for the formation of a new revolutionary party. An indication of the strength of this party was supplied by the March 1973 elections in which it gained almost 70,000 votes when standing independently. Its nominal vote soared to 889,000 in the September 1973 presidential poll, though many of these votes were undoubtedly a result of voters' confusion when faced, this time, with an opportunity to vote for Perón on a Popular Left Front ticket. [2]

The National Left, both in its party and generic forms, made far less impact on workers than on students and petty-bourgeois sectors. Working-class nationalism, such as it was, owed more to Perón's rhetoric and to experience of industrial conflict with foreign monopolies than to readings of La Formación de la Conciencia Nacional. Quite apart from the ideas of the National Left, this was inevitable given the priority which the latter assigned to intellectual work. In this sense, its work has some parallels with the role played by the Radical Orientation Force of Argentine Youth during the 1930's and early 1940's. No political organisational work was done between the banning of the Socialist Party of the National Revolution in 1956 and the foundation of the Socialist Party of the National Left in 1962. Moreover, even after the formation of the latter party, the main emphasis was placed upon intellectual

---

1. Ramos, Revolución y Contrarevolución en la Argentina, 5 vols. 5th ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973).
2. Ramos, La Era..., op. cit. pp. 306-308.

production and proselytism for several years.

Most of the work of the National Left has thus been directed at "nationalising" the university petty bourgeoisie rather than adopting a consistent attitude towards work in the labour movement, at least until the present decade. Its ideas did much to attract young recruits to Peronism during the late 1960's and early 1970's but the ideological conceptions which it bestowed on Peronist Left sectors failed to prepare them for the realities of the 1973-76 Peronist Government. As argued above, the conceptions of the National Left were and are based upon their analyses of the 1946-55 Peronist Governments and were only minimally reformulated to take into account post-1955 changes in Argentine society. Even by 1973, the National Left considered that a stage of national-democratic change was inevitable before an independent struggle for Socialism could get under way. This led them to an overestimation of the anti-imperialism of the national bourgeoisie, to uncritical support for Perón and to the misplaced belief that Peronism was capable of further radical reforms.

The lack of National Left analysis of the 18 years of Peronist opposition did nothing to undermine the illusion that Perón himself had become more radical than in his early years. Failure by the National Left and others to analyse the behaviour of Perón during these years, especially the way in which he used the left-wing for his own purposes without surrendering the helm to them, encouraged the Peronist Left illusion that they could inherit the Movement's leadership through demonstrating that they were the most active and numerous Peronist tendency.

Though bitter critics of the Argentine Communist Party, the National Left helped to pass on to the Peronist Left a view of the

revolutionary process which was fundamentally that of international Stalinism clothed in national dress. The idea that the national bourgeoisie was still progressive was propagated in all National Left literature, even in the more radical works which called for working-class leadership of a national multi-class alliance, for one could not imagine participation by a conservative national bourgeoisie in a worker-dominated alliance of this type. Whether these views originated in Stalinism itself (the case of Puiggrós) or in the nation-imperialism dichotomy of historical revisionism, the strategy implications were the same - the Left had to accompany the national bourgeoisie in the present stage of anti-imperialist struggle, which in national terms meant participating in or accompanying the Peronist Movement in the belief that it still had a progressive role to perform. The National Left has become well-known for its view that the traditional Left constituted a left-wing shield of the Argentine oligarchy; a future Socialist movement in Argentina may well consider the National Left to have been a left-wing shield of the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

CATHOLIC RADICALISM

> "Why do we sit in a locked room debating whether the soul is immortal when we know that poverty and wretchedness are mortal?"
>
> "The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin"
>
> Camilo Torres Restrepo. [1]

In a country where 90% of the people are baptised and 70% reach

---

1. Camilo Torres Restrepo, quoted in "Words and Deeds," Church Times (London), 24th June 1977; and in John Gerassi (ed.), Revolutionary Priest (Great Britain: Penguin, 1973), p. 9.

the stage of first communion, [1] it is not surprising that the radical Catholic ideas of the 1960's played an important formative role in the evolution of the Peronist Left. It was these ideas which radicalised the former conceptions of several key Peronist Left figures, especially those who formed the original embryo of the Montoneros. For these young men, the new ideas within the Catholic Church led to a concern with social problems and social change, legitimised revolutionary action and pointed them in the direction of the Peronist Movement.

The spread of radical ideas in the Catholic Church was not, of course, a phenomenon peculiar to Argentina though she did produce one of their principal bearers in the persona of Juan García Elorrio. It was principally in Europe that the traditional social conservatism of the Catholic Church began to be challenged. This really got under way in the late 1950's, though there had been precursors like the French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, who had called for the development of a worker-priest movement prior to the German occupation, had supported armed resistance during it and appealed for Marxist-Christian dialogue after it. [2] Another prophet of the new school was Abbot Pierre who in 1954 sustained that "before talking about God to a man without a roof over his head, one must first provide him with a roof over his head", [3] an idea taken up by Camilo Torres in 1962 to justify revolutionary politics.

Such ideas would not however have had the dynamic impact which they did without the blessing and promotion of the Vatican. The latter, mindful of the fact that over one-third of its followers lived in Latin America and fearful of the loss of the impoverished millions to the

---

1. P. Carlos Mugica, Peronismo y Cristianismo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Merlin, 1973), p. 81.
2. Gerassi, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
3. Abbot Pierre, quoted in Mugica, op. cit., p. 84.

rival attraction of atheistic Marxism, began to see the need to concern itself with the lot of the poor in a far more radical way than previously. Moreover, under the papacies of both John XXIII and Paul VI and in recognition of the growing participation of Catholics in class struggles, dialogue with Marxists became acceptable to Rome. John XXIII, in Pacem in terris (1963), went so far as to say that Marxism contained "good elements, worthy of approval". [1]

The 2nd Vatican Council and the documents which emanated from it formalised the new orientations. Poverty, injustice and exploitation were condemned as results of man's greed for power and wealth. Christians were urged, in the name of love for their fellow men, to struggle for equality even if this meant taking on the oppressors and exploiters. This message gained its most radical expression in the words of Patriarch Maximos IV at the Council in 1965: "True socialism is a full Christian life that involves a just sharing of goods and fundamental equality". [2] Two years later came Paul XI's proclamation of Populorum progressio, the most important synthesis of the ideas of Vatican II. It attacked inequality, the profit motive, racism and the selfishness of the richer nations but equivocated over how these evils were to be vanquished - violence was ruled out "save where there is manifest long-standing tyranny which would do damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country". [3]

Conscious of the existence of a good many of the "exploiters" among its brethren, the Vatican limited its radicalism in this way for fear of becoming exclusively the 'Church of the Poor'. To some,

---

1. Quoted in Gerassi, op. cit., p. 17.
2. Patriarch Maximos IV, quoted in Dorothy Day (Preface), Camilo Torres: priest and revolutionary (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968) p. 16.
3. Quoted in Gerassi, op.cit., p. 45.

Populorum progressio implied that tyranny was not just a question of repressive political regimes but also of systems which dehumanise and maintain the existence of widespread poverty, with this justifying the violence of the oppressed in the Third World. To others, however, "manifest long-standing tyranny" meant only the political variant, with this interpretation providing a justification for non-involvement in revolutionary movements and only timid opposition to dictatorial regimes. Paradoxically, this vagueness on the issue of political violence, vital in maintaining the unity of a socially heterogeneous Church, only served to generate division in the Argentine Church, as different people put different interpretations on the encyclical and became polarised into conservative and radical factions.

Worker-priests were active in Argentina prior to the proclamation of Populorum progressio, foreshadowing in practice the ideas of the Vatican II documents by working amongst the poor and sharing their experiences. The movement, however, only became specifically political with the creation of the Third World Priests Movement (Movimiento de Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo) in 1967, heralded by a Third World Bishops' document which referred to Socialism in highly positive terms:

> "The Church can only rejoice at seeing the appearance among humanity of another social system which is less alien to the ethics of the prophets and the Gospel". 1

It was "less alien" of course, than capitalism which was firmly condemned for its "evil" characteristics of subjecting man to the economy and subordinating social to economic considerations.

This document rapidly received the support of nearly 1,000 Latin American priests who submitted a manifesto to the Medellín Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in 1968, which clearly demarcated the

---

1. Quoted in Mugica, op. cit., p. 89.

"unjust violence of the oppressors" from "the just violence of the oppressed". This grass roots view was only entertained up to a point by the Church hierarchs meeting in Medellín who, while blaming institutionalized violence and unjust social structures for Latin America's problems, categorically opposed the idea of an armed revolution ("generally, it engenders new injustices") [1] and criticized Marxism as well as liberal capitalism, claiming that both "militate against the dignity of the human person". [2] Nevertheless, the ideological revolution which swept through broad sectors of the Catholic Church in the 1960's did have a profound radicalising effect on many young people, not least in Argentina.

After Populorum progressio had called for political action to eliminate poverty, and with traditional appeals for individual philanthropy having failed, the question left unanswered was "What kind of political action?". The most radical reply to this question was that of Camilo Torres in arguing that "Revolution is not only permitted but is obligatory for all Christians who see in it the most effective way of making possible a greater love for all men". [3] Few priests were prepared, though, to follow his example of going into the mountains to die as a guerrilla in the struggle for "the takeover of power by the people, no matter what the cost". [4] In Argentina, most of the Church radicals shared Carlos Mugica's stance ("I am prepared to be killed but I am not

---

1. Quoted in Gerassi, op. cit., p. 49.
2. Quoted in Peter Strafford, "The Church of Change," Times (London), 2nd December 1977.
3. Torres, "A Message to Christians," (3.8.65) in Day, op. cit., p. 73.
4. Torres, "Message to the United Front of the People," (25.11.65), ibid., p. 109.

prepared to kill") [1] but a minority inspired by Juan García Elorrio did sustain that revolution could only come about through armed struggle in which priests had to participate.

García Elorrio, having been born into an upper middle class family, began his adult life in the San Isidro seminary. Influenced by the ideas of the 2nd Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII and Camilo Torres, he gave up his priesthood training at the age of 21 in order to establish firmer links with the temporal world. There he came into contact with Marxist ideas through acquaintance with Cuban revolutionary literature, a trip to Cuba, participation in dialogue with Marxists in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters (University of Buenos Aires) in 1965 and through meeting Cooke and adopting his revolutionary Peronist views. [2] The end product of his evolution was the review Cristianismo y Revolución (Christianity and Revolution) which he brought out in September 1966. It was designed to expose Onganía's attempt to justify his regime on the basis of Christian ideas, and to propagate the message of Camilo Torres that "The duty of every Catholic is to be a revolutionary; The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution". [3]

Cristianismo y Revolución rapidly became a decisive force in the radicalisation of the 400 Argentine priests and handful of bishops who adhered to the 3rd World Priests Movement and that of the bishops from 1967. It reflected their tercermundismo, their concern for the poor and oppressed of the 3rd World and support for the liberation movements. The Boletín del Tercer Mundo became a regular feature of the

---

1. Mugica, quoted in Mario Eduardo Firmenich, "Nuestras Diferencias Políticas," El Peronista (Buenos Aires), no. 5 (21st May 1974).
2. "Juan García Elorrio" (Obituary), Cristianismo y Revolución (Buenos Aires), no 28 (April 1971), p. 23.
3. Torres, quoted in Gerassi, op. cit., p. 9.

review, providing news and analysis of events in the underdeveloped world. García Elorrio's review also opened its pages to the whole of the Left, and thus provided all the underground armed organisations with a mouthpiece. Initials like FAR, FAP, FAL, MRA, MRP, MNRT, ENR, ERP, JAEN, JOC, JEC, JUC, etc., which appeared at the end of the communiqués and documents which it contained, reflect the role of Cristianismo y Revolución as a journalistic meeting-place for the radical Church, clerics and laymen, with the Marxist and Peronist Left.

Taking up the new ideas of the Catholic Church and giving them a Camilista interpretation, García Elorrio's review sought to convince Catholics that they could not stand on the political side-lines, that they had to opt for revolution as the only way of realizing "the commandment of fraternity through solidarity" even though the revolution would be "at times necessarily violent, because some hearts are so callous". [1] That revolution was not simply a matter of changing the social order but of changing man. It had to be "in man and in structures" [2] and here, apart from theological considerations, the influence of Guevara's ideas on the 'New Man' was crucial.

Cristianismo y Revolución also urged radical changes within the Catholic Church, seeking its deinstitutionalisation so as to convert it into a 'Church of the Poor', which would, in Helder Câmara's words, become "the voice of those who have no voice". [3] Somewhat naively, Church leaders were requested to give up their privileges and influential position within the State, distribute Church property and live among the

---

1. García Elorrio, Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 1 (September 1966) p. 23.
2. Rubén R. Dri, "Alienación y Liberación," ibid., no. 26 (November-December 1970), pp. 59-64.
3. Helder Câmara, quoted in Mugica, op. cit., p. 90.

poor. In 1967, García Elorrio wrote a beautiful letter to Monseñor Aramburu, Archbishop of Tucumán, which read:

> "We beg you urgently to share in the life of the poor and to open the doors of your churches to the 'plebs', so that they may at least feel that the house of the Lord is their own house too. May God enlighten His Lordship the Bishop". 1

Needless to say, the reverend gentleman decided to retain his palace, as did his colleagues, With some notable exceptions - such as Monseñores Devoto, Distéfano, Angelini, Cafferata and Nevares - the Church hierarchy rejected the radical ideas of the 3rd World Priests and in fact condemned their activities. Violence was condemned except in cases of "prolonged dictatorships". "Terrorism", Cardinal Caggiano argued, would "lead to totalitarianism". Meanwhile, on November 31st 1969, General Onganía consecrated the Argentine nation to the "protection and divine invocation of the immaculate heart of Mary". 2

In fact, the Church hierarchy's equation of the rebels' 'theology of liberation' with a 'theology of violence' was unjust. Those who rallied behind Cristianismo y Revolución did not favour political violence nor in most cases practise it. Rather, they considered it as an inevitable response to institutionalized violence, sinful yet demanding understanding rather than the denunciation which they reserved for oppressive violence:

> "We Christians continue believing that violence is bad and sinful but our theological reflection leads us to clearly distinguish between two kinds of violence: the primordial and originating violence which an oppressive power imposes on society and which is generally expressed in the socio-economic sphere, and derived violence",

---

1. García Elorrio, "Open Letter to MGR. J.C. Aramburu, Archbishop of Tucumán," in Alain Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America (Great Britain: Penguin, 1974), pp. 311-314.
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 28th June 1969, 1st December 1969 & 15th October 1970.

resorted to by the poor as a means of survival. [1] In this sense, the radicals legitimised "liberating" violence while stopping just short of advocating it.

Finally, Cristianismo y Revolución provided the young Catholics who were to become practitioners of armed struggle with an eschatological outlook. The glorification of militants who heroically sacrificed their lives for "the people", in the form of homages published in the review, helped to prepare young radicals for a means of politico-military struggle which would in all probability claim their lives. Quite apart from the promise of heavenly solace, the future fallen were promised life after death amongst the people for whom they fought. Referring to the deaths of Camilo Torres and Paz Zamora (a Catholic killed while fighting for the Bolivian National Liberation Army), the review claimed:

> "They will live for ever in the rifle of that anonymous guerrilla who fights everywhere in Latin America, in the rebel machete of the peasants or in the avenging fire of mining dynamite". 2

Moreover, there was the idea, brilliantly dramatised in Camus's Les Justes, [3] that being an agent of violence was not so sinful, and was indeed in a sense legitimate, if one was prepared to sacrifice one's own life as a result of undertaking a violent path. For a Christian, there is no greater proof of love than giving one's life for other men - and what better form of atonement?.

The same idea was preached by Father Carlos Mugica who, while rejecting armed struggle personally, sustained that:

---

1. José María González Ruiz, "Cristo guerrillero o Cristo rey?" Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971), pp. 39-41.
2. Ibid., no. 28 (April 1971), p. 81.
3. Albert Camus, The Just (England: Penguin, 1970).

> "The Christian may or may not be disposed to kill - this being for reasons of conscience, information or ideology - or in other words to respond or not with violence to the violence he suffers. But what he must always remember is that he must be disposed to die and that is very clear". 1

This influence, combined with the magnetism of Guevara's idealised heroic man, was crucially important at a personal level in persuading young Catholics to participate in the creation of the armed organisations, to make a tremendous sacrifice, the offered personal rewards for which were spiritual.

From the priesthood, Carlos Mugica, a member of the Jesuit Order and 3rd World Priests Movement, also played a key role in the radicalisation of young Catholics, though his reservations about political violence were greater than those of the more radical group surrounding García Elorrio. Mugica's militancy, though influenced by the ideas of Vatican II and Camilo Torres, was largely derived from his interpretation of the Bible. For him, a key point of departure for the new ideas in the Church had been Pope Pius XII's call for a return to the Bible in his Divino Afflante Spiritu of 1943, for this signified increased interest in the temporal world and reminded Christians of Christ's attitude to society.

For Mugica, Christ's message was the liberation of man, not only from unjust social structures but also from himself as sinful man, for all men according to the Catholic Church have "the possibility of acquiring the dimension of the son of God" ... "the divine dimension". Recognising that man's environment is a conditioning factor, Mugica argued that in his capacity as a man of God:

---

1. Mugica, op. cit., p. 32.

> "I have to love human beings and the structures which help them to realise themselves as men, to live creatively. And I must try to destroy or modify structures which prevent one from living in this manner". [1]

His socialist alternative to the existing structures, seen as subordinating man to material goods, was rooted in the Bible, in its references to how Christ and the Apostles rejected private property and shared all possessions collectively.

Basing himself on the original Christian community, Mugica argued that "if everyone in our country who call themselves Catholic were Christians, there would be no need to make a social revolution". However, since history had demonstrated that the rich have no propensity to surrender their wealth voluntarily, "it is necessary to help them to liberate themselves from the goods which oppress them". [2] Socialism with a human face and national roots, as opposed to the bureaucratic socialism of the Soviet Union, was embraced by Mugica as being the only type of society in which individuals could lead creative lives, enabling their spiritual development and the discovery of Christ.

Mugica saw his role as a priest as demanding that he get closer to the poor, to live among them and adopt their viewpoint. This was the key to his concurrent conversion to both Christianity and Peronism at the age of 26. A vital element in explaining the convergence of the radical Church and Peronism, including the personal experience of Mugica, was an intense feeling of guilt at the Church's participation in the 1955 overthrow of Perón, coupled with a realisation that this had led many people to identify the Church with the oligarchy and oppressive forces. [3]

---

1. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
2. Ibid., pp. 51-52.
3. Ibid., p. 84.

Perhaps this sense of guilt goes some way towards explaining why Mugica and those who shared his evolution adopted an exceedingly naive attitude towards Peronism when they decided to join the camp of the people. Another factor here is that Mugica, as a man of God, did not expect perfection from the creations of men.

Peronism, both due to its social welfare policies and the sense of dignity which the poor reputedly enjoyed under it, was viewed by Mugica as "a Movement which embraces Christian values in a specific epoch". He accepted Perón's claims about his government "only doing what the people wanted" totally uncritically, while also swallowing Perón's promises of socialismo nacional:

> "I believe that the process towards 'national' socialism, with a human face, which doesn't seek to eliminate ownership of consumer goods but to give them to everybody, began in Argentina on 17th October 1945". 1

Such an attitude did not stem from any real analysis of Peronism but rather from a desire to be with the people, a faith in the people's allegiance to Perón and an assumption that a popular-based movement such as Peronism had at least to have socialist implications.

Any defects of Peronism with regard to socialist credentials were to be explained by Mugica's acceptance of the stages approach to revolution:

> "I think personally that the first struggle for the liberation of our people is contained in this option: dependency or liberation. In this national liberation struggle there need not necessarily be class struggle. It can be joined not only by workers and students but also by national-minded entrepreneurs. I believe that later, certainly, there will come the business between entrepreneurs and workers, in a second period. In other words, a society in which Christian values are fully realised will be a society without entrepreneurs". 2

---

1. Ibid., pp. 35 & 55.
2. Ibid., p. 40.

Christian entrepreneurs begged to differ.

Finally, through Mugica, the Catholic youth in contact with him were presented, despite all the socialist icing, with Perón's view of the primacy of politics over economics. In Mugica's writings, this was of course combined with the primacy of religion over politics:

> "I as a Christian think that although there must be a disappearance of classes, to sustain the total equality of men is to ignore the reality of sin. For me, a Christian, full equality will only come when Christ comes and not before. I think that this is where Marxism and Marxists are mistaken. They emphasise economic man and forget political man. That is why they find it hard to understand Peronism which stresses the political more than the economic" [1]

Before examining exactly how these ideas came to the Catholic participants in the building of the Peronist Left, it is worth examining just one more example of the radical Catholic literature: Rolando Concatti's explanation of Nuestra opción por el peronismo, written for the Mendozan region of the 3rd World Priests Movement. It outlined the bases for 3rd World Priests' commitment to Peronism, these being threefold. Firstly, Concatti argued that Peronism deserved support because "The objective role of Peronism in the present history of the country is to represent the proletariat, what is national and what is popular in Argentina", this being a "historic fact". This argument involved the lines of class struggle being equated with the Peronism versus anti-Peronism dichotomy, dispensing with discussion of class conflict within the Peronist Movement with the ridiculous statement that there were "anti-Peronist factors in Peronism". [2]

Secondly, Peronism was supported for being a Movement and thus

---

1. Ibid., p. 36.
2. Pbro. Rolando Concatti, "Nuestra opción por el Peronismo," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971), pp. 28-36.

allegedly more dynamic and less bureaucratic than a political party. While the bureaucratic nature of the Peronist Party was seen as a weakness which needed criticism and rectification, the structures of the equally bureaucratic CGT were viewed as basically sound. Finally, adhesion to Peronism was grounded in the opinion that one must base political activity on the existing level of workers' consciousness, Peronism being regarded as "the highest level of consciousness and combativity reached by the Argentine working class" to date, though not the peak of potential working-class consciousness. No guidelines were provided as to how the existing level was to be transcended.

Underlying all these reasons for supporting Peronism was a view of national development surprisingly, for Peronists, derived from the experience of some of the metropolitan countries. "History teaches that liberal democracy is an indispensable step in the evolutionary process", Concatti maintained, going on to characterise the early Peronist experience as a "liberal-democratic revolution" which had paved the way for the present stage of struggling for a "militant democracy" .... "a social democracy whose objective is not 'equality at the ballot box' but 'equality in life' in all its aspects: economic, cultural and political". Though Peronism was criticised for its lack of an ideology, revolutionary project, organisation and methods, all these defects were relegated in importance by attributing them to the Peronism of the earlier stage. Because Peronism was regarded as a dynamic movement, capable of change, and because "Perón was loyal to the objectively most important force: the proletariat", the Movement could be reformed from within in order to equip it for the tasks of the modern stage. [1]

Clearly the 3rd World Priests began with a recognition that the

---

1. Ibid., pp. 30-33.

workers' movement was largely Peronist, saw the working class as the most progressive force in society and from there developed an interpretation of Peronism as a whole being progressive. However, the latter was dependent on a highly unrealistic vision of Argentine political history. For though the early Peronist governments were democratic in the sense of their electoral origins and the popular support they enjoyed, they were in no way "liberal". Those on the Peronist Left who were influenced by radical Catholic conceptions saw this but inherited the underlying vision of the revolution unfolding in distinct stages, which in turn enabled them to consider the defects of Peronism as being the limitations of a former stage. Furthermore, they adopted the myth that Peronism always did what the people wanted and this was crucial to their belief that Peronism had become or could become a revolutionary instrument of the transition to socialismo nacional.

The importance of radical Catholic ideas in the ideology of the recent Peronist Left has been so neglected by analysts that it is necessary to illustrate exactly how the influence was imparted. In the early years of the 1960's, Fernando Abal Medina, Carlos Gustavo Ramus and Mario Eduardo Firmenich, all future founders of the Montoneros, attended the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires. There they participated together in the Catholic Secondary Student Youth (Juventud Estudiantil Católica - JEC), a branch of Catholic Action (Acción Católica - AC), playing leading roles in the school branch. Above all, the new ideas of the Catholic Church came to them through the branch's spiritual advisor who was none other than Carlos Mugica.

According to Firmenich, it was Mugica who "taught us that Christianity was impossible without love for the poor, for those persecuted for defending justice and for fighting against injustice". [1] He

1. Firmenich, "Mi Afecto y Agradecimiento al Padre Carlos Mugica," El Peronista, no. 5. op. cit.

had also, apparently, maintained that Christ had come to bring the sword rather than peace and that this sword was pointed towards the exploiters of man and violators of human dignity. In fact, he later rejected this interpretation of the Biblical passage, arguing that it was not a call to arms but rather a warning by Christ to his followers that they might be persecuted. [1] The message preached by Mugica would not, however, have made such an impact had he not attempted to put it into practice. The future Montoneros frequently went with Mugica to work amongst the shanty-town dwellers of Retiro, Buenos Aires. Firmenich and Ramus also went with him on a trip to Tartagal, Santa Fe, in February 1966 in order to work with the poor and preach the new ideas of the Church.

These experiences of evangelical social work combined with the impact of Camilo Torres's death led the missioners to conclude that "the basic problem was political and its solution was political revolution" [2] In 1967 the group debated "the problem of whether political violence was morally just or not" but failed to reach agreement. Though Mugica had supposedly advocated the machine gun as the only solution when in Tartagal, he now rejected guerrilla warfare as incompatible with the example of Christ. Ramus, Abal Medina and Firmenich, on the other hand, began to look to armed struggle as a legitimate response to institutionalised violence. So while Mugica remained a priest and denounced violence, except in cases where it was employed by the mass of the people, the proto-Montoneros broke with their Church organisations, went underground and helped García Elorrio form the Comando Camilo Torres. That organisation was only a stepping-stone towards the formation of the Montoneros. Its only public action occurred on 1st May 1967, when García Elorrio and two others broke

---

1. Mugica, op. cit., pp. 16 & 66.
2. Firmenich, "Mi Afecto....," op. cit.

up a mass attended by General Onganía in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires. The intention was to expose the institutional Church as a defender of the military regime and a call was made for "revolutionary struggle" against the "Alsogaray-Onganía-Krieger Vasena government" [1]

Other key early Montoneros whose radicalisation took place in Catholic organisations were Emilio Angel Maza, a medical student at Córdoba's Catholic University and leader of the Integralista youth centre there; José Sabino Navarro and Jorge Gustavo Rossi who both started out in the Catholic Young Workers organisation (Juventud Obrera Católica - JOC); and Carlos Capuano Martínez who began his political life in the Catholic Secondary Student Youth. The Montoneros were momentarily reunited with one of their former mentors after the deaths of Abal Medina and Ramus on September 7th 1970, during police hunts for the Montonero kidnappers and executioners of ex-President Aramburu. Mugica took the funeral service in which he referred to the deceased as "an example to youth" while Father Benítez (formerly Evita's confessor) on the same occasion said they "were murdered by the nation, which did not know how to understand them" ... "Thank you Lord for these two young men. They didn't choose an easy road". [2] Benítez was later accused of providing a cassock worn by one of Aramburu's abductors and Father Alberto Carbone received a 2-year suspended sentence for supplying the typewriter with which Montonero communiqués were written.

Many other Third World Priests participated in the struggles against the 1966-73 military regime, though few actually assisted in the formation of guerrilla groups. Parish priests participated in the fight to prevent sugar mill closures in Tucumán province and also in the Cordobazo.

---

1. Buenos Aires Herald, 2nd May 1967.
2. Ibid., 12th and 15th September 1970.

An indication of their localized success was seen in July 1969 when the transfer of a radical priest by the Church hierarchy led to a 24-hour protest strike and mass demonstrations in Cañada de Gómez, Santa Fe. [1] In general, though they refused to support actions such as the killing of Aramburu, they refused to condemn them openly, instead calling for a questioning of the system which gave rise to such violence.

The arguments of the radical Church were present in many of the early Peronist Left guerrilla communiqués. The Montoneros were to claim: "We are not the ones who seek violence; rather, violence is an everyday thing belonging to the system. Violence is hunger, poverty, illiteracy, infant mortality, exploitation, repression". [2] Likewise the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias - FAR) sustained that: "We have not chosen violence, we have simply decided to cease suffering it" and announced that they would fight, as Guevara said, out of "love for man and life". [3] This was also the line of the Peronist Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas - FAP) who described themselves as "people of God", not violent by desire but "present in the vanguard of the people who confront the brutal violence of egoism with the violence of love". [4] Finally, radical Catholicism was also the driving force behind the militancy of printing workers' leader Raimundo Ongaro who, in January 1970, took to the pulpit of the Church of San Antonio de Padua, Avellaneda, to call for armed revolution ... "Christ was a revolutionary" ... "like Camilo Torres we must take up arms and defend our brothers". [5]

---

1. Ibid., 24th July 1969.
2. "Hablan los Montoneros," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970), pp. 11-14.
3. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, "Comunicado No. 2," ibid., no. 25 (September 1970), p. 59.
4. "Carta de las Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas a los Sacerdotes del Tercer Mundo," ibid., no. 26, pp. 15-20.
5. Raimundo Ongaro, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 7th January 1970.

The Third World Priests Movement declined in Argentina during the early years of the 1970's. Its demise was due to a number of factors - political repression, pressure on the part of the Church hierarchy for the rebels to accept their authority and, quite probably, moral revulsion at the escalating violence. Repression led to the imprisonment of several priests and claimed the lives of Mugica and, probably, Elorrio. The latter was killed by a car in mysterious circumstances early in 1970 and though Cristianismo y Revolución soldiered on for a while under his wife, Cassiana Ahumada, it was suppressed when she was arrested at the end of 1971. Militant Catholicism was thus deprived of its main organ of influence.

Carlos Mugica, who had also known what the inside of a prison cell looked like, was gunned down in May 1974 as he left his church in the Materdos district of Buenos Aires. Mugica had fully supported Perón's return in 1973 and indeed was a member of his leader's entourage on the return flight from Madrid. Under Cámpora's Presidency, he took a key job in the Social Welfare Ministry but soon found himself doing battle with right-wing minister José López Rega. The outcome was his resignation over the failure of the Ministry to do anything effective to help the shanty-town dwellers with whom he worked. His reward was death at the hands of the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA) directed by López Rega, though at the time an attempt was made to implicate the Montoneros in the assassination in order to discredit them. Around 4,000 people, many of them from the villas miserias, joined his funeral cortège and attended his burial.

Since that time, while still occasionally criticizing human rights violations, the Argentine Church has become more united in its repudiation of violence and its practitioners. Those who attempted to convert it into a 'Church of the Poor' failed and paid a high price for their

attempt. In Latin America as a whole, some 800 clerics have been killed, imprisoned, tortured, kidnapped or deported in trying to put liberation theology into practice [1] and Argentina's share of this toll has been substantial.

Nevertheless, the radical wing of the Church, both actual promoters of armed struggle and non-violent militants, were a decisive influence in the orientation of Catholic nationalists towards the Peronist Left during the 1960's. It eased the passage, at the level of conscience, of young Catholics towards revolutionary violence, providing them with a justification for it and the promise of atonement through sacrifice. Undoubtedly, due to its Christian preoccupation with the question of the morality of violence, the whole discussion of how to make the revolution had revolved around this single issue, ignoring other fundamental problems of revolutionary organisation and strategy.

Secondly, it helped to provide the Peronist Left with a 3rd World perspective on the international situation. "The Third World is the world of revolutionaries", García Elorrio had said [2] and this view became predominant. Not only did it tend to isolate the Peronist Left from the left-wing and labour movements of the advanced industrial countries but it also strengthened the conception of the 'national revolution', overriding a class view of anti-imperialist struggle.

Thirdly, the idea of the need to join the people's struggles, to become part of the people and adopt their standpoint militated in favour of a naive and uncritical attitude towards Peronism. Again, García

---

1. "Key test for Pope on Latin America's contending bishops," Sunday Times (London), 17th September 1978.
2. García Elorrio, "The Sign of the Revolution," in Gheerbrant, op. cit., pp. 304-307.

Elorrio:

> "I had to fight with the slaves, the people, as they fought, not as an elitist teacher," (I had to be) "a genuine participant with them and not for them, in their misery, their failings, their violence" [1]

- and, one might add, in their illusions. Such an approach led to a disdain for revolutionary theory which for Lenin was a crucial element in the dialectic of revolutionary praxis.

Finally, the active Catholics of the Peronist Left received from the radical Church the message that social justice was central to Christianity. In this way the Catholic influence not only directed those young militants towards Peronism but also towards vague notions of socialism and revolutionary change. Radical Catholicism thus played a vital role in the intellectual development of leading cadres of the Peronist Left. Even today the Montonero Superior Council sports a 'reverend father' (Rafael Iaccuzzi) and its "militias" contain a number of priests. [2]

ORTHODOX PERONISM

In addition to the already discussed currents of ideological thought, the Peronist Left incorporated many ideas from Perón and Evita into their ideological baggage and cited them frequently in an attempt to demonstrate that they were the most "orthodox" of Peronistas. Before examining these ideas, it is first necessary to clarify their status and briefly

---

1. Idem, Interview with John Gerassi, Gerassi, op. cit., pp. 41-42.
2. Radical Catholic influence upon the Montoneros was confirmed in July 1978 when Montonero Army Comandante , Horacio Mendizábal, wrote to inform the Vatican that his "army" had established a chaplaincy and had appointed Padre Jorge Adur to take charge of it. See Ejército Montonero, Estrella Federal, no. 5 (August 1978), passim.

discuss whether Peronism can reasonably claim to have an ideology. The use of the concept of ideology has changed through time and still today we lack a commonly-accepted definition of the term. Clearly there is a "grey area" where political thought and ideology meet and Peronism, or Justicialismo as its ideas are called, is generally deposited there.

Peronism's characterisation of its own ideas is totally unhelpful here. Perón himself often used "philosophy" and "ideology" interchangeably, [1] as in his description of the contents of his La Comunidad Organizada [2] which in fact is a philosophical piece drawn from his speeches at the First National Philosophy Congress in 1949. Nor is his idea of "Peronist Doctrine" of much use for whereas most people would equate "doctrine" with a system of beliefs, Perón at times used it to designate "the forms of execution of (Justicialista) ideology".[3] Finally, it is necessary to avoid the mistake made by some Peronist Left writers in identifying ideology with revolutionary theory.

Neither Perón nor any of his supporters offered the world a new Weltansschauung. Peronism has not produced a "total ideology" providing an overall view of the world. Yet if one accepts Plamenatz's definition of ideology being "a set of closely related beliefs or ideas, or even attitudes, characteristic of a group or community" and his argument that ideologies can be "partial", [4] consisting of ideas which relate to only a part of reality, then Justicialism can be considered ideological. In its most impoverished expressions it is composed of a series of dogmas enshrined in the "Twenty Truths of Justicialism".

---

1. See, for example, Juan Domingo Perón, La Hora de los Pueblos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Norte, 1968), pp. 153 & 172.
2. Perón, La Comunidad Organizada (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1974).
3. Perón, La Hora..., op. cit., p. 153.
4. John Plamenatz, Ideology (Great Britain: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 15-18.

There one finds such claims as "For a Peronist there is nothing better than another Peronist" and "In this land, the best that we have is the people". It was also asserted that "A Peronist Government is one which does what the people want". [1]

Stronger claims to ideological status can be made for the two principal components of Justicialism, its "Third Position" and its "Three Banners" which will be examined in this chapter, before analysing Perón's radical-sounding rhetoric of the 1960's and finally the role played by Eva Perón.

Perón

> "I know that the defence of the interests of businessmen, industrialists and traders is the defence of the State itself"
>
> - Juan Domingo Perón,
> Speech in the Chamber of Commerce, 1944 [2]

Before looking at Perón's early spoken and written words, it must be pointed out that he was no ideologue. Rather he was a supreme pragmatist who, when confronted with the democracy versus fascism debate of the early 1940's, commented "I prefer to be more empirical". [3] His actions were guided by the political, social and economic situations which he encountered and the practical options which they offered. Though he once referred to Mussolini as "the greatest man of this century" [4] and said that he would "follow in his footsteps but also avoid his mistakes", Perón's political deeds were guided more by opportunism,

---

1. For a Montonero summary and analysis of the "Twenty Truths of Justicialism", see El Descamisado (Buenos Aires), nos. 21-25, 1973.
2. Perón, quoted in Fernando Nadra, Perón Hoy y Ayer 1971-1943 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Polémica, 1972), p. 57.
3. Perón, quoted in José Pablo Feinmann, El Peronismo y la Primacía de la Política (Argentina: Editorial Cimarron, 1974), p. 58.
4. Perón, quoted in John Barnes, Eva Perón (Great Britain: Fontana/Collins, 1978), p. 37.

in the non-pejorative sense of the word, than by any ideology and many of his ideas were only enunciated after coming to power.

Perón adopted the perspective of the historical revisionists in seeing Argentina following her formal national independence as an "English colony" in which the main historical conflicts had been between "an Anglo-Saxon line and a Hispanic line". [1] The former referred to the oligarchy and other sectors linked to imperialist interests whereas the latter line, which included the 1st Junta, Rosas, Yrigoyen and, of course, himself, denoted the political forces who had fought for genuine national independence. Such a rationale was behind his claim that "The ideologies have become redundant and the dilemma has ceased to be communism or capitalism, instead becoming liberation or neo-colonialism". [2] His "Third Position" was presented as an alternative to both systems, each condemned for being exploitative and imperialistic.

Internationally, the "Third Position" was posed as a response to the existence of the "two imperialisms", red and yankee, and purported to be "as distinct from one of the dominant imperialisms of that time as from the other". [3] In practice, Peronist foreign policy lost its national way on a number of occasions by bowing to US pressures. Though Perón claimed to have attacked "the international capitalism of the great consortium of foreign exploitation" ... "without quarter and without truces", [4] there were in fact "truces" once the economy began to decline in the early 1950's, when concessions were made to US oil

---

1. Perón, quoted in Feinmann, op. cit., p. 11.
2. Perón, quoted in Gonzalo Cárdenas, "El Peronismo y la Cuña Neoimperial," in Cárdenas et al, El Peronismo, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1973), p. 45.
3. Perón, quoted in Enrique Pavón Pereyra, Perón tal como es (Buenos Aires: Editorial Macacha Güemes, 1973), p. 225.
4. Perón, quoted in Feinmann, op. cit., p. 115.

companies. Moreover, one can cite several diplomatic instances revealing that the "Third Position" was by no means equidistant from the two major world powers - Perón's January 1946 message to Truman, promising that if he won the elections, Argentina would side with the US; his declaration that Argentina would form part of the "western front" in a future war against communism; the September 1947 signing of the Treaty of Río and affiliation to the Organisation of American States in March 1948, both of which linked Argentina to the USA; and finally Perón's support for US intervention in Korea in 1950. [1]

At home the "Third Position" took the form of class conciliation and harmony. Justicialism claimed independence from both capitalist and communist systems, purporting to offer a new social system which had eliminated or would eliminate the class struggle. For Perón:

> "social problems have never been resolved through struggle between capital and labour but through harmony. And that is why we propose ... agreement between them, both under the tutelage of authority and justice which emanate from the State". 2

This was clothed in humanist arguments which tolerated:

> "neither the exploitation of man in the name of capital nor in the name of the State. We want man, while retaining his freedom, to be a human being, principal and end in himself and not an instrument of the appetites of capital or of the State".... "Peronism is humanism in action". 3

This "humanism" was applied to capital in Perón's argument that it could be "humanised" as a means of arriving at a single class of men: "the workers will progressively acquire direct ownership of the capital

---

1. Nadra, op. cit., pp. 79-81.
2. Perón (28.6.44), quoted in Milciades Peña, El Peronismo, Selección de Documentos para la Historia (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Fichas, 1973), p. 99.
3. Perón, Doctrina Peronista, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Macacha Güemes, 1973), pp. 69 & 241.

goods of production, commerce and industry, but the evolutionary process will be slow and gradual". [1] In fact, it turned out to be so "slow and gradual" that only one brewery appears to have been handed over to the workforce between 1946-55! As a bonapartist, Perón claimed to offer "solutions which equally benefit the workers, commerce and industry, because we are only interested in the wellbeing of the fatherland", [2] but of course it would be fallacious and exceedingly naive to assume that the material benefits received by the classes of the Peronist alliance were in any way equal. Moreover, while true that both the new industrialists and the workers benefited from the early years of economic prosperity, the relative class harmony which was achieved was premised upon that prosperity rather than upon any intrinsic merits of Justicialism. Perón's whole long-term economic strategy was based upon a belief in the coming of a 3rd World War. Influenced by the Nazi idea that war was inevitable as "a process of biological selection" [3] and seeing the escalation of the Cold War, Perón pinned his hopes for continued Argentine financial ascendancy on another war, enabling her once again to accumulate huge stocks of foreign exchange reserves through supplying the combatants. The failure of this to materialise combined with other factors in producing economic decline in the early 1950's and then the strikes by the railwaymen, bank workers, sugar workers, textile workers, metal workers and others began to show the artificiality of the former relative class harmony.

Behind Perón's calls for class harmony, one finds clear indications of a bourgeois fear of class struggle and social revolution:

---

1. Perón, quoted in Feinmann, op. cit., p. 144.
2. Perón, Doctrina..., op. cit., p. 55.
3. Perón, quoted in Nadra, op. cit., p. 79.

"If we don't make a peaceful revolution, the people will make a violent revolution". [1] His concession of important material benefits to labour was not only motivated by a desire to construct a solid mass base for a programme of national development but also by a fear of the Left - "to avoid a resurgence of sleeping communism", he considered it imperative to "give 30% in time rather than lose everything later". [2] Perón was no obrerista (champion of the workers). In many ways his intentions here were similar to those of Rosas who once confided to a friend the secret of his durability:

> "I know and respect the talents of many of the men who have governed the country ... but it seems to me that all committed a great error; they governed very well for the cultured people but scorned the lower classes ... I believe it is important to establish a major influence over this class to contain it and direct it, and I have acquired this influence. I am a gaucho among gauchos. I talk as they do. I protect them. I am their attorney. I care for their interests". 3

It was an entirely different matter when Perón was faced with the spectre of an independent working class, as the Laborista leaders like Cipriano Reyes were to find to their cost when they resisted integration into the official Peronist Party. [4] Perón continued to preach class conciliation even after many of the industrial entrepreneurs whose interests he promoted had myopically deserted him in the early 1950's. He staunchly resisted all suggestions that workers' militias be formed to prevent a military coup and made no attempt to mobilise the labour movement against the 1955 revolt. Though in later years he was to repeatedly justify his refusal to resist with the claim that it was

---

1. Perón, quoted in Conrado Eggers Lan, Izquierda, Peronismo y Socialismo Nacional (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972), p. 107.
2. Perón, quoted in Nadra, op. cit., p. 57.
3. Rosas, quoted in Barnes, op. cit., p. 8.
4. See Walter Little, "Party and State in Peronist Argentina, 1945-55," Hispanic American Historical Review, vol. 53, no. 4 (November 1973), pp. 644-662.

to avert bloodshed, while in Paraguay a tired Perón released the scared thought, "think what would have happened if I had handed arms from the arsenals over to the workers ready to grasp them..." [1]

The Three Banners of Justicialism - Political Sovereignty, Economic Independence and Social Justice - slogans which symbolised the main orientations of Peronist policy, were similarly designed to appeal to all sectors of the Peronist alliance. They were left sufficiently vague to be acceptable and indeed attractive to both sides of the new industry, even if some entrepreneurs showed reluctance in conceding the merits of a judicious dose of social justice. It should be underlined that these principles were unoriginal. The 3 Banners had been raised by the young intellectuals of FORJA a decade earlier and they in turn had gained inspiration from Yrigoyen, Ugarte and Haya de la Torre. FORJA leader Arturo Jauretche had sustained in the mid-1930's that "economic emancipation and social justice will be the indispensable counterparts of political independence". [2]

Moreover, similar combinations of principles have been put forward internationally by other writers concerned at the dependent situation of their countries. The 3 Banners, for example, find close parallels in the San Min Chu I (Three Principles of the People) outlined by the Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen in 1905. [3] Though his principles of nationalism, people's democracy and people's livelihood

---

1. Perón, quoted in El Día (Montevideo), 5th October 1955; reproduced in Enrique Rivera, Peronismo y Frondizismo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Patria Grande, 1958), pp. 84-92.

2. Jauretche, quoted in Hernández Arregui, La Formación..., op. cit., p. 307.

3. See Harold Z. Schiffin, "The Enigma of Sun Yat-sen," in Mary Clabaugh Wright (ed.), China in Revolution: The First Phase, 1900-1913 (USA: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 443-474; and Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (eds.), Republican China 1911-1949 (Great Britain, Penguin, 1968), pp. 95-97 & 138-139.

are not identical to those of Justicialism, they shared their deliberate vagueness in an endeavour to maximise their appeal to diverse political currents. Their success in this respect still finds reflection today in the fact that both of the Chinese regimes invoke them to legitimise their behaviour. Similarly, in Argentina both the fascist and left-wings of the Movement have carried forward the Justicialist banners, while inscribing them with their own interpretations.

These then were the early ideas of Justicialism propounded by Perón, generally as a justification for his policies rather than as a guide to action. Pragmatist as he was, Perón had little interest in genuine ideological development which could not prosper when left to intellectual mediocrities like Raúl Mendé, director of the Escuela Superior Peronista and the official publishing house Mundo Peronista. Nor was it engendered by Perón's attitude, as a military man, to the raising of political consciousness - he viewed ideas as doctrines to be inculcated into people's minds rather than emerging from free intellectual discussion. Though it is slightly unfair to dismiss Peronist ideology as being no more than "Los Muchachos Peronistas, Evita Capitana, the Patio de la Moracha and the articles of Américo Barrios" (editor of the official paper Democracia), as Enrique Rivera did, [1] it was certainly exceedingly partial and exceedingly shallow.

Perón's alleged political metamorphosis, his so-called 'left turn', did not take place immediately after his displacement in 1955. While it is true to say that he urged more militant tactics than previously, especially in his letters to Cooke, it took a decade before talk of socialismo nacional took its place in Perón's pronouncements. By 1958, in Los Vendepatria, he was still referring to Justicialism as a "social revolution"

---

1. Rivera, op. cit., p. 35.

misunderstood 20 years previously, had now become the banner of the Third World - "the Third World is now in the Third Position".... [1] "We were the precursors and we have paid the price which precursors pay". [2] Of course this view of the Third World, and indeed the very idea of a "Third World", bears little resemblance to reality. Most of the main liberation movements, far from adopting a position of equidistance or independence from the two great powers, in fact receive support from the Soviet Union and align themselves with Soviet international policies. Moreover, if one looks at the governments of the underdeveloped countries, they tend to lean, to greater or lesser extents, towards one of the major powers. Governments which have seriously tried to balance between them have been few in number and not particularly durable.

In this way Perón maintained that his Movement, in accordance with the general evolution of the world, had become Socialist - "Justicialism was just an indispensable transition, in a bloodless form, towards a national and humanistic Socialism". [3] He even went so far as to claim that had he received Soviet backing in the 1940's, he would have become the first Fidel Castro of Latin America! [4] Another ploy to take advantage of left-wing sympathies for Cuba was his eulogy of Guevara after the latter's death in Bolivia:

> "Today, the most extraordinary figure offered by the Latin American revolution has fallen as a hero in struggle. His death rends my soul. He is an example of conduct, of disinterestedness, of the spirit of sacrifice, of renouncement..." 5

The irony is that Guevara in his youth had considered Perón a dictator.

---

1. Perón, Letter to Hernández Arregui (10.12.69), in Pavón Pereyra, op. cit., pp. 187 & 292.
2. Perón, quoted in Nadra, op. cit., p. 25.
3. Perón, quoted in Eggers Lan, op. cit., p. 44.
4. Nadra, op. cit., p. 85.
5. Perón, quoted in Mugica, op. cit., p. 38.

Socialismo Nacional was sufficiently vague for it to be interpreted by José López Rega as "national socialism", a blood brother of Nazism and Fascism, [1] and by the Peronist Left as a "national road to Socialism", understood as a system of economic socialization and popular power, respecting specific national conditions and traditions. The López Rega wing were able to cite, as supportive evidence for their interpretation, Perón's January 1969 statement to Félix Luna in which he said that during his 1937 trip to Italy, he had encountered "the first socialismo nacional to appear in the world". [2] To back this up, they were also able to refer to a passage in 'La Hora de los Pueblos (1968) in which Perón argued that the Allied defeat of Germany and Italy eliminated "all momentary possibilities of a socialismo nacional ...." [3]

On the other hand, the Left could point to Perón's sympathetic statements relating to China, Velasco's Peru and Allende's Chile, his public support for the French students in May '68 and his declaration that "the solution is to liberate the country in the way Fidel freed his". [4] The truth was that Perón's use of socialismo nacional was deliberately broad and varied. When obliged to state exactly why Justicialism was Socialist, his only reply was that it was because "it pivots on social justice". The inadequacy of such a definition can be immediately recognised if one points to the early Justicialist regime, which nobody at the time considered "Socialist", as an example of a government which promoted social justice. In fact, if one examines all the

---

1. José López Rega, Las Bases (Buenos Aires), 18th March 1972, p. 46.
2. Perón, quoted in Félix Luna, El 45, 7th ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1975), p. 58.
3. Perón, La Hora..., op. cit., p. 174.
4. Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 7th July 1970.

ways in which socialismo nacional was employed by Perón, the only unifying theme that emerges is that all the regimes and movements offered as examples preached social justice, whether they practised it or not. It was by no means limited to countries where capitalism has been eliminated. Quite apart from his use of the term with reference to fascist regimes, he was to include the Nordic countries with their "socialist monarchies"...."like England at present (under Wilson), a monarchy with a Socialist government". Within his blanket term, there was also the German Social Democratic Party - "a great Socialist movement" [1] whereas Mitterand in France was deemed to be a "Marxist" [2] though still in the "national" camp.

Any doubts which arose among the mainstream Peronist Left as to Perón's "Socialist" integrity as a result of such imprecision were soon swept away by other kinds of political definitions made by their leader, which fall into three categories. Firstly, there were numerous press interviews in which Perón appeared to confess that his non-resistance in 1955 was an error which he would not repeat again. Interviewed by the Falangist paper Arriba in 1969, Perón commented:

> "Perhaps I did wrong ... in not giving arms to the people .....I never thought those who were to succeed me would be so anti-patriotic. If I had to decide today, perhaps I would think twice".

He was more certain when interviewed by the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina the following year, when he declared that, had he foreseen post-1955 events more clearly, "I would have decided to kill the necessary half million people, or even a million, if needed". [3]

---

1. Perón, quoted in Pavón Pereyra, op. cit., pp. 215-216.
2. Perón, La Hora..., op. cit., p. 158.
3. Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 23rd April 1969 & 7th July 1970.

Secondly, there was the promise which Perón held out to the youthful Peronist Left of trasvasamiento generacional, a kind of generational rejuvenation of his Movement. He pointed out to the more zestful of his devotees that this did not mean "throwing an old person out of the window every day" but rather a gradual promotion of the best young cadres into leading positions so as to safeguard the historical continuity of the movement. At the same time, Perón avoided the alienation of Peronist elders by saying that they still had a role to play due to their experience, wisdom and prudence, and in arguing that "youth" was not just a question of age, "for there are old men of 20 and youths of 50". [1] Nevertheless, the young radicals were greatly attracted to a man who said that he hoped he could be of some use "to the wonderful youth we have and who will, sooner or later, take up our banners and, we hope, will carry them forward to victory". [2]

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly in the minds of many Peronist Leftists, was Perón's authorisation of revolutionary war, interpreted as urban guerrilla warfare. In a message to the youth in 1971, Perón outlined his conception of 'revolutionary war', which dated back to the early years of the Resistance, as including both surface organisations and "special formations" as elements in an "integral strategy". The "special formations" received nothing but praise here -

> "We have a marvellous youth which every day unequivocally demonstrates its capacity and greatness" ... "I have absolute faith in our lads who have learnt to die for their ideals".

They were not only supported and eulogised by Perón but also promised "gradual preponderance as the violent struggle develops" and given total tactical independence due to the impracticality of direction from

---

1. Perón, La Hora..., op. cit., pp. 171-172.
2. Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 16th February 1972.

Madrid. [1]

Most of the Peronist guerrilla organisations received personal letters of congratulation from Perón. The Montoneros received one such communication late in 1971 supporting their intention to "hit the government until it falls", [2] whereas the Peronist Armed Forces a year earlier were commended as "valient comrades" ... "the people can be proud to count with you in their ranks". [3] For many Peronist guerrillas, such messages more than made up for Perón's reluctance to really define socialismo nacional. Not only did it confer legitimacy on their strategy and tactics but it was also seen as a revolutionary definition in itself. For many Argentine guerrillas, the difference between a reformist and a revolutionary was not that between somebody who tries to work peacefully within the system and somebody who seeks a total change of system through an inevitably violent revolution; rather, this difference was seen as that between those who undertake 'revolutionary warfare' and those who do not, no matter how revolutionary their ideas. In other words, the meaning of revolutionary for them was not so much a political and ideological question as a methodological question, this attitude being synthesised in Luis Lozada's immortal statement: "The only orthodoxy is combat". [4]

Perón's promotion of urban guerrilla warfare was thus viewed as a revolutionary definition by most of the Peronist Left, while the minority who realised that it was nothing of the sort felt that Perón's

---

1. "Perón habla a la juventud," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971), pp. 8-10.
2. Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 22nd December 1971.
3. "Carta a las FAP," (12.2.70), Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 25 (September 1970), p. 20.
4. Luis Lozada, Interview in Córdoba newspaper, 20th February 1971, reproduced in ibid., no. 28 (April 1971), pp. 14-18.

tactical attitude towards their method of struggle should be taken advantage of. The majority, who in the main lacked Peronist experience until the late 1960's or early 1970's and who were provided with no written analyses of the post-55 period of Peronism in opposition before 1973, either by the Peronist or non-Peronist Left, felt that it was inconceivable for a non-revolutionary to urge guerrilla struggle. In fact, Perón had not pursued a consistent revolutionary line since 1955, as the Revolutionary Peronist Movement illustrated, nor had he consistently supported the bureaucratic and bourgeois tendencies of the Movement. He had always sought to maintain the unity of his movement and even broaden it if possible, though tactically this involved temporarily siding with one tendency if the other became strong enough to present a threat to Perón's plans.

On one occasion, Perón, in a very cynical way, laid bare his pendular strategy to an interviewer:

> "Within the Justicialist score, I wanted to include all the different melodies. An example of this experience was that led by Vandor and Framini" ... "The important thing was for there to be within the Movement coexistence and cooperation between the two currents, counterposed only in appearance, but with me at the top in the role of the Eternal Father. I assigned to Vandor the leadership of the negotiating, evolutionary and conservative currents, the only ones which the regime would tolerate; while Framini ... assumed the leadership of the revolutionary, aggressive wing, permanently attacking the system. Both helped to bring together, according to the role assigned to them in the strategy of the Superior Command, all the shades and currents which contributed to give a national and Christian content to our labouring masses. When the dynamic of events forced them to clash, they had to do it without making too much noise, taking care not to cause irreparable injuries or resentments. Anyway, they had in me an arbiter and moderator par excellence". 1

Unfortunately, this interview only gained broad circulation in 1973, by which time Perón had successfully used his "special formations" to harass and pressurise the military government into allowing his return.

---

1. Perón, quoted in Pavón Pereyra, op. cit., p. 271.

In fact, there were other indications of Perón's real intentions which the Peronist Left had to be somewhat blinkered not to see. There was, for example, his initial "wait and see" attitude when Onganía, a "good soldier", [1] seized power in 1966, an attitude which lasted several weeks before the regime was characterised as "gorila" and "reactionary".[2] Moreover, in his La Hora de los Pueblos alongside statements like "The reign of the bourgeoisie over the world has ended. The government of the peoples begins", which would be more at home in the Communist Manifesto, one finds clear appeals to bourgeois sectors for support. This was seen particularly in his portrait of Argentina as a country heading towards an abyss, with Perón presenting himself as the man "to pacify the Argentine population" through a "national solution" which would involve national reconstruction based, at least partly, on hard work, with West Germany being cited as an example. [3]

There were also the statements to Primera Plana in 1971 in which Perón presented himself to potential bourgeois supporters as a fireman of the revolution, claiming that his policies "made sure that communism never became a problem in our country". [4] Other indicators of Perón's objectives were his preparedness to negotiate with the Lanusse government and his increasingly less frequent references to socialismo nacional as the 1966-73 period of military rule progressed. His new theme then became 'Continentalism', expounding the merits of Latin American Unity: "The year 2000 will find us united or dominated". [5] Above all, it

---

1. Perón, quoted in Nadra, op. cit., p. 84.
2. Perón, quoted in Andrew Graham-Yooll, Tiempo de Tragedia, Cronología de la Revolución Argentina (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1972), p. 30.
3. Perón, La Hora..., op. cit., pp. 19, 43 & 132.
4. Perón, Interview in Primera Plana (Buenos Aires), 7th September 1971, quoted in Nadra, op. cit., p. 15.
5. Perón, La Hora..., op. cit., p. 119.

demanded a high level of naivety for the Peronist Left to view as revolutionary a man who chose to reject Castro's offer of hospitality and instead take refuge in the Paraguay of Alfredo Stroessner, the Nicaragua of Anastasio Somoza ("mi viejo amigo de ideales"), [1] Marcos Pérez Jiménez's Venezuela, Rafael Trujillo's Dominican Republic and Francisco Franco's Spain.

By naivety, one does not wish to suggest that the activists of the Peronist Left were innately naive. Their naive faith in Perón was rooted in their lack of personal experience of Peronism in power. As Benítez succinctly commented of Aramburu's executioners, "they do not know Peronism from within. They know anti-Peronism from within". [2] Most were born slightly before or after 1950 and their cognitive experience was that of anti-Peronist governments whose frequent unpopular measures were a factor in the strengthening of Peronist myths. In this sense, Perón could justifiably recite the Spanish saying ; "Detrás de mí vendrán los que bueno me harán" [3] (After me will come those who will make me good). For many Peronist youths came to Peronism not through an evaluation of its merits and demerits but through a revolt against the post-1955 governments. They saw that the main force of opposition to these regimes was the labour movement which, mainly for economic reasons, was massively pro-Perón and this was a major factor in their belief that Perón <u>had</u> to be a revolutionary. There are obvious difficulties attached to analysing motivations at a collective level but it would not be surprising, and by no means illogical, if it could be proven that those who swallowed Peronist myths most easily and had the

---

1. Perón, quoted in Pavón Pereyra, op. cit., p. 194.
2. Padre Hernán Benítez, "Causas y responsables de la 'ejecución' de Aramburu", <u>Cristianismo y Revolución</u>, no. 25 (September 1970), pp. 5-11.
3. Perón, quoted in Pavón Pereyra, op. cit., p. 327.

greatest illusions in a revolutionary Perón were those who had previously participated in anti-Peronist organisations and were full of feelings of guilt about their past hostility towards the popular movement.

Evita

"Se siente, se siente,
Evita está presente.
Evita presente,
en cada combatiente.
Si Evita viviera
sería Montonera"

- from Evita Montonera, a Peronist Left chant. [1]

Evita was not strictly an ideological influence on the Peronist Left for she had no ideology to offer. Her contribution was to serve as a myth, as a battle standard and a plentiful source of revolutionary phraseology. The Peronist Left cited her two highly emotive works, the Historia del Peronismo and La Razón de mi Vida, [2] perhaps more than those of any other author but their content was no more sophisticated than preaching love of the poor, hatred of the rich and worship of Perón. Her radical rhetoric held a tremendous attraction for the Left for she not only hit out at the traditional opponents of Peronism but also attacked the "traitors" within the Movement. She became a cult figure for the Peronist Left though her actual political record in no way justified the claim that "if Evita were alive today, she would be a Montonero".

In her Historia del Peronismo, Evita's appeal to emotion and disdain for intellect was unashamedly expressed: "Here we don't need many

---

1. "Evita Montonera", reproduced in Jorge Pinedo, Consignas y Lucha Popular en el Proceso Revolucionario Argentino, 1955-1973 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1974), p. 110. Translation: "We can feel that Evita is with us, Evita is among us. Evita is present in each fighter. If Evita were alive today, she would be a Montonero".

2. Eva Perón, Historia del Peronismo (Buenos Aires: Presidencia de la Nación, Subsecretaría de Informaciones, 1953); La Razón de mi Vida (Buenos Aires: Editorial Relevo, 1973).

intellects but many hearts because Justicialism is learnt more with the heart than with the intellect". She offered no rational argument as to why Perón deserved the uncritical support of the masses, but this did not prevent her from building his myth and exhorting her descamisados to love him. The most important thing for a Peronist, she wrote, was "to love Perón with all ones soul" for he is "the soul, the nerve, the hope and the reality of the Argentine people" [1] and moreover, "the marvellous epitome of the best and highest virtues which have adorned the soul of all the genii offered by humanity." [2] With such religious and emotional language, Evita presented Perón as a god, a person to believe in, to have faith in, rather than a political leader to be judged on the merits of his political actions.

The Historia is not in fact a historical work. Though it alludes to the origins of Peronism, these are so romanticised that what one is in fact presented with is a fairy tale. This revolves around the almost magical meeting of Perón and the masses, the famous theory of the encuentro according to which "the people cannot advance in history without having someone to lead them". The masses are unable to achieve anything until the great leader, the conductor, arrives to direct them. Though the relationship between the providential leader and the people is purportedly reciprocal (the conductor "does what the people want") [3] the whole emphasis in Evita's writings was upon loyalty of the people to their leader, whereas Perón's commitment to them was unquestioned and remained an article of faith. The encuentro theory gave rise to the view inherited by the Peronist Left that the conductor-pueblo symbiosis was an essentially Argentine revolutionary formula. It depended on the

---

1. Eva Perón, quoted in Milciades Peña, op. cit., pp. 107-108.
2. Eva Perón, (Buenos Aires: Cuadernos de Crisis, 1974), p. 31.
3. Eva Perón, quoted in Goldar, op. cit., p. 129.

idea of a "dialogue" existing between the leader and his mass following, a dialogue supposedly made operative through the mass rallies in Plaza de Mayo. The idea does not merit serious consideration - that the "dialogue" in reality constituted a "monologue", more often than not, was demonstrated on numerable occasions, not least in August 1951 when Evita turned down the requests of a mass CGT rally to stand for the Vice-Presidency in the coming elections. Acceptance of this theory by the Peronist Left certainly did not bring the revolution any nearer. It encouraged faith in and dependency on the leader who was to demonstrate on May 1st 1974 that he had no respect for "dialogue" and was not prepared to "do what the people want". [1] At the same time, it helped steer the Peronist Left away from Leninist views on revolutionary organisation and indeed any forms truly independent of Perón.

Evita's condemnation of Marxism in the same work was studiously ignored by the Peronist Left. Marx received praise for his call to the workers of the world to unite but his ideas in general were rejected as:

> "contrary to the profoundly humane sentiments of the people"... "He denies religious sentiment and the existence of God"... "Moreover, Marxism is materialist and this also makes it unpopular"..."On the other hand, it is unpopular because it suppresses the so profoundly human right to property". 2

Though few members of the Peronist Left described themselves as Marxists and most saw Marxism as only "a useful method of anlaysis", it was incongruous for them to see Evita as a revolutionary while at the same time supporting a political project which implied the elimination of private property. The Left attempted to circumnavigate this objection by maintaining that Evita's and Perón's limitations were the limitations of their era, that they were as revolutionary as was possible in the early

---

1. See below, p. 290.
2. Eva Perón, quoted in Milciades Peña, op. cit., pp. 110-111.

Peronist period. Such an argument could be used to bestow revolutionary attire on the most timid reformists that history has offered.

The Peronist Left was to present Eva Perón as a representative of a plebeian and revolutionary wing of the early Peronist Movement, but though she was of plebeian origin she was in fact no more radical than Perón himself. In La Razón de mi Vida, one finds both the idea of class harmony and the notion of the "two imperialisms". Here, Evita presented "the fundamental objective of Justicialism in relation to the workers' movement" as being "to make class struggle disappear and replace it with cooperation between capital and labour", this of course being a bourgeois dream internationally. While it is true that she argued that due to the exploitation of the workers by the privileged over the past century, "the balance must be restored by another century in which the privileged are the workers", such statements reveal that the system of privilege was not under attack. Furthermore, no revolutionary could be happy with her time scale.

Her radicalism over the issue of women has also been overstated by the Peronist Left. For though Evita can be regarded as progressive for her role in the enfranchisement of women, their political organisation and some improvement in their social condition, especially in Argentina where machismo was and still is strong, many of her ideas on the role of women would not have been out of place in the Mothers' Union. Maybe because she didn't have one herself, Evita was a great defender of the family. It was a natural thing, she argued, for a women "to give herself, to surrender herself out of love" to a man while, collectively, she urged subordination of women's movements "to the cause of a man" so long as he was worthy of them. Whereas men could live alone, she claimed, women needed the company which only a home-life could offer and to be a wife

was woman's natural "profession". [1]

It was Evita's diatribes against the oligarchy and her impassioned condemnations of social injustice which really endeared her to the Peronist Left and facilitated the growth of the myth of Evita the jacobin. She preached death to the oligarchs: "With or without bloodshed, the race of oligarchs, exploiters of man, will undoubtedly die in this century". [2] It should be underlined that this was only a promise for the future, though her hatred of the oligarchs, who had snubbed her throughout her short life, was certainly genuine and deep-felt. On other occasions, however, she maintained that the oligarchy was already dead, that it had been defeated on 17th October 1945, and this was the key to the paradox of Evita's writings. For the uneasy blend of revolutionary rhetoric with reformist and even some conservative ideas could only be coherent if one considered that Peronism had already really carried out a revolution. In this sense, Evita's revolutionary words pertained not so much to the need for future social changes but to a belief that the revolution was already in progress. That Peronism did not represent a social revolution was to be demonstrated by the oligarchic restoration to political prominence through the 1955 coup. Though Peronism had signified a loss of oligarchic political power and a transfer of income from the agricultural to the industrial sector, it had not eliminated the economic base of the oligarchy through land expropriations.

Having left the landed oligarchs for dead, Evita turned her guns on the enemy within the Movement... "I'm more afraid of the oligarchy within than the one we defeated on October 17th". She warned against "the Pilots within our cause" and "the Peronist leaders who develop

---

1. Eva Perón, La Razón de..., op. cit., pp. 95-96 & 193-199.
2. Eva Perón, quoted in Goldar, op. cit., p. 135.

personal circles (serving) their egoism and their excessive ambition. For me they are not Peronists. They are oligarchs, clay idols". Yet in truth, such statements as "the official who uses his station to serve himself is an oligarch. He does not serve the people but his own vanity, pride, egoism and ambition", [1] could with some justification be applied to Evita herself. Through her charity, the Fundación Eva Perón, a lot of people were helped in a paternalistic sort of way, but Evita also helped herself. Her wardrobe alone could not have been maintained on Perón's salary.

Moreover, "vanity, pride, egoism and ambition" speak out from under the covers of that false humility which fills her writings. She presented herself as only a "humble woman" yet the message which the reader was supposed to receive was that she was really a modest heroine whose whole life was bound up with the cause of the people, a saintly figure who had dedicated her life to "serve my people, my fatherland and Perón". [2] In this way her myth was being developed by a not disinterested party even before her death. In particular, Evita claimed credit for the 17th October 1945 workers' mobilisation which resulted in Perón's release from imprisonment. In her Historia, she presented a graphic account of how she had supposedly gone round rallying the workers to the cause of Perón, yet historical research has shown that if Eva did indeed play a part in these events, it was far less important than the role performed by labour leaders such as Cipriano Reyes. [3] At the same time, since her myth was so inextricably linked up with that of Perón, her writings are full of nauseating deification of her husband.

---

1. Eva Perón, Cuadernos de Crisis, op. cit., pp. 16-18.
2. Ibid., p. 10.
3. See "La CGT y el 17 de Octubre de 1945," Todo es Historia (Buenos Aires), no. 105 (February 1976), pp. 70-90.

The latter was portrayed as a "giant condor who flies high and sure among the clouds and close to God", [1] as an "ideal incarnate" and "like a god to Argentines". [2] The aim, of course, was to gain adulation from the masses, blind faith and devotion rather than a reaction based upon critical judgement.

Much of Evita's writing was totally hypocritical. She adopted a plebeian self-image yet loved to dress in the most expensive and glamorous minks and jewels, weakly explaining to her descamisados, "I am taking the jewels from the oligarchs for you.... one day you'll inherit the whole collection", [3] but it was always "one day" or "in this century", not right now. She posed as a dedicated and selfless servant of Perón and the people, yet her career as "the greatest social climber since Cindarella" [4] involved the acquisition of an ever-expanding bureaucratic empire. And she set herself up as a revolutionary, as a banner of the proletariat, yet had no qualms about visiting fascist Spain, receiving the Grand Cross of Isabel the Catholic from Franco and reciprocating the falangist salutes at mass events.

The myth built up by Evita and after her death hid many facets of her life and politics from the later Peronist Left. Stories about Evita pocketing funds from the Fundación were dismissed as malicious lies spread by the Radical Party. Indeed, so strong did the myth become that in recent years it has become near impossible to discuss the merits and weakspots of Evita with a Peronist on the basis of empirical evidence.

---

1. Eva Perón, quoted in Pedro Geltman, "Mitos, Símbolos y Héroes en el Peronismo," in Cárdenas et al, El Peronismo, op. cit., p. 134.
2. Eva Perón, quoted in Mary Main, Evita: The Woman with the Whip (Great Britain: Corgi, 1977), pp. 230-235.
3. Eva Perón, quoted in Barnes, op. cit., p. 126.
4. Tim Rice, Lyrics of the rock opera Evita, 1976.

The Peronist Left, for example, simply refused to accept that Evita's close associates were not the few militants like Cooke but rather the right-wing elements of the Movement such as Hernán Benítez and Dr. Ivan Ivanissevich. It is highly ironic that the latter figure, of recognised pro-Nazi sympathies, was the man chosen to drive the Peronist Left out of the University of Buenos Aires during the administration of Isabel Perón. Even more ironic is the fact that Ivanissevich was also the author of the Peronist song, Los Muchachos Peronistas, happily sung by the Peronist Youth without a thought for its parentage.

The magnetic attraction which Evita had for the Peronist Left was not simply a result of her quasi-revolutionary rhetoric. It was also due to her radical-sounding idea of creating a Peronist militia in the early 1950's, a plan vetoed by Perón in 1952. Its members were to come from the trade unions and junior army officers who were to go into action whenever a coup seemed likely. Eva made an arms deal with the Dutch Royal Family for the provisioning of her militia but of the 5,000 .45 pistols which did arrive, only about one hundred were distributed before the plan was shelved. Nevertheless, the episode helped build her revolutionary image, though, from the scanty information we have, quite unjustifiably so. The Montonero Dardo Cabo was to compare Eva's plan with "the scheme of armed defence by the Cubans", [1] but the key question is the defence of what? In Argentina, the militia would have been used to defend a basically capitalist structure, for all its progressive policies of income distribution, rather than a system based upon the elimination of capitalism. Furthermore, from the information available, it seems highly doubtful that the direction of the militia would have been put into proletarian hands and highly probable that Eva or even the

---

1. Dardo Cabo, "La milicia peronista," La Causa Peronista (Buenos Aires), no. 4 (30th July 1974), p. 29.

young NCO's would have kept a firm grip on its leadership. Again, it is worth emphasising that, even if one put the most revolutionary interpretation possible on the militias scheme, it was purely a defence mechanism and to describe it as revolutionary entails acceptance of the 1946-55 Peronists governments as revolutionary.

Finally, the strength of Evita's myth must to some extent be attributed to her timely death in 1952. Her death from cancer at the age of 33 coincided with the onset of serious economic problems for the Peronist government, so her image came to be identified with the most golden of the golden years. Though in some ways progressive and deserving credit for her promotion of the feminine vote, Evita thus became a thoroughly undeserving revolutionary heroine. Her myth was taken up as a banner of Peronist Left struggle, a banner which by implication presented the early Peronist governments and the Peronist Movement as more radical than they were, paving the way for future illusions. "I will return and I will be millions...", Eva had said. She was correct, but certainly would not have found much in common with the thousands of youths who were to embrace revolutionary armed struggle while believing that:

> "Eva Perón embodied more than anyone the energy and motor of the proletarian rebellion which Peronism signified"... "The true image of Evita... is projected in the numerous armed comandos which bear her name". 1

THE IDEOLOGICAL COMPOUND

The three ideological currents examined above were the main ingredients of mainstream Peronist Left ideology - i.e. of the

---

1. "Si Evita Viviera Sería Montonera," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971), p. 2.

movimientista tendency which will be analysed in later chapters. Only to a lesser extent did they influence the smaller alternativista tendency which is the subject of the final substantive chapter. The latter was more inspired by the Marxist-mediated revolutionary Peronism of Cooke though there was some overlap between the two tendencies, provided by their positive evaluations of Peronism, their tercermundismo and their historical revisionism. Movimientista ideological unity was only loose but nevertheless, despite the diversity of formative influences, was sufficiently coherent to enable one to speak of a tendency. [1] The ideological postures which united them were far more important than those which divided them, though in this concluding section it is worthwhile looking at that diversity through briefly referring to two works produced by the Peronist Left themselves.

All three currents shared a revisionist historical outlook which was closely related to their shared conviction that the "principal contradiction" involved in the Argentine dilemma was that of imperialism versus the nation, domestically and socially expressed as "Oligarchy versus People". Such a dichotomy was more relevant to the social make-up of the old agro-export Argentina, when landed and commercial interests were the main beneficiaries of the country's dependent relations with Britain. However, for popular nationalists it remained the "principal contradiction" after the rise of the national industrial bourgeoisie in the 1930's and 1940's and even after foreign capital had deeply penetrated the dynamic industrial sectors. This view of Argentine conflict had historical roots but was dated. The 1946-55 Peronist experience showed that the national bourgeoisie was only conditionally anti-imperialist (by 1955, many industrialists had passed over to the opposition camp)

---

1. See below, pp. 249-257.

and that its contradiction with the oligarchy was not antagonistic (hence the lack of agrarian reform).

In all three cases, this antinomy led to a positive evaluation of the national bourgeoisie as a progressive force, though there were differences of opinion as to whether it was sufficiently progressive to retain its hegemonic position within the Peronist Movement. Each viewed Peronism as the Argentine national liberation movement while disagreeing over its capacity for "social liberation", or socialist tasks. The reverse side of the socialismo nacional of many of these currents was a refusal to examine and learn from the international experiences of other national and social liberation struggles. National, continental and "Third World" perspectives in all cases tended to obscure from view important successful revolutionary examples such as the Soviet one. Finally, all three influences either agreed upon, or were compatible with, the view that revolutions in the underdeveloped world inevitably unfold through a series of stages, with this leading those who recognised some of the limitations of Peronism into an acceptance of them as being historically inevitable.

In many of the above cited works, nationalism was a far stronger influence than socialism, even where there were attempts to reconcile the two. The limitations of multi-class nationalism, especially in the post-1955 period, can be easily identified but it must also be emphasised that this nationalism was tremendously attractive to the Peronist Left. Since, as will be seen, most of the strength of the main Peronist Left tendency lay in the petty bourgeoisie, the idea of a multi-class national alliance was far more appealing than one largely based on the proletariat. Moreover, though one can point to the decline of the national bourgeoisie in order to demonstrate the historical redundancy of multi-class anti-imperialist alliances, one has to bear in mind that

Argentina, unlike many Latin American countries, had actually passed through a vibrant anti-imperialist phase of development hegemonised by the national bourgeoisie. For many, the experience of the national bourgeoisie having behaved in a "progressive" way was far more persuasive than economic analyses which suggested that such behaviour was now a thing of the past.

Obviously, certain writers and schools of thought were more influential upon certain individuals and groups than others. It was natural that Catholic radicalism only played an important role in the case of those of Catholic persuasion. However, there were here some important parallels with Guevarist influences on the more secular-minded. The two ideological currents offered a similar justification of revolutionary violence, this being viewed as a response to institutionalised and oppressive violence, something forced upon people rather than freely chosen and resorted to out of feelings of love for one's fellow men rather than hatred of the enemy. For both influences too, the revolution was not just a question of changing a social system but of changing man also, this operating at both a structural and personal level. Lastly, they were to share a common glorification of the heroic militant sacrificing his life for the popular cause.

Within this general panorama, however, there was some variation in the Peronist Left's evaluation of the early Peronist governments, as can be seen from the highly influential works of José Pablo Feinmann and Juan Pablo Franco and Fernando Alvarez. [1] Feinmann, following the line

---

1. Feinmann, op. cit.; Juan Pablo Franco and Fernando Alvarez, "Peronismo, antecedentes y gobierno," Cuadernos de Antropología del Tercer Mundo (Buenos Aires), no. 1 (June 1972). Blas Alberti's critical summary of this work, rather than the text itself, had unfortunately to be relied upon due to the unavailability of the original (for political reasons) when the research for this thesis was done.

of orthodox Peronism, rested his case on an assertion of the primacy of of politics. A Marxist "straw man" was vanquished by equating Marxism with economic determinism, and all sociological analysis flew out of the window with it ... "for us, social classes are merely descriptive concepts and in no way explanatory, since the explanatory (factor) is politics". Moreover, any fundamental criticism of Peronism was rendered impossible with the assertion that "only from Peronism is it possible to explain Peronism" and the demand that all analysts should look at the Movement in terms of its own categories. A third defence erected around Feinmann's thesis was provided by his refusal to even discuss the notion that Peronism ultimately represented bourgeois interests, "because our explanation cannot be confined to a negation of opponents' views" [1]

Feinmann's argument was that socialismo nacional was not some new 4th banner of Justicialismo but rather "the most profound synthesis of the political project which has animated Peronism since its origins". From the very start, he argued, Perón and the working class "hegemonised the great strategic instances of the process" and the Movement expressed the "true historic interests of the working class". However, he never defined "hegemony" and in fact the word was rendered meaningless when he argued that to claim that the working class was and is hegemonic did not mean that "the working class today has the conductor's baton and is conducting the process". Feinmann's allegation that the Peronism of the period up to 1955 represented "popular power" and "government of the masses" not only failed to explain why the masses supposedly lost power so easily in 1955 but was also full of contradictions. For his only explanation of the failure to suppress capitalist property was that Peronism "did not do absurd things, it practised politics, which, as Perón has always said, is the art of the possible". Likewise, according

---

1. Feinmann, op. cit., pp. 46, 51 & 196.

to Feinmann, to say that Perón should have armed the workers was "to confuse our history with a western or Eisenstein film". However, had the masses really had power between 1946-55, there would surely have been no constraints imposed by the "balance of forces". On the other hand, if the latter did in fact prevent structural changes, it must surely have been because the masses in fact lacked both power and hegemony in the Peronist Movement. Workers' opposition to the early government in the form of the railway workers' strike was dismissed with the nonsensical claim that the striking workers were "objectively serving anti-worker interests". [1]

In his attempt to demonstrate that Justicialismo and Socialismo Nacional are "equivalent concepts", Feinmann in fact distorted Perón's own definition of the "Third Position", examined above, by asserting that it "had nothing to do with class conciliation, nor with the third way between capitalism and socialism, but rather expressed the choice of a national and autonomous road for the revolution". Here, "historical revisionism" took on a new meaning . One must ask, "Why '3rd' then?" By backdating the talk of socialismo nacional of recent years to the practice of the early Peronist regime, Feinmann explicitly rejected the theory of stages and claimed that the "national bourgeoisie" was never national. However, since he explained the limitations of early Peronism in terms of what was "practical" at the time and clearly expected Peronism to achieve more in 1973, a modified version of the stages approach was in fact implicit in his work.

Finally, though Feinmann argued that "every consistent anti-imperialist posture is also anti-capitalist", his whole argument relied upon a strict division between capitalism and imperialism. For his

---

1. Ibid., pp. 79, 91, 110, 179, 185 & 218.

premise of the primacy of politics led him to include in the anti-imperialist movement any capitalist sectors which supported Peronism politically (... "in a subject nation, the criterion for unity and organisation must be above all political"). [1] This only leads one to wonder how Peronism can possibly be expected to adopt any "consistent anti-imperialist posture" for, in line with Feinmann's previous argument, this would surely involve social suicide on the part of the bourgeois sectors of the alliance.

Alvarez, on the other hand, felt that Peronism did not originally represent socialismo nacional but rather occupied the "3rd Position", characterised by "class collaboration with the State", this being deemed "correct given the stage of capitalist development of our country". By the early 1970's, however, the capitalist stage had for him terminated. His argument was that since 1955 the Argentine national bourgeoisie had been swallowed up through imperialist economic penetration, reducing Peronism to its proletarian constituency and thus enabling its conversion into a socialist movement hegemonised by the working class. Peronism's convertibility from a bourgeois to socialist movement was explained by presenting Perón as a revolutionary whose ultimate aim was always Socialism. However, as Blas Alberti has commented, this ignored Perón's bourgeois and military ties completely and was no more than a question of Alvarez "creating a Perón in his own image" [2] or at least in the image of Fidel Castro.

Apart from reliance on the notion of a revolutionary Perón,

---

1. Ibid., pp. 79, 194 & 229.
2. Alvarez, quoted in Blas Manuel Alberti, "De como se puede llegar a ser peronista con fundamentos antiperonistas; o las vicisitudes de dos ideológicos perdidos en el océano de la confusión," Peronismo, Burocracia y Burguesía Nacional (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Rancagua, 1974), pp. 42 & 46.

Alvarez explained Peronism's capacity for social transformation by maintaining that "the only permanent element is that (Peronism) from 1945 until now has been hegemonised by the working class". [1] The argument does not withstand the test of the most elementary logic, for if the working class really was hegemonic, how could one explain the existence of an early capitalist stage? Again the assertion of "hegemony" was the main weakspot. For Alvarez, hegemony appears to have meant merely that the workers were by far the largest sector of the Peronist Movement. For working-class hegemony to be proven, however, one would need to demonstrate that Peronist policies overwhelmingly benefited the workers as a class and that working-class gains were not solely the product of Perón's need to create a mass political base and expand the domestic market. Likewise, to demonstrate that Peronism had become socialist by the early 1970's requires more than merely citing the more radical pronouncements of Perón.

"Stages" were also present in Franco's presentation of the Peronist transformation. He maintained that in the early Peronist years there was "major participation in the exercise of government and in the transformation of Argentine society by the workers". For him, the period saw "a tendency towards the dissolution of the system of capitalist ownership and the transition towards specific national forms of the construction of Socialism". However, Franco's fantasies did not go quite as far as those of Feinmann and Alvarez, for rather than seeing working-class hegemony as existing back in the 1940's, he depicted those years as merely transitional towards such a state of affairs and maintained that "the formation of a people's consciousness is not only prior to but also indispensable to the formation of a consciousness of

---

1. Ibid., p. 55.

the hegemonic necessity of the workers", [1] an idea taken up and developed by Ernesto Laclau later on. [2] Yet what is "people's consciousness"? If the "people" refers to all the social forces which comprised the Peronist Movement, then surely their ideology reflected not the interests of the alliance as a whole - impossible due to its social diversity - but that of its dominant sector.

All these writers accepted Perón's own definitions regarding what Peronism had become. In all probability their illusions in working-class hegemony were based on the 18 years of opposition during which the unions were the main organisations of the Peronist Movement. Their general subordination to the strategy of Perón was not viewed as an objection to that assertion for they were convinced that Perón, like his Movement, had changed with the times. It should be remembered that these books were written in the early 1970's when, with events such as the Cordobazo in mind, many people felt that "the Liberation" was near. Yet today, with the benefit of more historical hindsight, the way in which so much fantasy was presented in such a serious and systematic manner appears as little less than bizarre. These, however, were the illusions which thousands of movimientistas had in Perón and his Movement and the way in which they helped to prevent the emergence of a real socialist alternative to Peronism is one of the themes developed in later chapters on Movimientismo.

---

1. Franco, quoted in ibid., pp. 75 & 83.
2. Ernesto Laclau, "Towards a Theory of Populism," in Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (London: New Left Books, 1977), pp. 143-198.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST 'TENDENCIA REVOLUCIONARIA'

The term Tendencia Revolucionaria (revolutionary tendency within Peronism) has in recent years been employed to denote two phenomena: it has been used loosely to refer to the whole of the Peronist Left, without differentiation, in the period since the late 1960's, and it has also been applied, more specifically, to the Montoneros and their collateral organisations. However, it is equally apposite to apply the term to the nowadays forgotten early Peronist Left whose gestation dates back to the years of the Resistencia Peronista after 1955 and whose zenith was reached in 1964 with the creation of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista - MRP). It was revolutionary in that it espoused a programme and strategy for radical social and political change, and groped towards a revolutionary ideology; it was a tendency in that it was not embodied in a revolutionary party but rather was a left-wing orientation which permeated several sectors of the broader mass movement of Peronism.

Though the Tendencia of the 1958-66 period never gained the strength of the later revolutionary tendency, the former was an influential forerunner of the latter. Its political conceptions were not fully elaborated but did find a loud echo in the later tendency. In this way, along with the work of John William Cooke, it helped produce the early, tentative elaboration of more recent Peronist Left ideology. Structurally, it also offered an embryo of things to come, being composed of trade union, youth, secondary school and university student organisations and, furthermore, possessing an armed expression in the form of the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Nacionalista Tacuara - MNRT). Though these organisations lacked the organic

cohesiveness and degree of conceptual unity of the later Montonero tendency, they were sufficiently united to be considered a tendency, and this was reflected in their mutual recognition of the weekly Compañero as the organ of revolutionary Peronism. [1]

Radicalisation took place mainly among the youth of the Movement, but through the Revolutionary Peronist Movement the early revolutionary tendency allied itself tactically with a reformist section of the trade union movement. When examining the reasons for this radicalisation, it is therefore important to differentiate between revolutionaries and reformists and to explain why each sector behaved as it did. In the case of the former, radicalism was a product of socio-economic decline, the experience of Frondizi's 1958-62 government, exclusion from the political system and the impact of the Cuban Revolution; in the latter case, the alliance with the revolutionary tendency was a result of the rise of a powerful trade union bureaucracy which failed to represent the interests of the smaller unions.

The rise of the first Peronist Left has to be seen against a background of declining living standards for the mass of workers, and even for many salary-earners, a product of the devaluation policies of post-Peronist governments which were designed to effect a transfer of income towards the rural sector. While economic policies favoured owners of capital in general, social and economic conditions for workers became grim:

> "In 1963 GNP again dropped by 5% to a figure below that of 1958. Private consumption was also down by 10% in comparison with 1958, and in per capita terms it approached 15%. Again the workers were most affected, and as before this helped to uphold their Peronist loyalties. In 1963 real wages were 15% below 1958, and unemployment, which was mainly marked in textiles and

---

1. Compañero, a weekly paper edited by Mario Valotta, first appeared on 7th July 1963 and became the official organ of the MRP in August 1964.

> metallurgical production, reached 8%. It had been an unpleasant five years. The cost of living had risen in monetary terms by 400%." 1

In response to this situation, workers resorted to militant strike action which reached a periodic peak in 1959. January of that year witnessed a powerful general strike in opposition to the decision of the Frondizi administration to denationalise Frigorífico Lisandro de la Torre. That strike was to pass into labour history as the "revolutionary" general strike due to the near insurrectional dimensions it attained, especially in Buenos Aires. In September of the same year, following the "great devaluation", some 73 million working hours were lost through strikes, representing over 5% of the average number of hours worked per month in industry and the public services. Further resistance to economic decline came in 1964 when the General Labour Confederation (CGT) launched a Plan de Lucha (Plan of Struggle) which involved the occupation of some 11,000 workplaces by almost four million workers. [2]

Taken in isolation, such events might suggest ample raw material for radical alternative politics. Yet only a minority of Peronist activists were radicalised in this period. To them, the persistent economic crises appeared to be structural rather than conjunctural, and led them to add monopoly capitalism to imperialism and the oligarchy as a foe of the Peronist Movement. However, the new left-wing tendency failed to blossom into a mass revolutionary movement and here again economic trends help to explain why the radicalisation process was truncated.

Firstly, it must be pointed out that labour resistance to the

---

1. David Rock, "The Survival of Peronism," in Rock (ed.), Argentina in the Twentieth Century (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. 205.
2. Peralta Ramos, op. cit., p. 166.

plans of post-1955 governments was not characterised by a gradual rise in combativity and strength, as many Peronist Left analyses have suggested. Rather, it was characterised by irregularity. After a highly combative 1955-59 period, labour opposition fell off greatly before it was reasserted in 1963-64. There was then another decline in the mid-1960's before the offensive of the late 1960's and early 1970's which did much to persuade the military of the advisability of allowing Perón's return. This pattern can best be illustrated by the number of days lost through strikes during the years of gestation and life of the first Peronist Left tendency. There was an important upswing here after 1955 (5 million days in 1956, over 3.6 million in 1957, over 6 million in 1958 and over 11 million in 1959, these figures being just for the Federal Capital), but it was followed by a dramatic decline after the major battles of 1959 (1.5 million days lost in 1960 and 1961, and only 268,000 in 1962). [1]

What was important here, as Danny James has commented, was not only the militancy seen in 1959 but the fact that practically all of the labour initiatives of that year ended in defeat. These defeats, followed by even greater unemployment, victimisation and black-listing, left many workers demoralised. There was a marked fall-off in union participation and many trade unionists began to feel that intransigent opposition to governments was futile. It was in these conditions that the phenomenon of the burocracia sindical, the powerful trade union bureaucracy already seen under the 1946-55 Peronist governments, reappeared, not in direct opposition to rank-and-file sentiment but rather resting on the sufferance of a temporarily defeated and cowed labour

---

1. Daniel James, "Power and Politics in Peronist Trade Unions," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, vol.20, no. 1 (February 1978), pp. 21-22.

movement. [1]

Secondly, though years of severe economic hardship preceded the creation of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement in August 1964, its appearance on the stage of history coincided with the start of a short-term upturn in the economy, at least in so far as workers were affected. Consumption levels and real wages rose in 1964 and 1965 while the share of wages and salaries, as opposed to capital, as a percentage of GNP grew (39.1% in 1962; 37.2% in 1963; 36.9% in 1964; 39.1% in 1965; to 41.1% in 1966). [2] The Illia government of 1963-66 pursued a policy of increasing internal consumption through raising the purchasing power of workers, the aim being to benefit small and middle-order industrialists whose prospects depended on the health of the domestic market. In other words, no sooner had the Revolutionary Peronist Movement been formally structured, partially as a result of the radicalisation of some activists and encouraged by the economistic militancy of the workers in general, than the workers' situation improved. Support for revolutionary Peronism was thus undermined and hopes of advancement within the system strengthened.

Moreover, though the 1959 general strike was seen by its leaders at least as political, the vast majority of strikes throughout this period were motivated by economic need. This was seen with particular clarity in 1964, in the sharp contrast between the relative strengths of the powerful Plan de Lucha, an entirely economistic campaign, and the feeble Return Campaign which produced little in the way of mass mobilisations for Perón's return. Here, one cannot fully accept the Peronist Left's post-mortem report on the miserable failure of the latter, which

---

1. Ibid., passim.
2. Peralta Ramos, op. cit., p. 150.

ascribed it solely to the failure of the bureaucracy to provide a lead.[1] Had there been mass potential support for a revolutionary Peronist struggle, as opposed to a wage claim, the Left would surely been able to mount a massive Return Campaign of its own, sidestepping the bureaucracy.

In this period, apart from a smallish group of activists, most workers could, in Leninist terms, be described as having exhibited only "trade union consciousness".[2] A key factor here was the fact that post-1955 Peronism was fundamentally structured on the basis of the labour movement. There was no coherent national political organisation to counterpose to the power of the Peronist unions whose leaders tended to dominate what political organs there were. If one accepts that revolutionary consciousness does not emerge from daily struggles and experiences, but rather from an external revolutionary political vanguard - or to be more accurate, from the interaction between workers' experiences and the analysis and theoretical generalization of these by a conscious political vanguard - then it becomes easier to understand the paradox of this period: the existence of a well-organized and periodically militant labour movement prepared to do battle over economic issues without this being, in the case of most workers, translated into changes in political consciousness. Of course, the paradox is by no means unique to Argentina, the USA perhaps providing the classic example.

Economic decline was thus a factor in the emergence of the first

---

1. For example, the resolution approved by the National Congress of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement and Peronist Youth Rank-and-File (6th-7th February 1965), published in Compañero, no. 77. (2nd fortnight of February 1965), p. 3.

2. "... the conviction of the need for combining in unions, for fighting against the employers, and for trying to prevail upon the government to pass laws necessary for the workers, etc." - Lenin, What is to be Done? op. cit., p. 80.

revolutionary tendency but only influenced a minority of activists. The new radicals were also influenced by their experiences during the 1955-59 Resistencia period. Though the years following the "Liberating Revolution" (as anti-Peronists termed the 1955 coup) were full of individual acts of resistance and militant union struggles, these years had been marked by a lack of coordination, the absence of a generally accepted national command and programmatic uncertainty. When resistance struggles reached a peak in the January 1959 strike, these factors proved fatal, despite the efforts of the Peronist National Command to provide some makeshift leadership. [1] The principal axis of resistance in those years had been the Peronist labour movement which fought successfully for the recovery of the unions from military control. Commando units at times acted as auxiliaries in this task but more commonly engaged in operations of sabotage, propaganda and direct action. The trade union basis of the Resistance was both its strength and weakness: it enabled a rapid reconquest of the main unions by the Peronists but also limited the political tasks of the Movement. Once the union leaderships were back in Peronist hands, they mainly concentrated upon fighting against labour's economic decline.

This created a vacuum in which a new political organisation could emerge though it also meant that such an organisation would be rivalled in its quest for leadership by the entrenched power of leading labour bureaucrats. By the late 1950's, young Peronists in particular were feeling the need for new political initiatives if the Peronist Movement was to advance. The defeats of 1959 seemed to show the inadequacies of trade union struggle, but their response was not solely political.

---

1. For an account of the strike and the role of the Peronist National Command in it, see "Apuntes para una historia de la resistencia y del peronismo revolucionario (Ia Parte)," En Lucha, supplement to no. 14 (February 1974).

Military or politico-military organisation was also looked to, mainly by Peronist Youth members who saw guerrilla struggle as a continuation and development of the commando activities of the Resistance period. This had ideological as well as methodological implications, for in taking up primitive guerrillerismo, young militants began to study guerrilla experiences in other countries, and left-wing ideas as well as methodological lessons were drawn from Cuba and Algeria in particular.

However, armed struggle was not the main form of struggle in these years. Though resorted to by the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement and to an extent by the Peronist Youth, semi-legal forms of activity were more common, practised by new organisations such as the Justicialist Secondary Students' Grouping (Agrupación Justicialista de Estudiantes Secundarios - AJES) and the Peronist University Youth (Juventudes Universitarias Peronistas - JUP). The latter groups took advantage of the relative freedom allowed under Frondizi to organise politically in the schools and universities respectively. In general, after the immediate aims of the Resistencia were achieved, with the reconquest of the unions, there was a feeling among many Peronist militants that defensive structures could no longer take the Movement forward. New organisational forms were necessary if the Peronist Movement was to take advantage of the new conditions offered under Frondizi and begin to seriously challenge for power.

At the same time, the experience of the Frondizi government had a marked impact on the incipient Left. In return for their decisive electoral support for Frondizi's Intransigent Radicals (UCRI) in the 1958 elections, the Peronists were conceded a general amnesty, a new Law of Professional Associations (providing for a national reorganisation of the labour movement) and a 60% wage rise. However, the promised "normalisation" of the CGT was delayed until 1961 and legalisation of the

Peronist Party until 1962. In addition, Frondizi reneged on his nationalist statements of intent made before and during 1958, by signing contracts with eight foreign oil companies and by denationalising Frigorífico Lisandro de la Torre in 1959. In the face of the powerful labour resistance which the latter action generated, as well as an upsurge in individual terrorism in 1959, Frondizi bowed to military pressures and introduced first a State of Seige and then, in 1960, the CONINTES (CONmoción INTerna del EStado) Plan. This provided for military jurisdiction over people accused of terrorism and led to Berisso, La Plata and Ensenada being declared military zones, the intervención of unions and arrests of strikers.

Peronists felt betrayed by Frondizi, though he was in an unenviable position. Jostled between contending military and Peronist pressures, Frondizi was obliged, in order to retain office, to both placate and "betray" the Peronist Movement. He could not do enough to satisfy Peronist demands without being deposed by the military; on the other hand, by becoming a military puppet, popular opposition to him was bound to increase and thus provide the military with other reasons for ousting him. Frondizi's repressive policies were viewed by the incipient Peronist Left as a clear demonstration of the counter-revolutionary nature of the industrial bourgeoisie and as related to its developing romance with foreign capital.

Frondizi's desarrollista (developmentalist) project involved a major role for foreign capital in development plans. The repression which he resorted to was therefore not solely a result of military pressures but also of the need to create the "stability" which foreign investors demanded. Despite the early concessions to labour, that stability could not be ensured by placating the labour movement, at least not without hitting those industrialists who were Frondizi's main

backers, due to the poor state of the economy. Frondizi pursued a dual policy in relation to Peronism, attempting to domesticate its national leadership while fiercely repressing its combative línea dura. Due to the overpowering, conflicting pressures on his government, Frondizi's combination of assimilation and repression ultimately proved unviable but gained reflection in the early Peronist Left - both surface organisations, taking advantage of his political concessions, and underground armed groups, a response to repression, were created.

Frondizi's project eventually failed because Peronism remained the hostile and reasonably united majoritarian force in the labour movement. He was unable to legalise Peronism and allow it to participate in elections without it committing the unforgivable sin of winning. When Frondizi finally sanctioned Peronist participation for the 1962 elections, his own party was successful in 10 provinces plus the Federal Capital but neo-Peronists won control of 4 provinces (5 if one includes Jujuy where they successfully backed a Christian Democrat) and official Peronists won in 4 provinces plus the decisive province of Buenos Aires where militant trade unionist Andrés Framini was elected governor. Through annulling the election results and deposing Frondizi, the military realized Perón's prediction that "If we lose, we win nothing. And if we win, we lose everything". [1] Frustrated in their attempt to regain power by legal means in 1962, then proscribed in 1963, many Peronists felt that they were left with no option but direct action, even if for many leaders the intended function of that direct action was just to compel the regime to concede legal participation to their Movement. They were forced to challenge the system which denied them participation, but this stance should not be mistaken for a conversion of the

---

1. Perón, quoted in Félix Luna, De Perón a Lanusse, 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1973), p. 138.

leadership to revolutionary strategies. It did however lead, or help to lead, a significant number of activists in that direction.

A further factor in the emergence of the Peronist Left was the rise in the Peronist and labour movements of currents which subscribed to "participationism" or "integrationism" - i.e. those prepared to come to terms with the government of the day, whatever its political color-ation. Both the demoralisation which followed the 1959 defeats and the "normalisation" of the CGT in 1961 (i.e. its complete return to trade union leaders) increased the political weight of the more conciliatory union leaders, and stark class confrontation strategies gave way to the classical Vandorist tactic of "negotiate while acting". Though this did not mean a total abandonment of militant industrial action, it did mean its subordination to a strategy of pressurising governments into making partial concessions, rather than seeking to bring them down.

Growing conflict developed between the "soft" and "hard" lines of Peronism, though even some "hard-liners" were affected by the tendency towards moderating demands. Although the January 1959 strike led to a shake-up in the Peronist 62 Organisations (the Peronist labour grouping), and to promotion for militants such as Amado Olmos, by 1963 Vandorism, the current associated with Metalworkers' Union leader Augusto Vandor, was the dominant influence in the CGT leadership. Two years later, Vandor was to openly challenge the authority of Perón at the Avellaneda Congress, at which the slogan Ya tenemos pantalones largos (Now we've got long trousers) was coined. As the 1960's progressed, this bureau-cratic tendency increasingly sought a place for the labour movement, or at least its leaders, within the institutional order established by non-Peronist governments, instead of a return of Peronism and Perón to

power.[1]

In order to understand why opposition to Vandor was not stronger, it should be remembered that the bureaucrats of the 1960's were in many cases the union militants of the late 1950's. Even Vandor had been a Resistencia activist and suffered imprisonment for it. José Rucci, later to be General Secretary of the CGT, was another fairly typical example of "yesterday's militant - today's bureaucrat," though his early record was only belatedly recognised by the Montoneros, a few days after they had assassinated him.[2] Moreover, after becoming privileged and often corrupt bureaucrats, union leaders had to win some material concessions for their members in order to retain their posts over time, and it would seem that such concessions rather than the return of Perón were the top priority for most workers. Even for the minority of militants, it was some time before the reputations of the formerly combative bureaucrats became sullied.

To some extent, the advent of the Peronist Left was an example of "reflex leftism" - i.e. a response and reaction to the growing threat of Vandorism in the Peronist Movement.[3] Perón's initial patronage of

---

1. Some non-Peronist left-wing tendencies gave this trend their critical support. Palabra Obrera, of Trotskyist orientation, saw it as a move towards working-class political independence. Though this support was "critical", it was seen by many Peronists as left-wing approval of Vandor and yet another example of the classical Left's hostility to Perón. See Ernesto González, op. cit., p. 107.

2. "Ante la muerte de José Rucci," El Descamisado, no. 20 (2nd October 1973), pp. 2-3: "Rucci was a good lad... he was not a bad type. He had his history of resistance, of prison". The same editorial also referred to the militant records of Vandor and Coria during the Resistencia years: "They were loyal, they had arrived in the unions through elections and they represented the union rank-and-file". Vandor was assassinated by pre-Montoneros in 1969 and Rucci and Coria by Montoneros in 1973-4. El Descamisado was the Montonero weekly of 1973-4.

3. For further discussion of this notion, see Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," Journal of Latin American Studies, vol. 8. no. 2 (1976), pp. 273-296.

his left-wing was certainly a reflex action stimulated by Vandor's threat to establish a "Peronism without Perón", but the Left was soon to discover that this patronage was manipulative rather than supportive. By itself, however, "reflex leftism" fails to satisfactorily account for the rise of the revolutionary tendency. Perón's tactical and opportunistic adhesion to the Left was momentarily important. However, he did not create the Peronist Left, nor did the latter suddenly drop from the sky as soon as Vandor became troublesome. Vandor's challenge and Perón's resort to the Left and militants to counter it both aided the growth of the Left; however the Left had been present, at least in embryonic form before the Perón-Vandor conflict arose, and as causal explanations of its birth factors such as economic hardship, political exclusion and international inspiration were more important.

"Reflex leftism" appears to have been most important in the case of the new young union leaders who emerged in the mid- to late-1950's, especially those leading the smaller unions. As the burocracia sindical became dominant, these militants were left out in the cold, Merely to conscientiously fight for their members' basic demands led such young leaders into confrontations with the dominant bureaucracy which failed to represent their interests. Due to the fact that the interests of the small unions were ignored by the big batallions, like the Metalworkers, which dominated the CGT and 62 Organisations, the leaders of small unions were well-placed to recognise the limitations of trade union struggle and to see the need for a radical political leadership and organisation. Cases in point here were Gustavo Rearte, elected to lead the Federation of Soap and Perfume Workers at the age of 25, Jorge Di Pasquale, also in his 20's when elected leader of the Association of Pharmaceutical Workers, and Ricardo de Luca of the Naval Construction Union. The younger leaders were less affected by the demoralisation and

cynicism which set in in the wake of defeats, though tended to have rather idealised impressions of the early Peronist governments, their experience of which was limited.

Date on the class composition of the early Peronist Left is so limited that it is impossible to make definitive statements relating class to radicalisation. Several Peronist Youth members, possibly a majority, were working class and suffered economic privation along with fellow workers. On the other hand, a member of the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement revealed in an interview that his organisation was largely composed of petty-bourgeois youths who had moved into the Peronist Movement in the late 1950's and early 1960's due to a growing identity of socio-economic interest between workers and petty-bourgeois sectors, both hit by the effects of devaluation policies. [1] The reappearance of a Peronist university student organisation, in the form of the Peronist University Youth, successor to the General University Confederation (Confederación General Universitaria - CGU), [2] may also indicate that the Peronist Movement was experiencing a small influx of petty-bourgeois recruits, a trickle which was to become a flood by the late 1960's and early 1970's.

Whether changes in class composition contributed to the emergence of left-wing ideas within Peronism or not, it was no accident that the emergence took place in this Movement. Radical-minded recruits were drawn towards Peronism because of its proletarian constituency and because of the historical failure and crisis of the traditional Left. The Communist Party had been discredited through its support for the 1955

---

1. "Reportaje al Movimiento Revolucionario Nacionalista Tacuara," Compañero, no. 63 (8th September 1964), p. 4.
2. The CGU was the old Peronist student organisation created in 1950. It was dissolved in 1962 and replaced by the Juventudes Universitarias Peronistas (JUP), not to be confused with the pro-Montonero Juventud Universitaria Peronista (JUP).

military coup whereas the Socialist Party has entered a phase of disintegration, initiated at its 1958 Congress. Moreover, in the same period, there was an influx of young nationalists who rapidly evolved towards the Left. As argued below, it was in the late 1950's and early 1960's that a small group of nationalists realised just how reactionary the traditional nationalist organisations were and looked to Peronism as a nationalist movement with a mass popular base.

Two final factors in the emergence of the Peronist Left were Perón's encouragement and the Cuban example. During the Resistencia years, many of Perón's statements and directives contained rhetoric about "Social Revolution being the basic goal...."[1] and encouragement for guerrilla as well as mass forms of resistance. In the early 1960's, he went further in approving the left-wing programme of Huerta Grande in 1962 [2] and in calling for the building of a revolutionary Peronist party in 1963. This enormously strengthened the Left, albeit momentarily, enabling them to appear as legitimate and orthodox Peronists. There is no indication in the literature of the first Peronist Left of any awareness on the part of its cadres that they were being used by Perón in an attempt to bring the Vandorists back into line. Perón's quasi-revolutionary pronouncements were accepted at face value by the youthful tendency, most of whose members had little direct cognitive experience of Peronism in power.

Lastly, the Cuban revolutionaries' victory in 1959 provided the Latin American Left with a new revolutionary model to be acclaimed or rejected. Though its impact was not immediately felt within Peronism, for reasons stated in the first chapter, it did gradually acquire Peronist

---

1. CPC, II:383.
2. See Appendix B on 'Early Radical Peronist Programmes'.

sympathisers. The Cuban experience played a vital role in persuading the new Peronist radicals that the national struggle could no longer be divorced from a struggle for Socialism; that anti-imperialism had to be anti-capitalist to be meaningful. As in the case of Cooke, the other influence which emanated from the Caribbean island was the possibility of success for an armed guerrilla strategy. Foquismo, adapted to predominantly urban Argentine conditions, was adopted by part of the Peronist Left while others, especially its trade union contingents, placed their emphasis instead on mass struggles, more readily influenced by the consideration that Argentina possessed the strongest labour movement in Latin America.

All of these factors played a part in the radicalisation of the original Peronist Left tendency, though only the ascendancy of Vandorism and the need for a militant response to economic decline were factors in the behaviour of the more overtly reformist trade union allies who conditionally came together with the Left in the Revolutionary Peronist Movement. Analysis of that organization, of the first Peronist Youth and Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, and of the views of the tendency as a whole as expressed through Compañero, will be presented below before an explanation of their failure is offered.

THE FIRST PERONIST YOUTH

"AQUI ESTAN / ESTOS SON / LOS MUCHACHOS DE PERON" [1]

Little is publicly known about the initial Peronist Youth (Juventud Peronista - JP). It has attracted scant attention from political analysts, largely due to its failure to grow from a band of activists into a mass youth movement. Moreover, hard data is unavailable - no

1. Early Peronist Youth chant: "Here they are, these are they, Perón's lads".

internal records of its activities or membership seem to exist; its publications were infrequent, in marked contrast to the frequency with which their editors were arrested; and many memories and details about the first JP experience have unfortunately gone with leading cadres like Gustavo Rearte and Carlos Caride to their graves. All that one can base an analysis on are a few infrequent JP papers, letters and communiqués sent to Compañero and the press in general, political thumb sketches of leading militants and the brief and committed JP memoirs of Caride in which myth and historical fact are hard to disentangle. [1]

The first Peronist Youth came into existence at the end of 1957 when a few dozen youths decided to coordinate their activities and regard themselves as the official youth section of the Peronist Movement. Some of them had acted together previously, Caride with a group which had bestowed upon itself the grandiose name of the "Central Command of Corrientes and Esmeralda". This, demythicized, referred to a small group of Peronist youths who met regularly in a bar or on a central Buenos Aires street corner to discuss the latest political developments and occasionally to stone the offices of establishment newspapers. They began to act together in the name of the JP in 1958, their first campaign ironically placing them in the dissident camp in relation to the official Peronist line. When Perón ordered a conditional vote for Frondizi in the presidential election of that year, the JP, doubting the integrity of their leader's order-bearers, campaigned for a blank vote. This intransigent stance, a positive protest rather than a mere abstention, was shared by other combative sectors and attracted 9.5% of the total vote, as opposed to 24.7% in the previous year when the blank vote was official Peronist

---

1. Carlos Caride, "Yo la muerte del general la sentí como la muerte de un compañero," La Causa Peronista (Buenos Aires), no. 1 (9th July 1974), pp. 42-43.

policy for the Constituent Convention elections. [1]

Peronist Youth activists rapidly integrated themselves into the general tasks of the Resistencia through small-scale activities such as painting slogans, distributing leaflets and exploding petards on railway tracks. More significant, though still small-scale, was their participation in strikes and the struggles to reaffirm Peronist control over the unions, activities through which they acquired valuable contacts, some young worker recruits and the use of union facilities as their reward. The first plenaries of the JP were held on the premises of Di Pasquale's militant Pharmaceutical Workers' Union, where the Peronist Youth Executive Committee for the Capital and Greater Buenos Aires was created. Other unions, generally distinguished by their small size and including the Shoemakers', Woodworkers', Telephone Workers', Vegetable Oil Workers' and Naval Construction Workers' unions, followed suit in lending material assistance in the early 1960's. [2]

In theory, the Peronist Youth was subordinate to the authority of the Peronist Superior Council, but in practice, given the disorganisation of the Movement and the conditions in which it was operating, it "acted as an independent branch". Only in 1960 did the Youth receive its first communication from Perón, a letter in which the leader gave recognition to his young supporters and congratulated them on their role in the Resistencia. Their role was not insignificant but was later grossly exaggerated in the partisan account of it written by Caride. It is probably true that "during the Frondizi government, when the Uturunco guerrilla appeared in Tucumán, the Youth provided combatants", but the claim that

---

1. Darío Canton, Elecciones y partidos políticos en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1973) p. 73.
2. Caride, op. cit.

the Youth "worked as its urban apparatus" belongs to the realm of fantasy. Such an allegation is on a par with the claim that the Mendozan JP comrades participated in the "Peronist Andean Army" (Ejército Andino Peronista), given that that chimerical organisation, referred to elsewhere in Peronist Left literature as the "Union of Andean Guerrillas" (Unión de Guerrilleros Andinos) seems never to have acted as a guerrilla force, even if a few Mendozan youths considered themselves to be following in the footsteps of el Che. Nor is confidence in the reliability of Caride's account boosted by the statement that "in 1958, we also took part in the occupation of Lisandro de la Torre, led by Borro", which in fact took place in January 1959. [1]

Though the basic Peronist Youth organisational units were referred to as comandos, their tasks were primarily political rather than military in nature, even though they occasionally engaged in small-scale armed operativos (guerrilla operations) such as the seizure of two machine-guns from a guardpost of the Ezeiza military air base at the start of 1960. This action, possibly the first of its kind in Argentina, was later hailed as the prototype of a multitude of similar operativos which took place a decade later, but its only immediate outcome was the arrest of JP leaders including Envar El Kadri, Jorge Rulli, Héctor Spina and Gustavo Rearte. [2] In all, some 30 members, including the leadership, were coninteados - i.e. arrested as a result of or during the execution of Frondizi's CONINTES Plan. That this seriously weakened the organisation in the 1960-63 period illustrates the numerical weakness of the first Peronist Youth. Though the JP, in addition to its Buenos Aires stronghold,

---

1. Ibid.

2. Envar El Kadri was a university law student in this period, Jorge Rulli a veterinary student who later became a journalist, and Rearte a trade union leader. Caride came from an impoverished Peronist family and was a post-office messenger boy at the age of 15.

had branches in Córdoba, Santa Fe, Chaco, Corrientes, Tucumán, La Roja and Mendoza by the early 1960's, it cannot have had more than a handful of activists in most places.

Due to the imprisonment of key members, the Peronist Youth was unable to take full advantage of the 1962 elections and the opportunities which the occasion offered for legal political canvassing and recruitment. Nevertheless, the non-coninteado rump of the JP, now temporarily directed by Carlos Caride and other former intermediate-level leaders, launched itself enthusiastically into the campaign with the slogan, "Through the Ballot Box or with Arms!" It may have had some recruitment success, but does not seem to have become a significant political force until 1963 when the political prisoners were released, with the exception of Caride, jailed in 1962 and regarded as a common delinquent by the authorities. Caride had joined the Executive in 1961 as Organisational Secretary, placed in charge of security. His arrest came after a Peronist Youth-General University Confederation meeting to mark the sixth anniversary of the 1956 Peronist military rising had been attacked by members of the right-wing Tacuara. Caride, convicted for the killing of Norma Melena during the incident, allegedly on the basis of her attackers' testimonies, then spent the next four years in prison.

The level of State repression at any particular time was an important determinant of JP fortunes.[1] Even more crucial, however, was the organisation's political disunity, which prevented substantial growth even in years of relative political liberalisation. Though a first internal crisis was resolved after the 1962 elections by the expulsion of a

---

1. According to one source, in this period the Federal Police had special brigades for persecution of the Peronist Youth. Their commander, Comisario Inspector Romeo Pepino, was the man to arrest Caride in 1962. See "Soy peronista como se es hincha de Gardel o de Boca," a homage to Gustavo Rearte, El Descamisado no. 8 (10th July 1973), p. 9.

"participationist" sector led by Alberto Brito Lima, [1] this was immediately followed by a more obscure and certainly more damaging crisis. The first National Congress of the Peronist Youth, far from producing an intended national reorganisation, only produced a second fracture which broke the JP into the Peronist Revolutionary Youth (Juventud Revolucionaria Peronista - JRP) led by Gustavo Rearte, and the Peronist Youth Movement (Movimiento de la Juventud Peronista - MJP) led by Envar El Kadri.

Although the specific issues at stake in this split are clouded in obscurity, the names of the JP offspring accurately suggest that the JRP was to the Left of the MJP. Unfortunately, the main source of information on this and related disputes, Compañero, only provided the Left's interpretation of these events, though the Left does appear to have been larger than El Kadri's group. Confusion over the issues at stake is strengthened by the fact that even after the split, there continued to be a Left-Right battle inside the MJP, either because sympathy for the JRP line grew there or possibly because JRP members "entered" the MJP on recruitment raids.

Prior to the 1963 split, the JP had not been free of political contradictions. For example, Roberto Viglino, a Buenos Aires Provincial JP leader, in an interview combined radical statements about trade union leaders having become bourgeois, calls for trade union leadership of the national liberation struggle and talk of capitalist crisis, the decline of liberalism and the need for a "total revolution", with loyalty to "our Justicialist system of ideas", dismissal of the Left as talkers and theoreticians, and lack of differentiation between Cuban and

---

1. Brito Lima, as leader of the fascist Organizational Command (Comando de Organización - C de O), was later responsible for terrorist attacks on the Peronist Left in the 1973-76 period.

Venezuelan "liberation" experiences.[1] Despite such ideological confusion, there does seem to have been fairly broad support within the JP for the programme of Huerta Grande and afterwards for the line of Compañero. Indeed, some sections outlined a clear alternativista strategy - i.e. a revolutionary strategy based on the proletarian rank-and-file of Peronism, seeking to develop base-level organisations independently of the Peronist leadership, with a view to eventually building a workers' party pursuing socialist ends. A case in point was the Federal Capital, Northern Zone Peronist Youth's "A Revolutionary Strategy" which called for the Organización de Base, based on the youth and workers, to be created in order to oppose not only external enemies but also "the Movement's national leadership which has become bourgeois".[2] However, whichever line was most representative of Peronist Youth members before 1963, it is clear that there was too much diversity for the organisation to hold a Congress and still remain nominally united.

It would appear that by 1963 most JP members could have been described as militant Peronists, but clearly not all had socialist leanings. Up until the abortive coup of General Iñíguez in November 1960, several Peronist Youth activists, including Rulli and Caride, had been involved in the coup-making plans of Peronist officers associated with the Centre of Resistance Operations (Centro de Operaciones de la Resistencia - COR). On one occasion, when a religious festival called "The Great Mission of Buenos Aires" was being held, the COR with some JP assistance organised attacks on churches and religious centres in an attempt to demonstrate the existence of a communist "threat" to the authorities, in the hope that

---

1. Compañero, no. 3, (21st June 1963).
2. "Una Estrategia Revolucionaria," ibid., no. 16 (9th October 1963).

the latter would look to Perón for salvation.[1] Another indication of the anti-Marxism of at least sectors of the first Peronist Youth was provided after the Calle Gascón shootout of July 1962. Police investigators of the event, in which two policmen were killed, produced a report which purported to discover an incredible subversive network which linked JP members such as Alberto and Gustavo Rearte with Vanguard Socialist Party members, Padre Hernán Benítez, Communist Party members, the right-wing Peronist Norma Kennedy, the Maoist Elías Seman, the Cuban Embassy in Montevideo, John William Cooke, Jorge Di Pasquale and other celebrities. In all probability, the list was concocted from the State Intelligence Services' "Who's Who of Subversive Delinquents". What is of interest here is that the Peronist Youth responded to the charges through a communiqué in which they denied any joint activities with Marxists and dismissed the report as a police invention designed to confuse the masses by placing in doubt "the doctrinal integrity of their leaders".[2]

It was during the persecution which followed the Gascón affair that Felipe Vallese, a member of the JP metropolitan executive, was kidnapped and killed by the police, who thus provided the Peronist Youth with its first martyr. Vallese, born in 1940, had begun work in 1958 as a machine operator and became a union delegate (delegado) after just a few months. He remained in his post for four years and during that time won concessions for union members. His abduction by the Mobile Brigades of the Regional Police of San Martín in August 1962 was probably a result of his close friendship with Alberto Rearte, sought by police for the Gascón shootings. Vallese died after nine days of unsophisticated

---

1. "La Historia de un Peronista," El Descamisado, no. 40 (19th February 1974), pp. 4-7. About Caride.
2. La Razón (Buenos Aires), 19th and 22nd July 1962.

interrogation, but became an important symbol for the Peronist Youth and the Movement in general. Though the second JP, established in 1972, was to claim that the trade union bureucracy had done nothing when the kidnapping took place, writers of impeccable Peronist Left pedigree have revealed that the Metalworkers' Union did in fact mobilise in an attempt to save Vallese's life. [1]

The traditional anti-Marxism of Peronism, characteristic of the theory of the two imperialisms, yankee and red, obviously made its mark on the first JP, but there was also some convergence between sectors of Peronism and the Guevarist "New Left" in the early 1960's, based on common sympathy for the Cuban Revolution. There probably was some substance to that section of the Gascón report which referred to links between JP militants and the Vanguard Socialist Party (Partido Socialista de Vanguardia - PSV), a splinter from the old Argentine Socialist Party. Che, a periodical unofficially speaking for the PSV, of both Guevarist and Third World orientation, opened its pages to Peronists like Rodolfo Walsh, [2] Cooke and Benítez. This represented both a positive reassessment of Peronism on the part of the former youth of the traditional Left, who saw it for the first time as a national movement, and a shift to the Left by sectors of Peronism.

---

1. Caride ("Yo la muerte...," op cit.) wrote that, "In this period the Youth lost one of its best cadres, Felipe Vallese, a comrade who in his capacity as metalworkers' delegate fought against the bureacratic sectors that led the UOM (Metalworkers' Union). That was why the UOM did nothing to secure his reappearance, nor defend him when the police accused him of being a communist, although today they seek to use his name as a banner". That the UOM did in fact try to help Vallese is revealed in Rodolfo Ortega Peña & Eduardo L. Duhalde, Felipe Vallese: Proceso al Sistema (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudestada, 1967), p. 37. In fact the first (1965) edition of this book was published by the UOM.

2. Rodolfo Walsh, Left Peronist journalist and author of Operación Masacre (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1972), about the 1956 executions of Peronist rebels, was kidnapped on 25th March 1977 after writing an open letter to the military junta.

Left-Right antagonisms split the JP in 1963, with Gustavo Rearte's JRP and sections of the MJP becoming the most dynamic sectors of the Revolutionary Peronist Movent, while El Kadri and the rest of the MJP appear, according to the Left's account, to have sided with Vandor. In May 1964, Compañero published a communiqué from the Santa Fe Provincial Command of the MJP which denounced the National Command of El Kadri for trying to get the MJP as a whole to accept a "stupid orthodoxy". El Kadri had apparently accused all those who disagreed with him of being Marxists and then, faced with a powerful rebellion of the provincial commands against his authority, had packed a meeting in Rosario with his friends while excluding delegates from most provinces. Santa Fe, and presumably other provincial sections, declared their loyalty to the left-wingers, Rearte, Spina and Ibarra, as national leaders of the MJP. [1]

Another edition of the same journal interpreted the rigged Rosario plenary as an attempt by Vandor, care of his National Command representative, "Elmar Elcadre" (Envar El Kadri), to get a conciliatory policy approved and to attack Compañero, attempts which failed due to provincial dissidence. A second attempt at organising a similar sham meeting, this time in Buenos Aires with right-wing Peronist leader Iturbe allegedly backing Brito Lima in an attempt to convert the JP into a more moderate force, also failed. It was repudiated by the Peronist Student League, the Peronist University Youth, the Justicialist Secondary Students Grouping, the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, the Peronist Revolutionary Youth, the 9th July Command and all the JP Commands of the Federal Capital and Greater Buenos Aires, who in turn declared their loyality to a new Buenos Aires leadership of Rearte,

---

1. "La Juventud Peronista de Santa Fe Denuncia a Falsos Dirigentes," Compañero, no. 48 (26th May 1964).

Ibarra, Spina and Salvide, elected in January 1964. [1]

Certainly then, political and maybe personality differences persisted after the 1963 split. The above account, drawn from partisan sources, requires corrobation, but suggests that the Left-Right (JRP-MJP) split of that year was immediately followed by a further Left-Right struggle for national control of the MJP, with the Left winning a majority of activists to their banner but being unable to establish complete control over the organisation and unify its political outlook. Here it would seem that though the El Kadri faction was in a minority by 1964, the weight of numbers in the internal dispute was qualified by the material aid which that faction gained from pro-Vandor trade union and political leaders.

Much less is known about the university and secondary student sister organisations of the Peronist Youth in this period. The Peronist University Youth anticipated its later pro-Montonero eqivalent in declaring that its mission was to bring:

> "to the lecture halls of the Liberal, oligarchic and cipaya University, a combative Peronist presence - i.e. a national and revolutionary presence. The raison d'être of such a presence is the need to link the student struggle in a concrete manner to the struggle of the working people".

By June 1964, when the organisation held a National Congress, it possessed groups in five faculties of the University of Buenos Aires, a group in the University of Morón and groups in two Santa Fe faculties. Fairly new groups had been established in seven other cities. Moreover, the Congress received messages of solidarity from the Justicialist Secondary Students Grouping, the Peronist Student League and the

---

1. "La JP no se presta al juego de los traidores," ibid., no. 42 (14th April 1964).

Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement.[1]

Apart from their specific programmes for a "national" and "popular" education system, both the university and secondary students' organisations shared the Left JP's devotion to the programme of Huerta Grande, to Perón's return and to the Plan de Lucha. They also denounced "betrayals" by the bureaucracy but, apart from joint declarations and some co-operation, they were never organically united with the JP in the way in which similar organisations were unified in the later Montonero tendency. Here again, it would seem that a crisis of hegemony and political differences prevented such unity: no one political line could achieve sufficient dominance to establish a solid federation of like-minded groups, though the Revolutionary Peronist Movement went some way towards attaining this goal. Information about the internal affairs of the university and secondary student organisations is not available, but it would be surprising if they were exempt from the kind of factional conflict which debilitated the Peronist Youth, especially since there must have been a significant membership overlap between these organisations.

Given the political confusion, the absence of clear ideas on strategy evokes no surprise. However, despite the vagueness, one can detect an important shift in strategic thinking in the early 1960's. Though it also thought in terms of popular insurrections, strikes and acts of individual terrorism, the early JP by no means ruled out the possibility of a Peronist military restoration, even after General Valle's 1956 coup failure. On several occasions during the early years, JP militants were mobilised, expecting a Peronist coup. Gradually, however, they became disillusioned by the repeated refusal of military officers to

---

1. Ibid., no. 47 (19th May 1964) & 49 (2nd June 1964).

accede to their requests for arms and by the constant excuse that the time had not yet come for the "revolution". Illusions about coup possibilities were eventually shed, by most Peronist youths, after the abortive effort of Iñíguez in November 1960, which got no further than an occupation of Tartagal, in Salta, and the taking over of the 2nd Regiment's base in Rosario.

A combination of mass mobilisations and small group armed actions then became central in JP strategic thinking, especially after 1962 when doubts about the viability of an electoral return to power seemed confirmed by the military veto of the election results. The specific relationship between armed operations and mass struggles, however, was never defined in these years though the emphasis, especially in the year of the Plan de Lucha, was upon mass insurrection. Several Peronist Youth militants also considered the idea of launching a guerrilla of their own but this never materialized, partly due to the crippling political differences within the organisation and partly due to the imprisonment of leading cadres in the 1960-63 period. The nearest they came to urban guerrilla warfare, apart from isolated armed actions, was cooperation with the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement which had considerable support in the JP's Zone I, covering Northern Buenos Aires, and with whom there was the occasional exchange of weapons. [1]

From the available evidence then, what emerges is a picture of a Peronist Youth which had grown and developed since 1958 but which, due to repression and its own political heterogeneity, by 1964 was still not monolithically left-wing nor a powerful political force. What gave it its historical importance was not so much the early autonomous years but rather the role which many of its cadres were to play in and after

---

1. Personal interview with a former member of the MNRT, Buenos Aires, 14th October 1976.

1964 as driving forces behind the Revolutionary Peronist Movement and later Peronist Left organisations. In 1963-4, Perón was momentarily, for his own purposes, to give the Left a helping hand, enabling the JP to help forge a loose left-wing and combative alliance, and thus participate in the first mass organisation of the Peronist Left. When the Revolutionary Peronist Movement declined after 1964, the Peronist Youth was to suffer the general mid-1960's demise of the Peronist Left, reflected in political fragmentation. Several militants of the first Peronist Youth were, however, to play important roles when the Left again asserted itself and this time grew spectacularly in the late 1960's and early 1970's. As will be seen in later chapters, Caride and El Kadri went on to create the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP), Salvide re-emerged in the Montoneros' Auténtico Party, and Gustavo Rearte created his own tendency, largely based initially on the Peronist Revolutionary Youth.

FROM TACUARA TO MNRT

"THE FATHERLAND WILL CEASE TO BE A COLONY OR THE NATIONAL FLAG WILL FLUTTER OVER ITS RUINS" 1

Tacuara and its left-wing splinter, the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara - MNRT), played a fundamental formative role in the emergence of the more recent Peronist guerrilla organisations. The parent Tacuara is of interest not only because it spawned the first Argentine urban guerrilla, but also because through its political fragmentation it reflected the early phases of an important social process: the movement of petty-bourgeois

---

1. "MNRT: Violencia Revolucionaria," 1st May 1964, Militancia (Buenos Aires), no. 6 (19th July 1973), pp. 35-38.

sectors towards Peronism from the late 1950's and early 1960's onwards. It must be stressed that this process initially only involved a few dozen activists but, nevertheless, they were to make their mark on the early history of the Peronist Left and MNRT influence was even to be extended across the Río de la Plata to the Uruguayan Tupamaros.

The early Tacuara of the late 1950's has been the subject of much misinterpretation, especially on the part of journalists. Sensationalist magazines of the period tended to ignore ideological developments in Argentine nationalism since the 1930's and changes in its social composition. [1] Though data on the class bases of most nationalist organisations is not available, writers who have seriously studied the topic have differentiated between the nationalism of the two periods. Whereas the nationalism of the 1930's was primarily influenced by Mussolini and the French monarchist Charles Maurras, that of the 1950's owed far more to the Spanish Falange. Moreover, there would appear to have been a shift in social composition from oligarchic plus displaced petty-bourbeois youth in the 1930's to people of generally more lowly origin by the late 1950's.

Nationalism during the 1930's, though it produced the revisionist school of history, owed much to foreign inspiration. According to Hernández Arregui, many of the nationalists of this decade were linked by family to the oligarchic Conservatives who had lost political power to Yrigoyen's Radicals in 1916. [2] They would not have been such a force in their anti-Communist and anti-striker activities, however, had they not attracted support from among the petty bourgeoisie - the classical mass

---

1. For example, "Para una interpretación de Tacuara. Ante que nada: GORILAS," Ocurrió (Aquí y en el mundo), (Buenos Aires), 1st April 1964, p. 15.

2. Hernández Arregui, La Formación..., op. cit., pp. 172-3.

social base of fascism. The major characteristics of their nationalism were a hankering for the past, an emphasis upon hierarchy and the merits of aristocratic political elites, and virulent anti-Communism and anti-Semitism.

By the 1950's, Argentine nationalism had changed considerably and was still changing, both in terms of its dominant ideological traits and social composition. There were of course some constants, especially historical revisionism and anti-Semitism, but the main feature of the nationalism of the late 1950's was an attempt by some of its promoters to reformulate ideas so as to make them relevant to contemporary Argentine society and its problems. Organisationally, Tacuara's genealogy also stretched back to the 1930's, but a series of political splits in the early 1960's led to profound changes in the orientations of some of its most dynamic sectors.

Tacuara's link with the past was provided by the Secondary Students Nationalist Union (Unión Nacionalista de Estudiantes Secundarios - UNES). UNES had been a wing of the Civic Legion (Legión Cívica) of the early 1930's and then of the Nationalist Youth Alliance (Alianza de la Juventud Nacionalista), and became the parent organisation of Tacuara after the 1955 coup. [1] The name Tacuara had been previously used by UNES for occasional publications and referred to the bamboo lances spearheaded with knives which were used by gauchos during the struggle for national independence. After some years of inactivity under Perón, whom the nationalists had initially supported, UNES was reconstituted around 1953. As a right-wing Catholic nationalist grouping, it supported the Church in its dispute with Perón and then assisted in a small way in his overthrow, through para-military activity. Feelings of triumph

---

1. See Marysa Navarro Gerassi, Los Nacionalistas (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1968), p. 225.

which arose when Lonardi replaced Perón soon gave way to feelings of betrayal when Lonardi was in turn replaced by Aramburu in November 1955. The young nationalists, who had regarded Lonardi as a national standard-bearer, now felt compelled to resume the struggle for power and created Tacuara for this purpose. After its foundation, its parent UNES rapidly disintegrated.

The original tacuaristas, far from being the nazi progeny of landed oligarchs, as was suggested by the sensationalists, appear to have come from a combination of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois anti-Peronist, Catholic families. Misinterpretation of their social composition was largely due to the fact that the Tacuara leader, Alberto Ezcurra Uriburu, was a proud descendant of Rosas and Uriburu, the latter being the leader of the right-wing nationalist coup of 1930. In fact, Ezcurra's father was only a revisionist history professor who was denied the better posts in education due to his political views, and this may have stimulated his son's militancy. In general, Tacuara members in the early years were reasonably well-off students from "good families", as much motivated by family Catholicism as by family nationalism, some of their parents having been active in the Legión or Alianza.[1] Furthermore, due to the Church-State battle during the later years of the 1946-55 Peronist government and the Peronists' unimaginative university policy, they were staunchly anti-Peronist.

While there was a shift down the social scale compared to the nationalists of the 1930's, at least at leadership level, the ideology was also different. It was often incoherent, composed of a series of

---

1. Ibid., p. 226; Rogelio García Lupo, "Diálogo con los jóvenes fascistas," in his La Rebelión de los Generales (Buenos Aires: Proceso Ediciones, 1962), p. 72; and personal interview with former MNRT member, op. cit.

slogans such as "Long Live Christ the King, Long Live Rosas, Long Live Franco, Down With The Bolshies, Death to the Jews! " [1] These synthesised, though, the major fragments of the early Tacuara ideological baggage: Catholicism, historical revisionism the ideas of the Spanish Falange, anti-Communism and anti-Semitism. Behind such ideas lay the influence, historically, of José María Rosa; of the Francoist State and the writings of José Antonio Primo de Rivera; and the fiercely anti-Communist and anti-Semitic writings of Julio Meinvielle, Tacuara's "spiritual advisor". [2] They felt a stronger cultural attachment to Spain than to Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy due to Argentina's colonial heritage. Moreover, Germany and Italy were instances of fascist imperialism, something seen as totally alien to the problematic of a dependent country like Argentina where genuine nationalism had to be anti-imperialist.

Chief among the falangist ideas which influenced Tacuara after 1955 was that of sindicalismo nacional, the idea of strong official trade unions playing a fundamental role in a corporate State. Despite the anti-Peronism of its advocates, the growth of the Argentine unions under the tutelage of the State during the Perón period was an important factor in the appeal of falangismo. Above all, the experience had shown the viability of a national movement based (in numerical terms) largely on the trade unions. Sindicalismo nacional became the stated goal of Tacuara, posed in opposition to "the decadence of capitalist structures and liberal democracy". The latter, along with the "complicit" political parties, were seen as responsible for the moral and social chaos which for Tacuara was a characteristic of the early Resistencia years.

---

1. Navarro Gerassi, op. cit., p. 226.

2. Julio Meinvielle, El judío en el misterio de la historia (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Teoría, 1959; El comunismo en la revolución anticristiana (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Teoría, 1961).

Tacuara's early ideology was not in fact totally incompatible with the "Third Position" of Justicialism, though at least superficially there was a greater emphasis on a State based on the unions rather than on class conciliation:

> "In the face of liberal indifference and the Marxist negation, Tacuara defends the National Syndicalist State, which will replace the liberal regime (and) be an authentic State based on the unions" 1

Tacuara had a vague notion that society had changed since the 1930's and that it was still changing. Fearing an atheistic lurch to the Left, they appealed to potential supporters on an "It's them or us" basis, arguing that:

> "Latin America is in a revolutionary process of an eminently social character. Either we give this revolution our national and Catholic stamp or it will have the reactionary stamp of Communism". 2

Their anti-Semitism and anti-Communism led many liberals to dismiss them as "Nazis", yet these ideas as well as being European-inspired were products of the nationalists' romance with Perón in the mid-1940's. The Jewish community almost en masse saw Peronism as a brand of nazism and so fervently opposed it, as did the Communist Party with a similar characterisation of the regime. This stimulated the anti-Communism and anti-Semitism already present in Argentine nationalism, elements which survived Perón's subsequent break with the Church and hence with the Catholic nationalists.

Equally or perhaps more important than ideology in attracting youth to Tacuara was its romantic appeal. They stressed the values of courage, sacrifice, violence and struggle and went in for direct action,

---

1. "Tacuara juega a la milicia revolucionaria," Che, no. 15 (2nd June 1961), pp. 10-11.
2. Ibid.

uniforms and ceremonies in a big way. The tacuaristas always wore the Maltese Cross in their lapels and dressed in uniforms for secret initiation ceremonies in dark recesses of the Chacarita cemetery. Care of the military and police, they had possessed small arms since 1955 and even when not engaged in operations carried coshes and knuckle-dusters around with them. Training exercises, combined with open-air feasts and folkloric discussion, were held at a country house owned by the Ezcurra family and in the Paraná Delta without police interference. Partly due to their social respectability and partly to their virulent anti-Communism, the early Tacuara enjoyed great immunity from police persecution. It was said that members rarely remained in police stations for more than 24 hours and that policemen drew back from photographing detainees for fear of dismissal.

One story which reveals the special Tacuara-police relationship of the late 1950's tells of how, when Ezcurra was arrested, another leading member, Joe Baxter, went personally to see the Chief of Police and arranged for the release of the Tacuara leader. In return for this, Baxter promised to organise the destruction of a Communist Party printing press, but with Ezcurra free, Baxter then had to go underground for six months since his own promises had been sheer bluff - he knew nothing of the location of clandestine CP printing centres! [1]

Tacuara only became widely known in 1958 with the ascendancy of Arturo Frondizi to the presidency. The idea of a new Catholic nationalist party was floated at the time but such hopes foundered when a substantial sector of nationalist leaders moved over to the Frondizi camp. Together with combative sectors of Peronism, Tacuara advocated a blank vote in 1958, yet they soon found themselves allied to the new premier,

---

1. Personal interview with former MNRT member, op. cit.

for religious rather than political reasons, in the controversy over religious educational institutions. In the battles for and against governmental recognition of private Catholic religious institutions and the qualifications they conferred, Tacuara defended the Frondizi "free education" line and, along with other Catholic student organisations, spearheaded the street mobilisations and battles in favour of it. [1] It was in this way that Tacuara grew from a few dozen to an organisation of hundreds of students, its growth promoted temporarily by Catholic priests. Tacuara reached its zenith in this period and won control of the University Law Union (Sindicato Universitario de Derecho - SUD), but its success was short-lived. As soon as the educational battle was won, the Church ordered student devotees to withdraw from the organisation and two-thirds promptly obeyed. Like a tap, Tacuara had been turned on and then off. The Tacuara splinters which appeared in the years which followed contained dozens rather than hundreds of activists.

More important for the subsequent development of Tacuara were the attempts made by one sector to come to terms with Peronism. Whereas the nationalism of the hard-line anti-Peronist faction remained reactionary, authoritarian, Catholic and largely foreign-inspired, the other faction which emerged was far more secular and more concerned with "discovering" an authentic Argentine nationalist experience. Greatly disappointed with the empty nationalist rhetoric of Aramburu and Frondizi, the latter group reappraised Peronism, influenced by its mass trade union base and national achievements. José Luis Nell, later the leader of the left-wing Tacuara splinter, began to promote the idea of working in the Peronist labour movement and developing links with the Peronist Youth.

---

1. For details of the controversy over education, see "Laica o Libre," Todo es Historia, no. 80 (January 1974), pp. 9-23, though it does not deal with the role of Tacuara.

Contact with the Youth, first established at the time of the Peronist June 1956 military revolt, grew in the late 1950's when those tacuaristas sympathetic to Peronism began to work alongside militants like El Kadri, Rulli and Gustavo Rearte. Relations were also established with the smaller, often more militant, trade unions - the naval construction workers, woodworkers and shoemakers - and also with Coria's Construction Union (UOCRA). There were occasional weaponry exchanges between Tacuara and the Peronist Youth, a few joint actions and examples of Tacuara technical support being given to the workers' struggles of the Resistencia period.

The orientation towards the unions, seen publicly in January 1959 when Ezcurra and Baxter stood out by supporting the general strike, was mildly palatable to the right-wing due to its compatibility with sindicalismo nacional (in much the same way as the slogan socialismo nacional was acceptable both to left- and right-wing Peronist Youth organisations a decade later). What was not acceptable to the Right was the inevitable drift towards Peronism which this implied, Peronism being hegemonic in the workers' movement but being seen by the Right as anti-Catholic.

Growing Left-Right tensions rapidly destroyed the unity of Tacuara. These appear to have been exacerbated by the recruitment into the organisation of youths of petty-bourgeois Peronist parentage. Many of their parents had risen socially under the Peronist governments but now saw their living standards eroded by the rising cost of living. A good number of these new tacuaristas were still students at university or night school but had to work during the day, usually as employees, to finance their studies. [1]

---

1. Navarro Gerassi, op. cit., p. 228; García Lupo, op. cit., p. 73; Personal interview with former MNRT member, op. cit., See also Appendix A.

A few members of the old guard, notably Ezcurra, responded to the pressures of the renovated rank-and-file to make a more radical political definition, but the more reactionary gorilitas broke away in 1960 to form the Restorationist Nationalist Guard (Guardia Nacionalista Restauradora - GNR). They accused the leftward-moving Tacuara of having been taken over by:

> "Fidelism, Trotskyism and Atheism" [1] (and reasserted that) "ultra-hierarchy is necessary in order to distinguish qualities.... Tacuara has always been a movement of the extreme right, a defender of the purity of nationality and continuer of the line interrupted in 1852 by the fall of Rosas".

Ezcurra was in a way correct when he dismissed them as "reactionaries, conservatives who reflect tendencies which ceased to be important here around 1930," [2] but the GNR and similarly violent right-wing organisations continued to pose a physical threat to left-wing and union militants in the years which followed.

The GNR overnight inherited the police immunity previously possessed by the tacuaristas, whereas the latter found themselves increasingly persecuted. As Joe Baxter, a law student of English descent, commented, "To opt in favour of national liberation cost us the loss of protection. The same people who until then had protected us turned against us". [3] A further step in the disintegration of the original Tacuara trunk came around 1962 when the New Argentina Movement (Movimiento Nueva Argentina - MNA) was created by Dardo Cabo and Edmundo Calabró. Less extreme than the GNR but still part of the Catholic Right, the MNA advocated complete integration into the Peronist Movement, a move which the ultra-reactionaries resisted.

---

1. Navarro Gerassi, ibid.
2. Horacio Salas, "La Ideología de la Violencia," Discusión (Buenos Aires), no. 15 (3rd-16th April 1975), pp. 14-17.
3. Baxter interview, Pregón (Buenos Aires), 1st April 1964.

Ezcurra defined the ideology of Tacuara after the GNR's departure as:

> "Christian, in that it affirms the primacy of the spiritual and permanent values in man and society; Nationalist, in that it posits the Nation as the supreme social unit; and Socialist, due to its socio-economic, anti-capitalist, revolutionary and communitarian conceptions". 1

Due to the strength of his religious convictions and in spite of his anti-capitalism, Ezcurra could not embrace the materialist philosophy of Marxism. Others, however, did adopt Marxism, as a method of analysis rather than as a philosophy, so ideological unity was still denied to Tacuara.

Apart from the relatively humbler social extraction of the newer tacuaristas, an important factor in their radicalisation was the theory and practice of armed struggle, a continuation of the violent direct action methods employed by Tacuara in the late 1950's. Tear gas and plastic bombs had been thrown into Jewish clubs and schools during that period and there were also attacks on left-wing meetings. In November 1960, a meeting due to be addressed by Guevara's mother was violently broken up by 200 Tacuara youths who invaded the Law and Social Sciences Centre in Buenos Aires. Violent methods persisted even after motivations and targets changed. As Tacuara's political conceptions moved into a state of flux and as the pro-Peronist elements began to evolve from direct action methods to organised guerrilla activity, combative tacuaristas began to avidly read books on international revolutionary struggles and this undoubtedly exercised an ideological as well as methodological influence.

A former member of the MNRT recollected, "We read everything

---

1. Ezcurra, quoted in García Lupo, op. cit., p. 77.

which was subversive and clandestine - even OAS stuff - the political ideology did not matter. There was a lot of infantilism and romanticism". [1] But even though the prime attraction was learning how to conduct a guerrilla struggle, most such struggles at that time on a world scale were national liberation struggles, often with a leftwing content. The Cuban and Algerian movements were particularly influential upon the tacuaristas, though their political immaturity was indicated by their failure to differentiate between the two. In general, however, the study of these experiences led to an examination of the relationship between national liberation and social revolution, and then to the conclusion that they were indivisible.

A further factor in this leftward evolution was contact between Tacuara and young National Left groups, splinter-products of the geriatric Socialist Party, tendencies with a more positive appraisal of Peronism such as the National Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional - MLN) of Ismael Viñas. Partly through the latter group, the influence of popular nationalist writers was passed on to sectors of Tacuara. Hernández Arregui's La Formación de la Conciencia Nacional, [2] which again related national and social struggles, was particularly influential. Previously, the tacuaristas had read little, mainly historical works such as those of José María Rosa and also the books of Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz. Another book on the Tacuara reading lists was Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution though it appears to have had no practical influence.

There was something of a time-lag between cognition of such ideas and their reflection in the practical activity of the organisation. Even in the early 1960's, Baxter and others engaged in anti-Semitic

---

1. Personal interview, op. cit.
2. Hernández Arregui, op. cit.

activities, such as waiting outside the Colegio Sarmiento until Jewish schoolboys came out in order to attack them. Ernesto Soloski and Edgardo Trilnik were wounded in such attacks. The young Peronists were still anti-Semitic, no longer as a result of fascist ideological influence, but rather due to the Jewish opposition to Perón. They developed strong links with the representative of the Arab League in Argentina, Hussein Triki, and though their anti-Semitism evolved into anti-Zionism when they moved to the Left, the dividing line between the two positions was for a time blurred.

The uneasy marriage between Left and Right only came to an end in 1962 when Nell and Baxter created the Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNRT), though the definitive break with Ezcurra did not occur until two years later when he finally dropped out of activity, later to be ordained into the priesthood. The official Tacuara, linked to the name of Ezcurra, then headed by Juan Mario Collins and then by Patricio Errecalte Pueyrredón, gradually disintegrated, despite opportunistic attempts to revive it. In 1966, Errecalte went personally to the Interior Ministry to congratulate the new military rulers, in an attempt to share the spoils and glory of victory. By this time, Tacuara membership was very small and requirements for joining were defined by Errecalte as "to be very macho and to love the Nation"! [1]

Social and political reality as much as international influences motivated the guerrilla organisation of the MNRT. Peronist insurrectionism had been defeated in 1959 with the failure of the 'Revolutionary General Strike' of January. Moreover, as the early 1960's progressed, the leadership of the Peronist Movement could visibly be seen abandoning violent strategies and conveniently forgetting the programme of

---

1. Salas, op. cit.

Huerta Grande. Guerrilla action was seen as the necessary antidote to this drift towards neo-Peronism and the rise of the Vandorist bureaucracy, and elements of Marxism rapidly became the ideological rationale for such a strategy. There had also been the experience of Frondizi's government which seemed to demonstrate the inability or unreadiness of the national bourgeoisie to bring about substantial changes in Argentine society, and in particular to halt the spiralling cost of living which was affecting both workers and petty-bourgeois sectors. It was therefore not surprising that the "young Peronists who wanted to fight", as writers have described the MNRT, [1] gravitated towards the most revolutionary wing of the mass movement of Peronism and along with the Peronist Youth and its sister organisations came to form part of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement of Villalón and Rearte. In 1965, the MNRT was given a token seat on the National Command of the latter Movement.

It is the history of the MNRT which is of prime interest here, due to its impact on the moulding of the Peronist Left. Though José ("Joe") Luis Baxter, who joined Tacuara in 1957, is referred to in all the scanty commentaries as the leader of the organisation ("Joe Baxter's group", etc.) the real operational and political leader was José Luis Nell. [2] It appears that Baxter gained his reputation from being a good public relations man and due to his much publicised international travels during the mid-1960's, rather than from his actual importance within the MNRT. Yet both men went on to play important roles in the shaping of the more recent revolutionary Left, Nell joining the Montoneros and Baxter ending up in the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). It was Nell who had led the tendency within Tacuara in the late 1950's which urged a positive

---

1. García Lupo, op. cit., p. 73.
2. Personal interview with former MNRT member, op. cit.

orientation towards Peronism and the labour movement, who had won that battle theoretically but who now, through advocating foquismo, maintained the alienation of his tendency from real integration with the working-class movement in practice.

In 1963, pressmen were surprised when the MNRT participated in a meeting with the Communist Party and Viñas's MLN in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, the kind of event which the parent Tacuara would have attempted to break up. On leaving the meeting, Baxter told a reporter, "Now we feel liberated. We are throwing off all (the influences of) the Second World War; we no longer feel defeated in the Battle of Berlin and we are starting out on a new road". The MNRT had come to realise that:

> "Not only is there a cipayo liberalism and a cipayo leftism, but also a cipayo nationalism. They are those who think that the battle for Argentine sovereignty was fought in the Berlin Chancellery in 1945". 1

One of the clearest political and ideological definitions to emerge from the organisation was the Reportaje al Movimiento N. Revolucionario Tacuara, published in Compañero in 1964, which demonstrated the elimination of falangista traces. Many postulates contained therein prefigured later Peronist Left stances: the fundamental contradiction in society was posed as "the confrontation of the National Liberation Movements with Imperialism" - "National Liberation of Semi-Colony"; the antagonism between the bureaucracy and the workers within the Movement was viewed as of cardinal importance, with the working class seen as the vanguard of the revolutionary process; there was the more recently widespread view of Perón as a revolutionary, unable to play his true role due to a cordon established around him by the bureaucracy, which was

---

1. Baxter, quoted in Salas, op. cit.

supposedly cutting him off from the masses; and there was the urban foquista strategy, with violence being justified as a response to the existence of official violence. [1] "With cowardly violence they maintain their privileges and with the creative violence of the people we will destroy them", an MNRT manifesto stated. [2]

No faith was placed in the national bourgeoisie, whose non-revolutionary character, it was argued, had been demonstrated by the Frondizi government. The future role of the "middle classes" was, however, much more complex. Their fear of the people and desire to rise into the privileged strata meant that they could be no more than the "vacillating rearguard of the National Liberation struggle". They were subject to a partially successful imperialist cultural offensive, yet sections would, according to the MNRT schema, join the struggle if suitable work was done by workers and revolutionaries to win them over. [3] This analysis was not based on any deep analysis of Argentine political economy or class structure but the MNRT did come to see the potential and limitation of most classes quite accurately through an analysis and experience of post-1955 governments and the behaviour of political forces. The weakspot in their analysis, however, was a crucial one. By only examining the "objective" interests of the working class, the MNRT ignored the strength of economistic sentiment in the labour movement and thus failed to articulate a programme geared to the immediate needs and demands of workers.

At a fairly superficial level, the social composition of the Peronist Movement was examined, and viewed as the dynamic key to its future development. As with the Montoneros later, the principal internal

---

1. "Reportaje al Movimiento N. Revolucionario Tacuara," op. cit.
2. Compañero, no. 52 (23rd June 1964).
3. "Reportaje...," op. cit.

conflict was viewed as "the confrontation between the bureaucracy - expression of a historical front which has exhausted its possibilities of life - and the working class". But the MNRT were far closer to Revolutionary Peronism in arguing that this contradiction would be resolved "to the extent that the working class is given its own revolutionary organisation". [1] The limitations of Peronism - the bureaucracy and the reformist, neo-Peronist "participationist" current - would disappear in the wake of the new revolutionary organisation, termed "the independent alternative of the working class" by later alternativista groups. [2]

Implicitly, they understood that the workers could not attain control of the existing structures of the Movement: they had to build their own organisation, aided by revolutionary Peronists. It would be, they hoped, "the instrument by which the proletariat exercises leadership of the other social forces marginated from the Capitalist Colonial Regime". What bestowed the attribute of vanguard on the working class was its "objective" lack of compromise with the system yet this tentative clasismo was, in the worst traditions of Revolutionary Peronism, combined with blind faith in Perón as the great revolutionary leader: "Perón is not made of bronze nor of marble, nor is he analysis material for hasty sociologists; Perón is reality and his message is Revolution". Written in the year of the Plan de Lucha of the CGT, the MNRT document assumed that the impressive mass workers' actions (mainly factory occupations and strikes) would either force vacillating leaders into line or strengthen the political authority of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement, as well as produce new workers' leaders steeled in the campaign.

---

1. Ibid.
2. Principally Rank-and-File Peronism (Peronismo de Base - PB) and the Peronist Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas - FAP). "Revolutionary Peronism", with a capital R, refers to the ideology of the alternativista organisations analysed in the final chapter.

For this, the keynote was Perón's saying, "The masses will march with their leaders at their head or with the heads of their leaders", [1] something which more recent revolutionary Peronists interpreted more literally.

Designating their activity the revolutionary action of the Peronist Youth, the MNRT emphasised the unity of theory and practice:

> "It is that theoretical-practical unity, the only guarantee of revolutionary action, which has enabled it to constitute, along with other combatant groups, the first germs of the armed organisation of Revolutionary Peronism".

Due to their own background of armed activities and the world revolutionary milieu in which they were operating, plus the aforementioned defeat of insurrectionism, putting revolutionary theory into practice for the MNRT meant organising a guerrilla force. The Ejército del Pueblo (People's Army), which they hoped to become, was to be "the armed vanguard of the masses, the product of objective political conditions" [2] - especially of the 1962 denial of Peronist victory through a democratic process.

MNRT combatants saw themselves as just an embryo of this Army rather than the Army itself. They emphasised that the Army had to be an integrated part of the mass movement, but adopted a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards the Movement. Though they generally adopted an alternativista position (regarding only the worker base of Peronism as truly revolutionary and thus seeking to organise it independently of the Peronist leadership), at times their statements suggested a movimientista

---

1. "Reportaje...," op. cit.

   Clasismo refers to the politics of those Peronist and non-Peronist left-wing tendencies which emphasized working-class revolutionary organisation and struggle.

2. Ibid.

orientation (viewing the Peronist Movement in its entirety as a revolutionary movement and thus working through its official structures). Thus, though the MNRT stress was upon rank-and-file struggles and the need for base-level organisation, movimientista attitudes occasionally crept into their literature:

> "The Peronist Movement is the revolutionary vehicle for achieving National Liberation. The People's Army is its armed vanguard: it develops out of it, is based on it and is supplied by it. Those who forget this and seek to replace the action of the masses as protagonists of the revolutionary process will be defeated". 1

A recent demonstration of the latter point had been supplied by Jorge Ricardo Masetti's People's Guerrilla Army (Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo - EGP), which established a small, isolated, totally ineffectual foco in Salta Province in 1963. This avowedly Guevarist guerrilla, led by people who had spent time in Cuba (like Masetti and Dávila) and by Cubans (like Hermes Peña), was destroyed as much by the inhospitable Salta terrain as by the Gendarmería. Several guerrillas died of starvation and four were killed in an avalanche. [2] To avoid the fate of the EGP, the MNRT promised that they would combine their activities with the mass struggles of Peronist workers. In practice, however, the organisation ignored its own teachings: the MNRT initiated armed operations without possessing a political basis of support among the workers and this was a sure factor in their débâcle.

Internationally, the MNRT were highly impressed by the "marvellous experiences" of China, Cuba, Algeria and Egypt, [3] but their failure

---

1. Ibid.
2. On Masetti and the EGP, see "Guerrillas in Argentine," chapter 7 of Ricardo Rojo, My Friend Che (New York: Grove Press, 1968), pp. 147-162; and the introduction by Rodolfo Walsh to Masetti's book, Los que luchan y los que lloran (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1969), pp. 7-18.
3. "Reportaje...," op. cit.

to differentiate between the political significance of these very different national processes indicated their political immaturity and their underlying assumption that revolutionary status was a thing to be acquired through practising armed struggle rather than being an ideological and political question. Due to the infancy of the organisation at the time of its downfall, its political personality was never fully clarified and its members failed to achieve political homogeneity. In terms of the later Peronist Left division between Movimientistas and Alternativistas, they had more in common with the latter than the former regarding their analysis of the potentialities of the Movement's integrants, yet were still taken in by Perón's "leftist" gesture of support for the Revolutionary Peronist Movement and still, as has been seen above, referred to the Movement as the instrument of liberation, in apparent contradiction with their convictions about the need to furnish Peronist workers with their own revolutionary organisation.

It was mainly from their study of international struggles that the MNRT saw the indivisibility of national liberation from social revolution. In Argentina, the same lesson was apparent in the practical failure of developmentalist strategies hegemonised by the national bourgeoisie, but the problematic of national and social liberation was never clearly articulated. "Economic Socialism" was seen as the only solution for the 3rd World, [1] and for Argentina this was considered represented by the Programme of Huerta Grande adopted by the 62 Organisations late in 1962 though never campaigned for by its leadership. In fact, the programme, despite radical calls for the nationalisation of key sectors of the economy, state control of foreign trade, the expropriation of land from the oligarchy without compensation and workers' control of exportation, fell short of advocating total socialisation.

---

1. Ibid.

The MNRT's May Day manifesto for 1964, Violencia Revolucionaria, shed further light on the organisation's outlook. Given the "total crisis" of the liberal capitalist system, the "treason of frondizi-ism and all the bourgeoisie, which capitulated to the oligarchy and imperialism" on March 18th 1962, given the "shameful (electoral) fraud" of July 7th 1963, the MNRT concluded that:

> "the Peronist masses will never have access to power by peaceful means because the privileged sectors are not suicidal and know perfectly well that the Peronist Movement in power means the NATIONAL REVOLUTION which will finish them off".

The battle against the regime was to be won "preferably through thousands of small encounters, in all parts and at all times" as ordered by Perón. Again, the stated aim was "to impose the programme of Huerta Grande, forgotten by the vacillating leadership, through popular mobilisation and armed struggle", [1] but in spite of verbal support for mass struggles and participation in the short-lived Revolutionary Peronist Movement, MNRT activity was little removed from pure foquismo. Their operations, primarily designed to accumulate arms and funds, had nothing in common with labour's forms of activity and there was no organised participation in trade union struggles. Whether or not the MNRT would have attempted a genuine marriage of armed struggle and mass activity once they had successfully passed through the preparatory stage of the guerrilla, one can only speculate.

The idea of the urban foco pioneered by Nell was adopted, though one should note that there was opposition to this strategy from a minority who favoured a role of just providing technical aid to workers in struggle. Such a view was related to the ideas of Gustavo Rearte (who maintained fraternal relations with the tendency) of at least developing

---

1. "MNRT: Violencia Revolucionaria," op. cit.

a minimum base of workers' political support for the ideas of Revolutionary Peronism before initiating armed warfare. The majority view prevailed and the MNRT became the first organisation in Argentina structured as an urban guerrilla force, based upon a series of comandos of which the Comando de Propaganda was the least effective due to persistent ideological controversies.

Lacking finance since their split with the Restorationist Nationalist Guard, the MNRT's immediate task, apart from mundane leafleting activities, was to equip themselves through a series of "expropriations", such as their raid on bus company offices early in 1963, in which they seized 400,000 pesos but missed a further 2,000,000. The money was destined to provide guns and ammunition for what is celebrated as the first Argentine urban guerrilla operation. Operación Rosaura, as it was called, had the payroll of the Policlínico Bancario as its target and was certainly a qualitative advance upon previous armed actions in terms of the amount of planning and the degree of organisation which went into it. Even so, many amateurish mistakes were made, not least the choice of target. By selecting the Bank Employees' Union Hospital, the MNRT hardly enhanced their chances of being accepted by the working class.

After three months of careful preparation, the proto-guerrillas attempted to put their plans into action in July 1963, forcibly acquiring an ambulance for their purposes, only to find that the payroll truck did not appear on its usual day. Undeterred, the operation was again attempted, this time successfully, on August 29th, with a hired ambulance being used. 14 million pesos were taken after two civilians were killed by a burst of machine-gun fire which the press attributed to José Luis Nell's nerves. This was only the start of the problems encountered by the MNRT. The banknotes were marked and emissaries were therefore sent to a variety of European capitals to change the money into hard currency. Some of

these emissaries did not exactly take the kind of security precautions required by their station in life. The Posse brothers, paid 1m. pesos for participating in the Operación on a contractual basis, reportedly invested part of the booty in pleasure-seeking activities in a Parisian nightclub, assisted by a certain "Brigitte"! Interpol, alerted by the Argentine police, noticed the circulation of pesos and the rapid arrest of one money-changer led eventually to an identification of the militants involved in the operation and to the downfall of the MNRT. Much of the exchanged money and printing equipment purchased with it were recovered by the police. Most members were rounded up early in 1964 and spent a long time in prison, except Nell who made a dramatic escape from the Tribunales (Law Courts). [1]

By the standards of the time, it was a thoroughly professional operation; by those of today, totally amateurish. Its aftermath revealed that there was still a slight shadow of criminal activity, derived from the original Tacuara, linked to the MNRT. Gustavo Posse, for example, only a sympathiser of the organisation, learnt of the movement of payroll money and sold the information to an MNRT friend in return for a share in the takings. Moreover, due to the lack of armed expertise of its cadres, the MNRT reportedly engaged a professional pistolero, Félix Arcángel Miloro, to join them in the operation for a fee of 2m. pesos. Other members of the organisation had "criminal records" but then so did many good Peronists.

The inexperience of some and the stupidity of others led to the collapse of the MNRT in Argentina. They had committed the sin of over-ambition in aiming for a 14m. peso haul at a time whem their organisational infrastructure was poorly developed and their political support

---

1. For accounts of Operación Rosaura, see La Razón, 25th March 1964 (police report) and Ocurrió, op. cit.

base restricted to a small number of activists. The employees and students (plus one senior medical practitioner of the National Institute of Neuropsychiatry) responsible for the action had future plans to invade the Malvinas Islands through a surprise commando attack. Though their plan was thwarted by capture, another Tacuara splinter, Cabo's New Argentina group, carried it out in 1966 and managed to create something of an international incident at a time when the Duke of Edinburgh was visiting Argentina. Though Cabo's organisation shared a Peronist identification with the MNRT, the fact that there were mainland support operations carried out by the fascist Tacuara rump during the invasion illustrates that it was on the other side of the political spectrum.

The collapse of the MNRT in Argentina in April 1964 did not put an end to its influence. It left behind its example as an inspiration for future urban actions and some later bank raids in Argentina and Uruguay were actually modelled on the Policlínico operation. Its ideas, though embryonic, often vague and never settled, were also to exercise an indirect and sometimes direct influence upon subsequent guerrilla organisations. It is important to draw attention to the activities of those who got away - Baxter (who wasn't in Operación Rosaura), Nell, Rubén Daniel Rodríguez and Jorge Andrés Cataldo - and of Jorge Caffati after he got out of prison.

Baxter, who never had more than one foot in the MNRT, fled the country and with the aid of Villalón and Arab contacts went on a world tour which included visits to Brazil, Spain, Algeria, Angola, the Congo, Egypt, Switzerland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, North Vietnam and China. The tour included 3 months of military instruction in Hanoi and the inevitable pilgrimage to Madrid for an audience with Perón. The latter displayed his usual dexterity when meeting Baxter. He began by eulogising Mussolini but soon changed to the opposite tack when he

realised that Baxter had "evolved" politically since the old days. [1] At the end of 1965, Baxter moved to Montevideo to help organise the MNRT-in-exile, and was reunited there with Nell, Cataldo and Rodríguez, Nell also having paid a trip to China in the interim period.

There, the Argentines came into contact with the fledgling Tupamaros of Raúl Sendic, helped train them and exercised an important formative influence on their conception of urban guerrilla warfare. Another influence on the Tupas, Spanish Civil War veteran Abraham Guillén, had already been in contact with Baxter in Buenos Aires in 1962, and his books on strategy, Teoría de la Violencia and Estrategia de la Guerrilla Urbana, written in 1965-66 owed a substantial debt to Tupa-MNRT discussions. In them, Guillén shared the MNRT's tentative idea of integrating guerrilla struggle with mass action in a "combined" strategy. [2]

Apart from discussion, MNRT work in Uruguay was devoted to promoting the unity of the member organisations of the Peronist Youth, which used Montevideo as a meeting place after the Onganía golpe. Moreover, they participated in Tupamaro bank raids until December 1966 when their brief romance with that organisation was ended by police persecution. Police investigations into an operation led to a shootout, followed by more raids and arrests, including that of Nell on 15th July 1967. This however was not quite the end of the MNRT. Baxter went on to contribute his military proficiency and assistance to the People's Revolutionary Army back in Argentina. He reportedly participated in their Sallustro operation before perishing in an air crash

---

1. Personal interview with former MNRT member, op. cit.
2. See James Kohl and John Litt, Urban Guerrilla Warfare in Latin America (USA: MIT Press 1974), p. 187; Abraham Guillén, Teoría de la Violencia (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jamcana, 1965); and Donald C. Hodges (ed.), Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla (New York: William Morris & Co., 1973), passim.

at Orly in July 1973, aged 32. [1] Caffati, after serving his sentence for the Policlínico raid, exercised both a military and political influence over the Peronist Armed Forces which he joined, and helped to mature the conception of the "independent alternative of the working class". José Luis Nell was to also have a politico-military influence, on the Montoneros in the early 1970's before joining the Leales (Loyalists) split-off early in 1974 and then, politically disillusioned, taking his own life in September 1974.

The fact that the leading cadres of the MNRT went on to intervene influentially in three different organisations is indicative of their lack of total political unity back in 1963-4 when the most solid cementing link was provided by their revolutionary methodology. This is borne out by the disparate literature read by members in the early 1960's, which included Hernández Arregui, Guevara and Leon Trotsky as well as the major revisionist historians. Further confirmation is provided by the recollections of a former MNRT militant with regard to that period. He recalled that even at that time Nell had been "muy monto", meaning that although he was occasionally ready to use elements of Marxist analysis, his political orientations were generally populist. According to his former colleague, Nell was always prepared to make pragmatic compromises with the objective situation at any given time. Baxter at the same time was characterised as a "political romantic" - his romanticism always provided him with an ephemeral relationship to any particular revolutionary theory, even though his ultimate self-definition was Marxist. [2]

---

1. Oberdan Sallustro, General Manager of Fiat-Concord, was kidnapped by the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) in March 1972 and killed the following month, after the government had prohibited the payment of a ransom by the company.

2. Personal interview, op. cit.

Tacuara influence upon the Montoneros also came via the New Argentina Movement, a tendency of the Catholic nationalist Right. Dardo Cabo, son of the metalworkers' leader Armando Cabo, became politically influential in the Montoneros as editor of their paper El Descamisado (1973-74) and as a leading member until his death at the hands of the military in January 1977. Coming from the Catholic Rightist organisation which produced the 'Condor Operation', as the Malvinas invasion was christened, Cabo never became one of the more leftwing Montoneros. Another Condor team leader, Alejandro Giovenco, stuck closer to his old ideas and moved into the semi-fascist University National Concentration (Concentración Nacional Universitaria - CNU) before accidentally blowing himself up in 1974. Other Montoneros, such as Fernando Abal Medina and Carlos Gustavo Ramus, passed through the mainstream Tacuara in the early 1960's at the age of 14. More important here though were the Catholic Action front organisations (the Catholic Working Youth, Catholic Student Youth and the Catholic University Youth) whose ideology was to a great extent echoed by Tacuara which, nevertheless, maintained its organisational independence and freedom of action to engage in violent activity.

As an organisation, the MNRT undoubtedly exercised a greater methodological than political influence upon the later politico-military organisations. They were never sufficiently politically united to go beyond an outline sketch of a revolutionary Peronist ideology. Yet these outlines are far too close, both linguistically and ideologically, to recent alternativista literature for their importance to be denied. The basic divisions were over members' attitudes to Marxism, between those with ideological motivation and those more preoccupied with combat itself, and, strategically, between those preaching foquismo and those urging an auxiliary role for their organisation in relation to

workers' struggles.

The strongest unitary commitment of the MNRT was to armed struggle. With the Resistencia as a background, the failure of Peronist insurrectionalism in the late 1950's and consequential turn of the leadership towards legal reformism, met by the military with annulment of election results in 1962 and with proscription in 1963, led the young Peronists of the MNRT towards foquismo. It was regarded as an almost magical solution which would galvanise the masses into action and militarily resolve internal Peronist contradictions, with revolutionary results. This hope was inherited by the more recent Peronist Left who subscribed to Perón's maxim, "against brute force, only intelligently applied force can be effective". [1]

Both in this methodological sense and through their tentative alternativismo, the MNRT were far more influential than analysts have suggested. Their foquismo was certainly naive and amateurish, and their conceptions were never fully elaborated, yet both represented important steps in the development of the Peronist Left. Its leaders covered a lot of ideological ground in progressing from "Long Live Christ the King, Long Live Rosas, Long Live Franco, Down with the Bolshies, Death to the Jews!" to the Programme of Huerta Grande, and laid some of the bases for further shifts to the Left on the part of later Revolutionary Peronists.

COMPANERO

> ".....mouthpiece of Revolutionary Peronism in the battle for Liberation" [2]

---

1. Perón, quoted in "Violencia Revolucionaria," op. cit.
2. M.R.P. Congress resolution, 1964, Compañero, no. 59 (11th August 1964).

Compañero, the main publication of the early revolutionary tendency, made its first appearance in June 1963 with Mario Valotta, Frondizi's former secretary, as its editor. Its theoretical importance, though rarely credited even by the later Peronist Left, cannot be understated for through its editorial columns ideas were propounded which were later to become common currency. Compañero voiced the views of the most radicalised sectors of Peronism of the time. It reflected as well as moulded the conceptions of young activists such as Armando Jaime [1] and Gustavo Rearte. Study of this weekly paper is therefore central to any understanding of the first revolutionary tendency and more specifically of the left-wing of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement.

The starting point for any evaluation of Compañero and its supporters must be its interpretation of background political events for the weekly's journalists developed their ideas through analysis of the political experiences of the Peronist Movement:

> "Concrete action, with its succession of victories and defeats - mainly the latter - is the principal school of the great liberation movements. There, in practice, the revolutionary line of Peronism was forged, then enriched afterwards through analysis of that experience and through theoretical exploration". 2

Certain conclusions were drawn from analysis of the practical limitations of the 1946-55 Peronist governments. They were seen as initiating a national liberation process but as being unable to complete it due to "internal contradictions within the popular forces". [3] Despite

---

1. Armando Jaime was a Peronist activist prior to 1955 and after the coup participated in Resistance comandos. He was a member of Cooke's National Command and a founder of the first Peronist Youth.
2. "No Habrá Perdón," Compañero, no. 71 (3rd November 1964), p. 1.
3. "Peronismo y Revolución," ibid., No. 17 (16th October 1963), p. 1.

the advances made with regard to industrialisation and the condition of labour, growing worker-bourgeois conflict had become apparent inside the Movement in the early 1950's, paralysing further progressive initiatives. In Compañero's view, only revolutionary measures could then have taken the Movement forward and it was partly in recognition of this that many bourgeois sectors had deserted Perón and the workers to support the 1955 military coup.

In explaining the 1955 defeat, the Compañero school of history thus focused not solely on oligarchic-imperialist subversion, as "orthodox" Peronists did, but also on the limitations of the Movement as multi-class movement. Indeed, as the economy declined in the early 1950's, it did become impossible to satisfy the demands of the component social classes of the Peronist Movement and erstwhile Peronist bourgeois did abandon the government. However, this valid interpretation of the Peronist fall was contaminated by the "revolutionary Perón" myth which also found its way into the weekly. For alongside the class analysis of the early Peronist decade appeared the presentation of Perón as a social revolutionary, prevented after the death of Evita from fulfilling his revolutionary mission by a circle of bureaucrats cutting him off from the masses. [1] To maintain this illusion, the Left one-sidedly stressed the intransigent postures of Perón in 1955 rather than his overall political zig-zagging course. Perón had swung one way and then the other, from compromise with his opponents to total confrontation and then back again in an attempt to maintain the unity of his Movement and his power through the use of demagogic acrobatics.

Compañero maintained that the hegemonic bourgeois sectors of the Movement had exhausted their liberation potential in the early 1950's.

---

1. Ibid.

In order for the Movement to maintain or recover its revolutionary momentum, the paper called for it to be reorganised on the basis of working-class leadership. Moreover, it pointed to the national bourgeoisie's closer ties with foreign capital as reflected in the oil compromises made during Frondizi's term of office. Both the industrial bourgeoisie, considered represented by the 1958-62 Frondizi government, and the middle classes, considered represented by the 1963-66 Illia government were seen as too weak to pursue an independent national development policy. In office they were both buffeted between the major forces contending for power, the oligarchy-imperialism bloc and the working class, and had generally ended up as allies of the former. In this sense they were not independent classes but dependent ones, this explaining their vacillating policies when in power. Sectors of the middle classes could, the Left argued, be won to the project of revolutionary Peronism, epitomised in the programme of Huerta Grande, but would have to accept working class hegemony in any alliance. On the other hand, "the big commercial, industrial and financial bourgeoisie" had passed into the enemy camp. [1]

Compañero urged a blank vote in the 1963 elections precisely because it was an inter-bourgeois contest which could not provide solutions to the problems faced by the popular movement:

> "the lame bourgeoisie is no threat to the oligarchic structures which must be destroyed urgently; it only aspires to become a junior partner in the share-out (of national wealth with imperialism). Its sole motive in seeking popular support is to use it as a bargaining counter, only to sacrifice the people's interests and those of the nation later on if that becomes necessary in order to safeguard their own interests". 2

It was in this rejection of bourgeois allies and in the view that only

---

1. "Falsa Opción," ibid., no. 1 (7th June 1963), p. 1.
2. Ibid.

the working class could provide strong and unwavering leadership in the liberation process, leading a front incorporating all sectors not compromised with foreign capital, that Compañero demonstrated its left-wing character, though the socialist implications of workers' leadership were never made explicit.

Peronism was characterised as the "political expression of the great majority of the working class" and as such was seen as a potentially revolutionary movement. However, this potential was not being realised and a revolutionary leadership, structure and political line had failed to emerge due to the bureaucratization of the "old structures of the Movement". [1] Valotta's paper argued that the presence of a conciliatory bureaucracy weakened the Movement qua revolutionary movement but envisaged the overcoming of this defect rather than the continued stifling of the Movement's potential. The idea presented of a superación [2] of internal Peronist conflicts, with the Movement developing onto a higher (revolutionary) level has much in common with the Marxian notion of dialectical development, but again the analogy was not made explicit in the pages of Compañero. In practical terms, it led the Left to call for a purge of the leadership, a thorough cleansing of the non-revolutionary elements, and their replacement by cadres drawn from the revolutionary wing of the Movement. In line with this demand and anticipating the later slogan of trasvasamiento generacional, they insisted that the Youth "must occupy the places left by the old opportunist politicians and the bureaucratised trade union leaders.... Only in this way will Peronism be an authentic revolutionary movement". [3]

---

1. "Reorganización para la Lucha," ibid., no. 16 (9th October 1963), p. 1.
2. Superación refers to an overcoming of contradictions, to a resolution of contradictions leading to a synthesis.
3. "Peronismo y Revolución," op. cit.

Thus the self-assigned task of the Left was to develop into the revolutionary vanguard which would replace the bureaucracy, and would become the dynamic nexus between Perón and his descamisados.

At times, Compañero analyses descended to the level of later movimientista analyses, making la burocracia the scapegoat for all the deficiencies of the Peronist Movement: "Only the absence of a clear-minded and consistent leadership has allowed the forces of privilege to survive". [1] However, to their credit, at other times its contributors, rather than pointing an accusing finger at the bureaucracy, acknowledged that the strength of the bureaucracy reflected "the immaturity of the revolutionary line" and that if the "domination of the apparatus by elements of bourgeois mentality" [2] was to be undermined, the Left had to win more support. The bureaucracy would get weaker only if the revolutionary wing grew in strength. At the same time, no analysis was made of the strength of economism and the reasons why support for the Left was not greater.

Certainly, most of the front-line leaders of the Peronist Movement in Argentina at the time were no revolutionaries, but the weekly provided no explanation of why, if they were "in the service of the enemy" [3] as it claimed, they had been able to maintain their positions over a number of years. Seeing the workers occupying their workplaces in 1964, it mistakenly deduced that the working class had attained a revolutionary political consciousness, that it had come to realise that "only the conquest of power through a revolution will enable it

---

1. "Dos Batallas Fundamentales," ibid., no 34 (18th February 1964), p. 1.
2. "Un Paso Atrás," ibid., no. 24 (5th December 1963), p. 1.
2. "Interesado Confusionismo," ibid., no. 32 (4th February 1964), p. 1.

to end with oppression and misery" [1] and, more often than not, that only the bureaucracy was holding the workers back. However, while it is true that in 1964 the union and political leaders of Peronism dragged their feet in refusing to hold May Day rallies, in doing as little as possible to achieve Perón's projected return and in suspending the Plan de Lucha before its intended finale, it was the bureaucracy, admittedly under pressure from the rank-and-file, which drew up the Plan de Lucha and to some extent directed the impressive occupations.

The Left explained this paradox by attributing the most machiavellian motives to the bureaucracy. On the basis of purely circumstantial evidence, Compañero in June 1964 denounced an alleged plot by imperialism, military coup-mongers, Frigerio and Vandor to destroy Peronism as a revolutionary movement. [2] According to the paper, the Plan de Lucha was intended by the bureaucracy not to secure workers' demands but as a battering ram to help bring down the Illia government through a US-backed coup; Perón would then be brought back to Argentina where a silver bullet from a CIA gun would await him; Vandor would then expect to inherit the Peronist Movement, as promised to him by his fellow conspirators; however, the Frigerio group, with Perón out of the way, would then settle their accounts with Vandor. Such was the supposed plot devised by Frigerio, Frondizi, Aramburu, US imperialism and the corrupted sectors of the trade union bureaucracy. The evidence consisted of examples of Vandorist treason to Perón (the suppression by

---

1. "Dos Batallas...," op. cit.
2. "Vandor se une a Frigerio: Pretenden 'eliminar' a Perón," ibid., no. 51 (16th June 1964), p. 3.

   Frigerio was Frondizi's delegate in the dealings with Perón which led to the Perón-Frondizi electoral pact. For his correspondence with Perón, see Ramón Prieto, Correspondencia Perón-Frigerio 1958-1973 (Argentina: Editorial Macacha Güemes, 1975).

him of Perón's 1963 order for a blank vote until just before the election and his refusal to recognise the four-man committee chosen by Perón and headed by Framini to reorganise the Movement); the political build-up given to Vandor in the pro-Frigerio reviews, Que and Primera Plana ; meetings of Vandor with military officers; and Vandor's displacement of Framini from the trade union leadership. The rest was pure speculation. Though the Peronist labour bureaucracy shared the antipathy of right-wing army elements to the Illia government, the idea of there being a plot to assassinate Perón was based on fantasy rather than hard evidence. [1]

Compañero's view of the battle lines being drawn between Perón and the masses in the revolutionary camp and the pro-imperialist forces, including the oligarchy, industrial bourgeoisie and Peronist bureaucracy, in the enemy camp was an oversimplification and partial distortion of reality. The bureaucracy could not be crudely reduced to a mere agent of imperialism and the local bourgeoisie, for although reformist rather than revolutionary, it did have significant differences with its supposed allies over questions like wage levels. Moreover, as well as being subject to pressures and influences from above, it must be remembered that it also came under pressure from its own rank-and-file. It could not therefore get away with persistently pursuing anti-worker policies and at times was compelled to lead workers' struggles for economic demands, as in 1964. Whatever the motives Vandorist leaders had in directing such a struggle, and even though they could surely have gone about their task more enthusiastically, the important fact

---

1. On the CGT campaign, see Jorge Correa, Los Jerarcas Sindicales (Buenos Aires: Editorial Obrador, 1974), p. 43; and for a Labour Ministry report on it, see Santiago Senén González, El Sindicalismo después de Perón (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1971), pp. 78-84.

is that they did lead such mobilisations and were therefore able to rest on the sufferance of significant numbers of workers.

It was true however that the major union leaders, once entrenched, had tremendous powers which rendered their peaceful, democratic replacement exceedingly difficult. Danny James has pointed in particular to their powers to interpret union statutes, which facilitated the expulsion of militants; the centralized, concentrated structure of the big unions, which enabled leaders to legally discipline member sections; the tremendous financial strength of the bureaucracy, derived in part from their percentage share in negotiated wage rises; bureaucratic control of union electoral procedures, which encouraged fraud and more commonly the banning of opposition lists of candidates; and finally, the support which union leaders often gained from the Secretary of Labour, which again enabled them to frequently act with impunity against rebels. [1]

Though not always the case, it is however necessary to criticise Compañero's tendency to regard the bureaucracy as monolithic and devoid of internal conflicts. These became especially apparent in late 1965 and early 1966 when a split appeared between the pro-Vandor unions and the pro-Perón 62 de Pie Junto a Perón. Rather than recognise inter-bureaucratic conflicts as such, Compañero referred to dissident displaced sectors of the bureaucracy as part of the revolutionary camp. Andrés Framini, for example, who was less radical then than ten years later, was solidly supported by the Left in the January 1964 Textile Workers' Association elections as the revolutionary candidate standing against the reformist bureaucracy. However, Framini was not totally identified with the perspectives of Compañero and the latter's support for him reflected the breadth and contradictions of the early Left. In mid-1964, in the

---

1. James, "Power and Politics...," op. cit., pp. 3-17; Coria, op. cit., passim.

way of self-criticism after being defeated by the Vandorists in the battle for control over the local Peronist apparatus, Framini confessed to departures from revolutionary consistency. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this episode, however, is the fact that the paper only referred to his vacillations and zig-zagging behaviour after Framini had himself admitted to such sins.[1] In other words, the tendency was prepared to back displaced sectors of the bureaucracy even though the latter often used the support of the revolutionary tendency for non-revolutionary purposes.

Underlying the oft-expressed view that the only obstacle to revolution in Argentina was the contemporary Peronist leadership, was the assumption that all the other components of a revolutionary situation were present and mature, even though these components were never enumerated. Again, the Compañero analysis must be challenged here for though the ruling classes were divided and workers were taking militant industrial action, there is no evidence that the mass of workers were motivated by political ambition, nor that there was a decisive shift of large sectors of the petty bourgeoisie towards the revolutionary camp. The weekly's contention that all the objective conditions for revolution existed and that only the subjective element, the vanguard, was still to emerge arose out of both the superficiality of its analysis of revolutionary situations (failing to differentiate between trade union and revolutionary consciousness, for example) and from the need to believe in short-term success for the encouragement of cadres. One cannot imagine any revolutionary organisation which holds out no promise of revolution for years to come winning many revolutionary recruits. It should also be noted that this fallacious contention, held also by many

---

1. "El Fin de la Farsa," Compañero, no. 58 (4th August 1964), p. 1.

non-Peronist groups considering themselves 'Marxist, is unmarxian in that it artificially separates objective from subjective factors, ignoring the fact that the subjective deficiency will generally reflect deficient objective conditions.

A final criticism which must be levelled against Compañero is of its characterisation of Perón as a social revolutionary. His decision and frustrated attempt to return to Argentina in 1964 was seen as an indication of his "profound identification with the masses". [1] His return, the Left argued, would be "in itself a revolutionary event" which would lead to the removal of the Marshalls of Defeat" (i.e. the local bureaucracy) and lead to a revolutionary liberation struggle. [2] Given that Perón had himself described his mission as one of "pacification", such illusions are hard to understand though their basis becomes clearer when other postures of Perón are taken into account. In 1963, worried by the ascendancy of Vandor, Perón had publicly charged the Vandorists with attempting to come to terms with the enemy and had in fact authorised a special committee led by Framini to reorganise the Movement in preparation for a more combative strategy, a move which failed to overcome Vandorist resistance successfully.

Indeed, one can cite many examples of Perón's supposed 'Left Turn' of the early 1960's, perhaps the most revolutionary-sounding item being his 1965 'Message to the Youth':

> "We are by no means trying to substitute one man for another but one system for another system. We are not seeking the triumph of one man or another, but the triumph of a majoritarian class, composed of the Argentine people: the Working Class".

---

1. "Un Desafío Histórico," ibid., no. 38 (11th March 1964), p. 1.
2. "Nuestras Consignas," ibid., no. 63 (8th September 1964), p. 1.

He warned his followers against the purported "revolutionary spirit" of the bourgeoisie, which died upon the seizure of political power, stopping short of social revolution, and ended with an assertion of "classism" as opposed to "polyclassism" when stating that:

> "Peaceful co-existence between oppressed and oppressor classes is impossible. We have posed the fundamental task of triumphing over the exploiters, even if they are infiltrated in our own political movement". 1

Compañero and the Peronist Left took such left-wing statements at face value, seeing in them a revolutionary definition by Perón, rather than a gesture to the Left as part of an overall pendular strategy. As a bonapartist par excellence, Perón sought to retain the social heterogeneity and political unity of his Movement by balancing between its component sectors, maintaining his personal authority through arbitration of internal conflicts and reconciliation or through the playing off against each other of warring factions. Nevertheless, he was always prepared to come down strongly on the side of one wing if the other was threatening to completely dominate the Movement. He therefore provided the Left with a degree of tactical support when the Vandorists, having gained control of the local leadership, began to challenge his authority.

In the light of Perón's leftist gestures, it was reasonable for the Left to try to make political capital out of them, given that they bestowed a legitimacy on the Peronist Left which enabled it to claim orthodoxy. This legitimacy and orthodoxy was of crucial importance due to the Peronist affiliation of most workers, but in such a personalistic movement it could not be obtained other than through the sponsorship of the Caudillo. However, one must question the political sophistication of Perón's left-wing supporters at this time, for they appear to have

---

1. Perón, "Mensaje a la Juventud," 20th October 1965, Militancia, no. 11 (23rd August 1973), p. 49.

genuinely believed in Perón's "Left Turn". It was not a question in the early period of the Left trying to use Perón for their own ends but of the Left believing in a "Perón" whom they had fashioned in their own image. Quite apart from his 1946-55 record, these supporters were surely naive in not questioning why Juan Domingo Perón, revolutionary leader of the Argentine proletariat, was accepting the fraternal hospitality of General Francisco Franco in Madrid.

Given the strong personalistic character of the Movement, "Peronism without Perón" was hardly a viable alternative, as the Vandorists were to discover. It must also be kept in mind that the early Peronist Left was not a body of socialists entering the Movement for recruitment purposes but were radical and revolutionary Peronists. They constituted the left-wing of the Peronist Movement but were limited in their leftism to the extent that they were Peronists - and vice versa. To the extent that they were left-wing, they looked to the rank-and-file of the Movement for a revolutionary superación; to the extent that they were Peronist, they looked to the non-revolutionary Perón for superstructural assistance. The contradictions of the Peronist Left lay precisely in the fact that they were a Left faction within a broad multi-class movement, a movement which placed great emphasis upon personalistic adoration.

Yet real alternatives to this contradictory position, in the period under consideration, are hard to imagine. Even Lenin had counselled his followers to work in mass workers' organisations, no matter how reactionary their leaderships:

> "If you want to help 'the masses', and to win the sympathy and support of 'the masses', you must....imperatively work wherever the masses are to be found"(and)"you must soberly follow the actual state of class consciousness and preparedness of the whole class (not only of its Communist vanguard), of all the

toiling masses (not only of their advanced elements)". [1]

The Peronist Left tried to do this but, as has been seen above, often fell into the trap of equating existing levels of working-class consciousness with that of Peronist radicals.

Almost insuperable problems faced left-wingers in the Peronist Movement: How to avoid obsequiousness in a movement which emphasised loyalty? How to criticise and put forward a clear alternative to Perón in a Movement which took its name from him? Even when, a little later, sectors of the Peronist Left saw through Perón's postures, they still felt a need to couch socialist appeals in Peronist rhetoric due to solid working-class support for Peronism. Due to the antipathy between Peronism and Socialism, this was bound to lead to a distortion of leftist intent in the form of major compromises in their dealings with Perón. They were forced to maintain that Perón was innocent of any complicity in the charges which they laid against the "old structures" of the Movement.

The Compañero analysis was then marred by its tendency to gloss over inter-bureaucratic conflicts, by inadequate consideration of what constitutes a revolutionary situation, by its failure to differentiate between militancy and revolutionary consciousness and by blind faith in Perón. On the other hand, its strategic support for class struggle objectively posed a threat to Perón's leadership and to his Movement as a multi-class movement. In terms of strategy too, it promoted revolutionary propagative and organisational tasks, to be conducted through consistent participation in mass workers' struggles. It resisted the temptations of foquismo, even though some of its supporters, like the

---

1. V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), pp. 44 & 57.

MNRT, were not so resilient. Indeed, its emphasis upon mass revolutionary activity as opposed to small group armed actions was strategically Leninist.

"Individual terrorism" (referring to armed actions by individuals or small groups which are divorced from mass struggles) was unequivocally repudiated:

> "to promote individual isolated acts of violence, without any plan and independently of the masses, is an attitude based on desperation and reveals, in the best of cases, a lack of understanding of the (revolutionary) process".

While mass violence was considered legitimated by the violence of the regime, individual violence was ruled out on grounds of ineffectiveness and its wastage of opportunities for mass struggle:

> "We feel that it is mistaken to anticipate events, transforming these actions into a policy which can only serve as a provocation, instead of using the possibilities offered by the period which we are entering in order to carry forward work of intense popular mobilisation around the objectives of the working class. In the final analysis, it leads directly through the road of defeat to conciliation with the enemy". 1

In other words, isolated armed actions were not only doomed to failure but would, by default, strengthen the reformist tendencies in the union leadership.

Though influenced by the Cuban Revolution in terms of seeing the mutual interdependence of national and social revolution, classical foquismo was clearly questionable (though not for the unfortunate People's Guerrilla Army) in a highly urbanised country with a powerful labour movement, especially in a period when there were great possibilities for surface vis-à-vis underground activity. Compañero pointed to two "deviations", one rightist and one leftist, in the labour movement:

---

1. "La Línea Justa," Compañero, no. 14 (10th September 1963), p. 1.

"conciliation with the enemy and isolated violence" [1] and here again one is reminded of Lenin's dictum about opportunism going hand-in-hand with ultra-leftism. [2] It was more fraternal in its treatment of the Left "deviation" than when denouncing Vandorist attempts to make deals with the enemy. The People's Guerrilla Army, for example, was defended against allegations that it represented foreign interference in Argentine political life, yet the weekly was equally firm in maintaining that "nothing permanent and definitive can be done outside of the mainstream of the real process of popular struggle which flows through the majoritarian movement". [3]

Apart from proposing a restructuring of the Peronist Movement and the creation of a revolutionary vanguard organisation, Compañero envisaged the construction of a broader National Liberation Front which would unite all anti-imperialist forces under revolutionary Peronist leadership. The formulation of the Front received little discussion since, quite correctly, the early Left felt that it was fanciful to hypothesise at length about an ideal liberation front while its intended spearhead, Peronism, was itself still deficient and incapable of a vanguard role. However, the dilemma was posed by Rodolfo Puiggrós during a Compañero interview when he argued that, though desirable and necessary, it was extremely difficult to "combine the breadth, which a great national movement must have, with the presence of an independent political leadership of the working class". [4] This problem was thus posed by the early

---

1. "Reorganización para la lucha," op. cit.
2. Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism...," op. cit., p. 17: "Anarchism was not infrequently a sort of punishment for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement. The two monstrosities were mutually complementary".
3. "Un Desafío Histórico," op. cit.
4. "El Peronismo debe darse una Conducción Revolucionaria," Interview with Rodolfo Puiggrós, ibid., no. 38 (11th March 1964).

Peronist Left but no real solutions to it were suggested. This was one area in which the first revolutionary tendency had little to bestow to later generations, though its insistence upon working class leadership of any front again demonstrates its radicalism for the period.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PERONIST MOVEMENT

"... in its day, it brought together and represented the best of Combative Peronism from all over the country"

Gustavo Rearte [1]

The Revolutionary Peronist Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista - MRP) was created at a foundation congress on 5th August 1964 in the headquarters of the Shoemakers' Union. An estimated 2,000 "delegates" [2] gathered to unanimously approve a Declaration of Principles, Revolutionary Manifesto and 10-point Programme, the Decálogo Revolucionario, documents which alongside the writings of Cooke provided the first fairly developed theoretical elaborations of Revolutionary Peronism. A message sent to the M.R.P. Congress by Héctor Villalón, Perón's personal delegate (or at least one of them), contained the official blessings of the leader who, alarmed at the challenge of Vandorism, had responded to the increase in mass militancy and Left-turn of some activists with a call for a revolutionary Peronist movement to be structured.

It was a typical Peronist Congress. In the worst traditions of Peronism, there appears to have been no democratic debate of the documents; merely their reading out by such people as Peronist Revolutionary

---

1. Gustavo Rearte, "Por que fracasó el M.R.P.," supplement to En Lucha, no. 18 (September 1974), p. 3.
2. "5 de Agosto: Jornada Histórica," Compañero, no. 59 (11th August 1964), p. 1.

Youth leaders Gustavo Rearte and Eduardo Salvide, followed by a positive show of hands. This was surely not the best way of trying to overcome political disagreements among the participants, even though it presented an appearance of unity to outsiders. Subsequent events demonstrated that Congress techniques designed to paper over the cracks only created a false unity which was soon to disappear. Yet the basic documents retain their validity and significance as the first coherent expression of a Left Peronist tendency, even if sectors of the MRP were not fully committed to them, as Gustavo Rearte recognised:

> "the formulations of these documents did not represent the theoretical-practical level of the MRP and of hard-line militants; only of their most advanced sector: JRP, A. Jaime". 1

The Declaration of Principles, written by Gustavo Rearte, posed the task of reconquering power in order to complete and extend the work of the 1946-55 Peronist governments. Their failure, following the Compañero analysis, was attributed to the role of the bourgeoisie and bureaucracy. Perón was exempted from criticism and there was also the implicit assumption that the working class were and are revolutionary at all times:

> "The failure to develop a national revolutionary structure to act as nexus between Perón and the people, a role filled so well by Evita, enabled the encirclement of the Peronist popular government by the bourgeoisie capitulating to imperialism. The latter's anti-national and counter-revolutionary ideology was able to penetrate (the Movement) thanks to the complicity of the conciliatory bureaucracy which from then on sold out the Movement and its leader".

The 1955 defeat was thus seen as the product of the "treason of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy of the Movement which prevented the constant extension of the transformations promoted by Perón" and the creation of the armed "workers' militias" encouraged by Evita. 2

---

1. Rearte, "Por que fracasó...," op. cit.
2. "Declaración de Principios," supplement to En Lucha, no. 18, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

In addition to the criticisms already made of the Compañero analysis and especially of the cerco myth, [1] a fundamental weakness of the analysis was that it centred upon the vacillations and desertions of leaders and failed to analyse the weaknesses of the Movement as a whole. Talk of "treason" implied that a real revolutionary alternative way forward was available to the Movement in 1955, and ignored the fact that no Left tendency had emerged and that internal class conflicts, though expressed over economic issues, found little expression at a political level. The reality was that the Movement as a whole, not just bourgeois and bureaucrats, was incapable of revolutionary tasks in that year. Furthermore, though one may agree that the working class always has revolutionary potential, it is surely erroneous to go on to argue that any movement with a mass working-class presence necessarily has that same potential. Though the analogy is inexact, it is rather like arguing that the British Labour Party has a revolutionary potential due to its worker base; that only its reformist leadership is holding it back from realising its "true" i.e. revolutionary potential.

This viewpoint involves a schematic distinction between the leadership and rank-and-file which was not so pronounced in practice. Though conflicts of interest existed, they did not produce a political contradiction. The power and behaviour of the bureaucracy reflected the weakness of socialist ideology among the union rank-and-file. The radicalism of the MRP lay in its perception that the bourgeois sectors of Peronism had exhausted their progressive capacity and that only the working class had a genuine interest in social revolution, but it mistakenly

---

1. A cerco, in Peronist usage, refers to a wall or cordon of bureaucrats or traitors encircling Perón and denying him direct contact with the masses. Cercos were accused by the Peronist Left of distorting Perón's orders and of misinterpreting popular feeling to Perón. Peronists view the leader-mass symbiosis as a revolutionary relationship - hence the importance of the cerco in preventing its realisation.

confused workers' objective interests with their actual level of consciousness in the early 1960's - "they consider revolutionary struggle in all its forms as the only way of achieving the return of Perón and conquering their liberation". [1] In order to win Perón's support for their political project, MRP militants presented their own political stance as the orientation of the working class as a whole and probably believed that this was so.

Though the Declaration of Principles shared Compañero's analysis of Peronism and its belief in a revolutionary superación of internal contradictions, there was a difference in emphasis when it came to revolutionary methodology. While Compañero spoke of mass struggles and insurrections, the MRP document displayed some militaristic tendencies in its pronouncement that the people would:

> "reply blow for blow to reaction with its own weapons. From now on, we will know how to utilise armed struggle as the supreme method of political action"..."the people must oppose the regime's army of occupation with their own armed forces and workers' militias, which will enable them to win and defend their victory afterwards".

What form the popular armed forces were supposed to take was never clarified though it seems that the M.R.P. envisaged either a mass armed struggle or some kind of military organisation serving the needs of the mass struggle, rather than foquismo:

> "The axis of action must be the total mobilisation of the people until it reaches a level where each man becomes a militant..." "the revolution will be made by the masses and nothing can replace them in this action". 2

It would seem then that some MRP militants envisaged the type of problems faced by subsequent practitioners of armed struggle - fundamentally their isolation from the labour movement - but failed to reconcile the need for

---

1. "Declaración de Principios," op. cit.
2. Ibid.

a military response to military repression with the problems associated with militarily organising a labour movement which, in general, viewed guerrilla warfare as alien.

The Manifiesto Revolucionario also saw the need to fuse armed struggles with mass struggles, to overcome the isolation of foquismo and the military powerlessness of most mass mobilisations, but it was posed at such an abstract and general level that no solutions to this critical problem were provided:

> "To create the popular armed forces which will enable us to fight on all terrains against the army of occupation. For this, it must be totally integrated with the Argentine masses and free of caste interests and privileges..."

The MRP itself, according to the Manifesto, was to be organised according to the principles of "revolutionary centralism", [1] though whether this meant democratic centralism or a radical version of verticalismo and digitismo was not spelt out. [2]

Among the MRP aims set out in this document were nationalist objectives like the assertion of national sovereignty vis-à-vis imperialism, internationalist aspirations such as the desire for Latin American unity and support for Perón's slogan of the "International of the People", and the implicitly socialist wish "to definitively finish with exploitation and social injustice". The document also anticipated trasvasamiento generacional in its aim "to give the Argentine youth the battle post which they merit so that they can contribute to the structural revolution in progress".

---

1. "Manifiesto Revolucionario," ibid., p. 3.
2. Verticalismo refers to the Peronist principle of authority and command, according to which all Peronists are expected to obey orders emanating from the leader; digitismo refers to the leader's powers to nominate lesser officials, as opposed to the latter being elected by the rank-and-file of the Movement.

This did not signify any illusions in a purely generational solution to the problems of the Peronist Movement, but rather envisaged the promotion of militant Peronist Youth activists to the leadership, replacing older conciliatory bureaucrats. Perón's own position, however, was in no way challenged. He was deemed the undisputed leader of the Movement which would struggle to "wrest power from the privileged classes" and "set up the revolutionary State". [1]

Finally, the MRP approved a radical programme in the form of its Decálogo Revolutionario. This proposed the nationalisation of all key sectors of the economy, including monopolistic interests and all companies dependent upon foreign capital. The landed oligarchy was to be deprived of its land, without compensation, and an industrialisation project was to be launched in accordance with a State plan. Moreover, the programme provided for educational reforms and expansion, an urban reform, the socialisation of medicine and workers' control of production. [2]

The Programme had much in common with that of Huerta Grande but went further in its call for all monopolies to be taken over by the State. National capital was to remain, and indeed be aided by the State, at the level of medium- and small-sized concerns, but presumably was also to be required to fall in line with State plans and to be further constrained by workers' control over production. Deep State inroads were to be made into capitalism, resulting in a mixed economy with a decisive public sector. However, as it stands, it cannot be characterised as a complete socialist programme for it said nothing about the destiny of the old State nor of the physiognomy of the revolutionary State. This

---

1. Ibid.
2. "Decálogo Revolucionario," supplement to En Lucha, no. 18, op. cit., p. 4. See also Appendix B on "Early Radical Peronist Programmes".

question is of vital importance due to the predominant role attributed to the State after the seizure of power: who would control the State apparatus and how would it be structured? Would it be just a revamped version of the former Peronist State only with revolutionaries in control or a new form of State based upon popular organisations? Such questions would appear to be crucial in determining whether the MRP programme should be characterised as socialist, as a revolutionary nationalist programme of state capitalism, or something else. Unfortunately, the Decálogo had nothing to say either about the State in general or about the future of its armed apparatus in particular, so one is forced to conclude that in spite of the radical orientation of this and other MRP documents, the Movement's perspectives for the future were never fully thought out, possibly due to the internal conflicts which held back the development of the MRP.

Apart from approving these three basic documents, which were to become part of the heritage of the Peronist Left, the Congress selected a leadership led by General-Secretary Nicanor Leyes, which, though it included Jaime and Salvide as Executive Secretariat members and Gustavo Rearte as a National Member, was not dominated by the most revolutionary sectors. Furthermore, three resolutions were passed: one of them condemned frentismo (attempts by the Peronist bureaucracy to form an alliance with those sectors of the bourgeoisie linked to imperialism), another backed the Plan de Lucha as part of the struggle for "the return of the Leader and for National and Social Liberation", and a third one, proposed by Héctor Villalón in his message to the Congress, stated that "from now on, Compañero will be considered as the mouthpiece of the MRP", and as the "updated expression of the thought of General Perón.[1]

---

1. Mensaje del compañero Héctor Villalón," Compañero, no. 59, op. cit., back.

Compañero, in turn, lauded the foundation of the MRP as a great step forward, but warned that it still had many difficulties to overcome. Quite correctly, Valotta pointed to "important contradictions within the structure just created" and referred to "the factious attitude of a sector which only yesterday was arm-in-arm with the conciliatory bureaucracy and which looks to purely electoral objectives". [1] Though no names were named, the charge that reformists and opportunists co-existed, not particularly peacefully, with revolutionaries in the MRP has much validity. Displaced sectors of the bureaucracy as well as earnest, but not revolutionary, hard-line Peronists backed the MRP as a means of putting a spoke in the wheel of Vandorism, not because they identified with the radical MRP programme.

The Congress saw the Left riding on the crest of a wave with nobody seeing the rapidly approaching trough: Perón's prompt disauthorisation of the MRP, aborting it before it could take on flesh. For Perón, the creation of the MRP was a brilliantly successful, if short-lived, tactical ploy. It did not eliminate the Vandor threat once and for all (as the 1965 Avellaneda Congress was to demonstrate) but did temporarily bring the Vandorists to heel. Alarmed by the new "revolutionary threat" and fearful of being outflanked on the Left, Vandor, Iturbe, Parodi and Carvalli rushed off to Madrid to make peace with Perón. On August 25th, they returned and jubilantly presented Peronist Superior Command resolutions signed by Perón to the press. In oblique references to the MRP, they explained that their leaders' counter-signature had been necessary due to "divisionist and confusionist manoeuvres" and the activities of those who falsely invoked Perón's authorisation. [2]

---

1. "5 de Agosto," op. cit.
2. La Razón, 25th August 1964.

These resolutions, dated August 20th, recognised the Justicialist Party as the sole political organisation of the Peronist Movement, the Peronist Superior Command as the tactical leadership in Argentina and Alberto Iturbe as Perón's delegate. At the same time, their purpose was

> "to disauthorise the so-called Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista, set up under the inspiration of Héctor Villalón, who does not belong to this Comando, nor to the Peronist Movement, and also its mouthpiece, the weekly Compañero". 1

In this way, the "official" existence of the MRP was terminated after only 15 days, patronage being withdrawn as soon as it had served Perón's immediate purpose. The head of Janus had turned full circle.

Perón's disauthorisation of the MRP and Villalón quickly brought the latent contradictions within the MRP into the open. The MRP suffered heavy losses when many of the reformist sectors, including trade union organisations, abandoned it in order to defend their sacred Peronist "orthodoxy". Villalón himself temporised, causing the Left to break with what was left of the MRP, a rump organisation which continued to exist but lost its political significance. When in February 1965 Villalón refused to organise a blank vote campaign for the elections, the Left created an alternative leadership to conduct such a campaign and rally the Left MRP forces. They were encouraged in thinking that they would carry Peronist militants with them by the 17th October 1964 rally in Salta, at which 10,000 people warmly applauded revolutionary speeches from Peronist Youth leaders Armando Jaime and Juan Carlos Salomón, and gave Peronist "oligarchs" Tomás Ryan and Cornejo Linares a hostile reception. 2

The Left, especially the Peronist Revolutionary Youth, organised

---

1. Ibid.
2. "Salta: La Juventud en Marcha," Compañero, no. 71 (3rd November 1964), p. 6.

a Plenary of Revolutionary and Young Peronist Organisations which took place on February 6-7th, 1965 to proclaim the blank vote for the March elections. This was its immediate tactical purpose but those involved also hoped that the Plenary would be the first step towards creating a more organic revolutionary Peronist tendency which would be more effective in challenging the bureaucracy's authority in the labour movement. What they feared was that the bureaucracy would take advantage of workers' frustration over the Plan de Lucha defeat (called off, according to the Left, when on the brink of victory) to repeat the 1963 attempt to forge an alliance with Frigerio's supporters, subordinate the Movement to the latter's objectives and doom it to remain a "sleeping giant". [1] The blank vote, it was hoped, would not only repudiate a fraudulent regime, (elected by only 25% of the voters) but also challenge the scheming bureaucracy, shatter its cerco separating Perón from the masses and provide a rallying point for the Left.

Apart from launching the blank vote campaign, also sponsored by Compañero, the Conference elected a National Command and a Central Command to organise it. The Left had much firmer control of these organs than they had exercised over the old MRP leadership. Jaime, Rearte and Valotta gained seats on the 8-man Central Command, and the Peronist Revolutionary Youth provided two of its members and two out of three of its substitute members (Salvide and Lafleur). However, if one examines the list of participants, one notices the absence of MRP comandos from such important places as Córdoba and Tucumán and the presence of only three workers' groupings (agrupaciones). It was largely a youth conference with the Peronist Revolutionary Youth playing the leading role. [2]

---

1. "Declaración y Resoluciones de la Histórica Asamblea," ibid., no. 77 (2nd fortnight of February 1965), p. 3. The decline of the MRP was reflected in Compañero becoming a fortnightly early in 1965.

2. Ibid.

Whereas 2,000 delegates had attended the founding conference of the MRP in 1964, six months later the blank vote conference only attracted 118. [1] In the elections, the call for a blank vote only attracted 4.2% of the voters, as opposed to 24.7% when it was the official Peronist line in 1957. [2] Moreover, attempts to unify the youth, student, secondary student and politico-military organisations got no further than the attendance of Peronist Youth Movement and Justicialist Secondary Students Grouping delegates at the 1964 Peronist University Youth Congress and declarations of solidarity. Though represented at the blank vote conference, the MNRT was rapidly disintegrating under the impact of police repression following the Policlínico operation. Clearly then, both the MRP rump and the coalition of revolutionary MRP and Peronist Youth groups had been greatly weakened by the desertion of most of their former trade union allies following Perón's disclaimer.

It is to the credit of Rearte that he publicly acknowledged the weakness of his tendency: "We have no false illusions with regard to the quantitative support for this (blank vote) slogan"..."We are conscious of the organic weakness of our line", and hence its weak appeal to workers when counterposed to the instructions of the powerful union bureaucracy. The decisive factor in the reversal of Peronist Left fortunes had been Perón's U-turn, which led the centrists (in Peronist terms, those wavering between the bureaucracy and the revolutionary line) to shift their support to the electoralist position of the bureaucracy. Rearte denounced the:

> "objective collaboration of those who out of weakness, prejudice or opportunism remain undefined and adopt sheep-like positions which they try to justify on the grounds of discipline and unity".

---

1. Rearte, "La Única Respuesta Válida," ibid., p. 3.
2. Canton, op. cit., p. 73.

Yet this denunciation did not rest solely on a politico-moral repudiation of the bureaucracy. Rearte recognised that the strength of the latter was a product of the weakness of the Left - "Only the present weakness of the revolutionary forces has enabled, and still does, this game of the bureaucracy". [1]

All that the Left could do now was resume the day to day mundane work of consistent agitation, propaganda and organisation. Having suffered from a decision of the Leader, the Left now placed less hope in him giving them a hand up into the leadership of the Movement. As Rearte now put it:

> "a revolutionary leadership cannot be nominated, it pushes itself to the forefront during a process and in the struggle against weak, vacillating, temporising and opportunistic elements".

He did not however see it as politic to question Perón's vacillating, temporising and opportunistic recent behaviour. One must remember that leftist concessions from Madrid were again on the cards following Vandorist attempts at the Avellaneda Congress to don long trousers and proclaim the arrival of "Peronismo sin Perón" (Peronism without Perón). Because Perón still held the trump cards, Rearte, along with the rest of his tendency, felt obliged to reaffirm that "our permanent objective is the return of the Chief of the Movement to bring about the social revolution called for by the descamisados with Perón". [2] The Left could afford to oppose the bureaucracy even when it was tactically backed by Perón, due to the hostility of militant workers towards some union leaders, but they could not abandon the mass aspiration for the return of Perón.

Perón himself, seeing the weakness of trade union support for the left-wing, discarded the possibility of again using the Youth and MRP

---

1. Rearte, "La Unica...," op. cit.
2. Ibid.

Left as a counterweight to the Avellaneda challenge of Vandorism. Instead he opted for the displaced sectors of the bureaucracy and promoted the creation of the 62 de Pie Junto a Perón, led by Alonso, which had the advantage of being able to fight Vandor from within the union movement. His support secured victory for the Alonso faction at the March 1966 Peronist Congress in Tucumán where both the line of the Peronist Revolutionary Youth (which participated in the 62 de Pie) and an allegedly "adventurist" policy put forward by Villalón were defeated. [1]

Finally, the Onganía coup of June 1966 stimulated further divisions within the already disintegrating tendency. The Peronist Revolutionary Youth broke completely with the more reformist MRP groupings who in turn fell out with Villalón. The latter was deposed as General Secretary in September 1966 and then expelled in May of the following year for "bad Peronist behaviour". [2] Most sectors of Peronism have since dismissed Villalón as an "adventurer", he having at times been Castro's representative and a dealer in Cuban tobacco, and at other times involved in shady deals and alignments with the Peronist Right. In 1977, his name was linked with the kidnapping of the Fiat chief in France, Luchino Revelli-Beaumont, as was that of Horacio Rossi of Policlínico fame. [3] A more recent report claimed that he led a Peronist deputation which held a short meeting with Admiral Massera in Paris early in 1978. [4] Villalón was replaced in the MRP leadership by Ricardo de Luca under whom, despite a little support in Córdoba and among the La Plata Peronist Youth, it died a lingering death, in practice abandoning the radical

---

1. Rearte, "Por que fracasó el M.R.P.," op. cit.
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 14th July 1968.
3. Guardian, 3rd August 1977.
4. "Infiltración, alianzas y fracaso de los militares," Denuncia, Organ of the Movimiento Antiimperialista por el Socialismo en la Argentina, MASA (New York), May 1978, p. 3.

MRP documents of 1964 to the small Peronist Revolutionary Youth.

WHY THE MRP FAILED

The political failure of the MRP and early Peronist Left in general has, somewhat surprisingly, been barely analysed by their heirs. Obviously, these early left-wing initiatives predated the cognitive political experience of most members of the more recent Left Peronist groupings. In the case of those with knowledge or experience of the earlier tendency, their silence on the matter probably stems from the need they felt to continue to present Perón as a revolutionary in order to present themselves as genuine Peronists. At the same time, this pretence is one of the main reasons why the few critiques which do exist tend to be highly superficial.

For the MRP rump, for example, a mere shadow of the original organisation after 1965, the early MRP had suffered from "internal contradictions", "limitations", lack of intensive rank-and-file work and the absence of a solid infrastructure. [1] No explanation of these undoubted blemishes was offered. Another critique, written by Gustavo Rearte after he had formed the 17th October Revolutionary Movement, penetrated deeper but still cannot be regarded as wholly satisfactory. Rearte was one of the few to learn and openly recognise that Perón's 1963-4 call for the creation of the MRP, while a counterblast to Vandorism, did not constitute a revolutionary definition. The Perón-Vandor conflict had been conducted within the parameters of the existing social system: Vandor had sought to "transform the Movement into a political party to represent the workers under the existing regime" whereas Perón's return and the

---

1. "El MRP fija su posición en la hora actual," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971), p. 49.

implementation of his "own capitalist project" required a change of regime. Vandor's integrationist plan required the destruction of the Movement's "hard-line" while Perón's demanded both a "hard" and "soft" line, both the revolutionary and bureaucratic sectors. [1]

Rearte's analysis helps explain why Perón backed the Left in 1963-64 and also why he withdrew that support in August 1964 for fear of completely losing control of the dominant trade union leaders. Having originally believed that "Perón had understood the need for a revolutionary leadership", Rearte and his Peronist Revolutionary Youth colleagues learnt from this experience that "Perón was not prepared to break with the bureaucracy, although he was prepared to let the "hard line" develop. This critique also acknowledged the disunity within the MRP, seen as a federation of three main factions, each with a fair degree of independence. Firstly, there were "the militants of the hard-line and the organisations which they created" (Rearte himself and his Peronist Revolutionary Youth; Armando Jaime and his Peronist Youth of Salta, etc.). A second faction was composed of labour leaders from small unions and the unions of the Interior (Ricardo De Luca of the Naval Construction Workers' Union, Mario Aguirre of the Rosario State Workers' Association, Atilio Santillan of the Tucumán Sugar Industry Workers' Federation, etc.). Finally, there was a small group of vaguely left-wing politicians like Villalón, "an adventurer dedicated to international dealings", and Valentín Luco.

Despite a strong revolutionary presence in the first faction, the other two groups brought a strong reformist influence into the MRP. They backed the MRP while it possessed Perón's sponsorship but withdrew or temporised when he changed tack. Most of them went on to support the

---

1. Rearte, "Por que fracasó el M.R.P.," op. cit.

62 de Pie - a means of fighting the Vandorists within the labour movement where the bureaucracy had its power base. These deep divisions explain why the MRP never reached full programmatic and strategic unity and this was reflected in the vagueness of the documents on key issues. The MRP never lived up to the radical 1964 documents as a Movement, for they only really expressed the ideas of its left-wing, and Rearte learned from the MRP failure the inadvisability of "putting revolutionary intentions into the hands of a reformist leadership".

Rearte had hoped that joint political activity with militant trade unionists would lead to revolutionary conversions, in accordance with his principle of "equal experience, equal consciousness". After the event, however, he began to speak of the "uneven development of objective consciousness", [1] and saw that not all people react in the same way and at the same time to common experiences. He abandoned the idea of forming MRP-style federations and devoted the rest of his life to an attempt at building a Revolutionary Peronist party. Thus the experience was crucial in the political development of Rearte and other Left MRP cadres, being instrumental in their shift from movimientista strategies, which viewed the Peronist Movement as a whole as potentially revolutionary, towards the ideas of alternativismo, orientated towards the building of Revolutionary Peronist organisations on the basis of working-class and non-bourgeois, non-bureaucratic sectors of the Movement.

The Rearte critique has its value in pointing to the main weaknesses of the MRP but as a causal explanation it tends to be tautological. The failure of the MRP to develop into a strong revolutionary organisation was mainly put down to the strength of reformism, whereas what needed explanation was why reformism was so strong in the Peronist Movement,

---

1. Ibid.

not only in the Vandorist clique but also in the displaced sectors of the bureaucracy which found expression in the 62 de Pie. Such an explanation would seem fundamental to any articulation of realistic perspectives and strategies for the Left in the 1960's. Here, the various factors referred to in the introduction to this chapter are highly relevant and had the early Left paid more attention to such an analysis, they might have avoided the trap of equating militant economistic struggles with the existence of a revolutionary proletariat.

Moreover, it must be said that Rearte and the Left only drew partial lessons from the MRP experience. They came to recognise the strategic ambivalence of Perón, a result of his attempt to maintain the unity of his diverse multi-class Movement. However, they then attempted to take advantage of this ambivalence by referring to Perón's quasi-revolutionary rhetoric and gestures in order to justify their own ideas and behaviour. This necessarily involved portraying Perón as a revolutionary and thus strengthened the illusions of many workers in his ability to resolve problems.

Perón had certainly demonstrated his opportunism but sectors of the post-MRP Left tried to take advantage of this in an opportunistic fashion. The promotion of Perón's revolutionary image by these sectors involved them in dishonesty, which rarely aids the Left in the long-term. Moreover, there was a fundamental contradiction between the short-term tactic (support for a "revolutionary" Perón) and their long-term strategy (the creation of a revolutionary party based on the workers). Though Perón had demonstrated that he might be used in the short-term, he had also shown his unreadiness for a definitive shift to the Left. For these reasons, one could argue that the Peronist Left should have drawn more radical conclusions from the MRP experience, should have recognised it as a failure for the Left and therefore should have dispensed with their

dependence upon Perón. Undoubtedly, this would have led to years of political isolation from the mass of workers, but would have enabled the Left to be more principled and consistent.

Nevertheless, the MRP experience was a crucial milestone in the evolution of the Peronist Left, though it influenced different tendencies in different ways. Movimientistas, like the Montoneros, took up the documents of the MRP [1] but ignored the strategic and tactical lessons which the earlier experience had offered. Indeed, though they took up the slogan socialismo nacional, they never progressed beyond the ideology which was implicit in these documents. In turn, alternativistas, like Rearte's Peronist Revolutionary Youth, not only carried forward and developed the MRP programme but also learnt the need for a class-based strategy and organisation.

The experience also illustrated the tremendous authority of Perón among Peronist activists and this was the major factor which prevented alternativistas from breaking with him in the 1960's, even though their support for him was logically inconsistent with alternativismo in its purest expressions. It was an experience which left its mark on Peronist Left history, but it must be emphasised that the left-wing Peronists of a decade later could have devoted more attention to an analysis of its failure. Had they done so, numerous political errors might have been avoided.

---

1. See for example, "Documento: Hablan los Montoneros," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970), pp. 11-14.

CHAPTER IV.

'MOVIMIENTISMO': THE MILITARY FRONT

MOVIMIENTISMO, ALTERNATIVISMO AND CLASISMO

The Peronist Left of the last decade has been far from politically homogenous. Its supporters have differed over the nature of the revolution being sought and the means of achieving it but most have adhered to one of two major tendencies: movimientismo and alternativismo. Movimientismo refers to that section of the Peronist Left which regarded the Peronist Movement almost in its entirety as the instrument of the Argentine national and social revolution - i.e. the bearer of both full national independence and socialism. Those who held this view, movimientistas, claimed that all the social sectors of Peronism were capable of playing a progressive and even revolutionary role during the present "stage" of the revolution. There were though, they believed, a number of "traitors" who had infiltrated their way into the leadership of the Movement and who would have to be eliminated, by political or military means, so as to facilitate the emergence of a more representative leadership. For the movimientista Left, this would consolidate working-class hegemony over the Peronist alliance of social forces whose basic composition was accepted.

Movimientismo had its roots in the belief that the "principal contradiction" affecting Argentina was that which counterposed imperialism to the nation. From this starting point followed the view that an anti-imperialist stage was the next indispensable step in the revolutionary process and that during this phase it was both correct and desirable for the workers to join forces with the national bourgeoisie against the oligarchy and imperialism. There was nothing particularly "national" here - for all the talk about socialismo nacional, this current inherited ideas

on stages and alliances which had been peddled by Communist Parties for four decades. The "national" element was rather provided by this tendency's identification with the revisionist school of history and its orientation towards the Peronist Movement.

For the movimientistas, it was the duty of the Peronist Left to fully participate in the Movement, attempting to win control of as many positions as possible. In this way they hoped to gain the full support of Perón whom they felt would be impressed by evidence that they had the greatest powers of mass mobilisation. Most believed that Perón was now truly committed to an Argentine road to socialism, whereas those with doubts considered that if the Left could conquer broad sections of the Movement and key structures, Perón would be obliged to go along with them, at least part of the way, in seeking to maintain the unity of the Movement.

Though the struggles for national and social liberation were seen as closely interrelated, the movimientista Left viewed the achievement of each as being temporally distinct - national liberation would be achieved as part of the process towards socialist revolution though it would only be truly consolidated with the arrival of the latter. During this process, as the tasks of the Movement were modified, they saw a need for its composition, leadership and structures to be changed and adapted until the Movement was completely dominated by the revolutionary and working-class sectors. This they regarded as entirely possible, Peronism's supposed capacity to adapt from national to socialist struggle being ascribed to the fact that the working class had always been the major component or "backbone" of the Movement.

These views were sustained, to a greater or lesser extent, by the political and guerrilla organisations analysed in this and the following

chapter. By far the most important of these were the Montoneros and their Peronist Youth collateral organisations. Others like the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), National Revolutionary Army (ENR) and the Shirtless Commandos (Comandos Descamisados) were also of some significance - particularly the FAR - in the early years, but by 1973 all had become integrated into or had fused with the Montoneros.

Though the alternativista organisations are the subject of the final chapter, in a negative way it will help provide a clear conception of movimientismo if its counterpart alternativismo is defined here. The alternativistas had a totally different view of the Argentine revolution and of the role of the Peronist Movement to that of the larger movimientista tendency. Whereas the latter portrayed a battle scene in which the contending forces were imperialism and oligarchy versus national popular forces, the alternativistas stressed class alignments and antagonisms. Domestically, they rejected the movimientista oligarchy-people counterposition and argued that the so-called "national bourgeoisie" had more in common with foreign capital than with the working class. That being so, they held that alliances with them were either impossible or dangerous for the labour movement. Pointing to the way in which foreign-based corporations had come to dominate key dynamic sectors of Argentine industry, the alternativistas concluded that the anti-imperialist struggle was in itself an anti-capitalist struggle and vice versa.

The implications of alternativismo were to lead to a far more critical stance towards Peronism than that adopted by the movimientistas. They viewed it in class terms as being a once-progressive alliance between the national bourgeoisie and working class with the former being the dominant partner. Given the increasingly close association between national and foreign capital since 1955, alternativistas regarded such alliances as being outmoded - anti-imperialist struggle had gone as far as

it could within capitalist confines and now could only be pursued by a worker-led movement committed to a socialist transformation of society, both in Argentina and throughout Latin America.

On this basis, Peronism could not be seen as a revolutionary movement in recent years, either in a national or social sense. The alternativistas therefore rejected the movimientista strategy of participating in the structures of the Movement and attempting to win control of it. Moreover, in its purest form, alternativismo rejected the leadership of Perón, characterising him as historically representative of the national bourgeoisie and as such no longer progressive. As will be seen, when conformist political pressure was at its height in the months running up to the March 1973 elections, only a minority of the alternativistas proved to be "purists". Part of the tendency was to cross over to the Montoneros in mid 1974 and soon afterwards the remainder either abandoned Peronism for good, to swell the ranks of the non-Peronist guerrilla, or redirected their energies to work in anti-bureaucratic labour alliances.

The Peronism of this tendency was more tactical than strategic and more a recognition of reality than an ideological choice. Though they saw most of the shortcomings of Peronism from a revolutionary criterion, the alternativistas recognised the reality of massive working-class identification with Peronism. They also realised that the working class learns more from its own experiences than from political propaganda offered by social outsiders. Their conclusion was that Argentine revolutionaries had to accompany the workers in their Peronist experience and had to formally adopt the workers' political identity while at the same time constantly pointing out the limitations of Peronism as far as the labour movement was concerned, drawing lessons from lived experiences. Through such activity they hoped to build up within Peronism

the nucleus of a workers' party and revolutionary army, prepared to break with Peronism completely once the revolutionary tendency had attracted most of its labour base to the idea of building an "independent alternative of the working class".

Thus the alternativistas were concerned with working alongside the Peronist workers while refusing to confer left-wing legitimacy on the Movement by participating in its apparatus. They worked amongst the workers in the factories and poor barrios but had little to do with the official movement, fearing that revolutionary participation would not only be unproductive but would also make Peronism appear as more radical than it was. Whereas the movimientista Left felt that Peronism could move onto a higher revolutionary plane through internal dialectical development, the alternativistas had no faith in an ultimately bourgeois movement undergoing a socialist metamorphosis.

By far the most prominent alternativista organisations were the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) and their sister group Rank-and-File Peronism (PB), though smaller tendencies like the October 17th Revolutionary Movement (MR17) also played a crucial role in the formulation of alternativismo. A final difference between the two main currents of the Peronist Left was that whereas movimientistas in most cases were late arrivals to the Peronist Movement, the alternativistas had much deeper historical roots going back to the Resistance years and their ideas to a great extent had been fashioned through involvement in the day-to-day struggles of Peronism in opposition.

Alternativismo occupied an intermediate position between the movimientistas and the non-Peronist revolutionary Left. Most prominent among the armed expression of the latter was the People's Revolutionary

Army (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo - ERP),[1] though in the early 1970's the Armed Forces of Liberation (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación - FAL) also managed to sustain a fairly continuous guerrilla campaign. Both the ERP and the alternativistas were clasistas, in that they promoted class struggle orientated towards a socialist revolution, but whereas the latter tendency shared the Peronist identity of the mass of workers, the former believed that any compromise with Peronism would only serve to reinforce workers' illusions in the bourgeois Perón.

The ERP had been created in July 1970 as the armed wing of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores - PRT), a small party which had emerged out of the Trotskyist Workers' Word tendency (Palabra Obrera) in 1965. Under the impact of the Cuban Revolution and other international guerrilla successes, factions within Palabra Obrera, led by Angel Bengochea,[2] and then within the PRT, led by Luis Pujals and Mario Roberto Santucho, had been converted from strategies of armed insurrection to foquismo. That methodological change appears to have been decisive in the displacement of Trotsky by Guevara as the major ideological inspiration of the "combative" PRT faction and then of the ERP. In 1973, the PRT-ERP broke with Mandel's Fourth International, criticising its "petty-bourgeois character" and "its refusal to proletarianise".[3] In fact, the ERP was no less petty

---

1. For a more extensive analysis of the ERP, see my paper, The E.R.P. - An Obituary?; and my "Armed Struggle in Argentina," in Antonio Herrera and Hernán Rosenkranz (eds.), Revolution and Reaction in Latin America (forthcoming).

2. Bengochea's proto-guerrilla, intended as an urban support force for Masetti's People's Guerrilla Army, was destroyed when its arsenal blew up in a Posadas Street apartment house in 1964. Bengochea and other leaders were killed in the blast.

3. "Por Qué Nos Separamos de la Cuarta Internacional," El Combatiente (Buenos Aires), no. 86, (17th August 1973), pp. 6-9.

bourgeois than the International, though this did not prevent Ruben Bonet, a combatant killed in the 1972 Trelew massacre, from claiming that they and the other guerrillas were "the proletariat in arms". [1]

In many ways, the ERP evaluation of Peronism was similar to that of the alternativistas. It pointed to the ultimately bourgeois nature of the Peronist leadership and to the conversion of the national bourgeoisie into a junior partner of imperialism. No national or social revolution could therefore, it was argued, be expected from Peronism which, the ERP accurately predicted, would rapidly resort to repressive methods to stem the class struggle when in office. Though somewhat crude, the ERP critique provided a realistic assessment of the potential of Peronism as an agent of change. However, it made no concessions to the fact that the mass of workers supported Peronism and formed part of that Movement. The ERP demonstrated great military proficiency in the early 1970's but never successfully tackled the problem of how revolutionaries could undermine workers' Peronist loyalties.

The ERP thus remained dangerously isolated from the mass movement, especially in 1973 when it ignored popular wishes for a period of political democracy in which legal mass activity would be feasible. While millions of workers expressed support for Peronism in the elections of March and September, the ERP maintained its guerrilla campaign with only minor modifications in its choice of targets. Kidnappings of executives in that year provided this Guevarist guerrilla with around 30 million dollars in ransom money but did nothing to overcome its isolation from the mass of workers. The latter was further accent-

---

1. Bonet, quoted in Francisco Urondo, La Patria Fusilada (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Crisis, 1973), p. 132.

For details of the social composition of the ERP, see Appendix A.

uated in 1974 when the ERP shifted its zone of operations to the rural province of Tucumán.

There, after early victories when only faced with police opposition, the ERP was gradually weakened by the Army after its local support base had been removed through the burning of villages by the military, Army intimidation of the local population and the forced resettlement of villagers in controlled zones. A final dramatic attempt to restore ERP fortunes through a move back to urban warfare had disastrous consequences. Around 100 ERP combatants lost their lives in a high-powered attack on a military garrison in Monte Chingolo, Buenos Aires Province, in December 1975, many allegedly shot after surrendering. Few significant ERP operations were mounted early in 1976 and the deaths of Commander-in-Chief Santucho and other members of the ERP general staff in July of that year signified the end of the organisation as a viable combatant force.

Since the focus of this thesis is on the Peronist Left, further discussion of the ERP will be limited to the problems encountered by those who attempted to unify the Peronist and Guevarist guerrillas. The remaining chapters examine the origins, development and decline of the two principal component tendencies of the Peronist Left. For reasons of analytical convenience, the analysis of each will be divided into separate sections dealing with the guerrilla and political organisations, though of course these categories were not mutually exclusive in practice. There is some justice in the claim made by Argentine guerrillas that their organisations are "politico-military organisations", in terms of their tasks. Moreover, many individuals participated in both the political and military wings of their tendencies. However, since specific organisations were either predominantly political or military in their functions, such a subdivision is legitimate and also helps to bring some

coherence into the jungle of organisations which participated in the recent history of the Peronist Left.

THE MONTONEROS

"MONTONEROS, MONTONEROS
SON SOLDADOS DE PERON
LOS TRAIDORES TIENEN MIEDO
TIENEN MIEDO DEL PAREDON"
"PERON, EVITA, LA PATRIA SOCIALISTA"
- Montonero chants [1]

The original 12 Montoneros who announced their existence to the world in March 1970 were mainly young men who had previously been active in Catholic and Nationalist organisations. Though it is not possible to identify all of the originals, examination of the backgrounds of the leaders and "martyrs" of the early years reveals five main lines of entry into the organisation. The core group was composed of the radicalised Catholics analysed in the second chapter (Abal Medina, Ramus, Maza, Capuano Martínez and Firmenich, the first two originally being tacuaristas) who had been preparing for armed struggle since 1967, the year in which the Catholic Student Youth President, Mario Firmenich, abandoned his studies as an engineering student. They had been radicalised and 'peronised' by the influence of the new ideas in the Church as well as by the general political and economic factors which led a significant section of the petty bourgeoisie leftwards in the late 1960's.

A second group came from the popular nationalist groups of the

---

1. Translation: Montoneros, Montoneros,
Are Soldiers of Perón.
The Traitors are Afraid,
Afraid of the Execution Wall.
Perón/Evita/The Socialist Fatherland.

Other Peronist Left slogans, chants and songs can be found in Jorge Pinedo, Consignas y Lucha Popular en el Proceso Revolucionario Argentino, 1955-1973 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1974), passim.

Onganía period and early 1970's, such as the Argentine Youth for National Emancipation (Juventud Argentina por la Emancipación Nacional - JAEN) and the Nationalist Student Front (Frente Estudiantil Nacionalista - FEN). Their nationalism, reflecting the prevailing mood of the period, was more popular than that of most previous nationalist tendencies, though some of their activists had earlier been in right-wing organisations. JAEN leader Rodolfo Galimberti had begun his political life in the non-radicalised wing of Tacuara. Among the leading Montoneros coming from this university-based popular nationalism was Fernando Vaca Narvaja, whose wife Susana Lesgart was to be killed in the Trelew massacre of August 1972.

Thirdly, there was a nationalist element which originated well over to the Right and was slow to move to the Left, even after integration into the Montoneros. Dardo Cabo, son of the trade union leader Armando Cabo, started as an extreme right-winger leading the New Argentina Movement (MNA), a Tacuara splinter group. In 1966, after being in charge of Isabel's bodyguard during her visit to Argentina, his group hijacked a plane to "invade" the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands, backed up by violent Tacuara solidarity actions on the mainland. After serving three years for this enterprise, Cabo appears to have been the organiser of a group which specialised in liquidating Peronist "traitors" before affiliating to the Montoneros. Even by 1973, when editor of the latter's organ El Descamisado, Cabo was not to reveal himself as the most radicalised Montonero.

A fourth line of entry into the Montoneros came from the traditional Left, especially from the Communist Party and its middle-to-late 1960's radical youth splinters such as the Revolutionary Communist Party (Partido Comunista Revolucionario - PCR). The most prominent product of the former party was Nelida Ester ('Norma') Arrostito,

wife of Carlos Maguid, who after leaving the party in the mid-1960's and visiting Cuba in 1968 became one of the original Montoneros and a leading member until killed by the security forces after the Videla coup. Those who came from the PCR were militants disillusioned at the failure of that party to live up to its early rhetoric about armed struggle and who saw it gradually drifting to the Right. Later it was to support the government of Isabel Perón.

Finally, and perhaps most important in terms of the creation of the Montonero support base and periphery, there was a fifth group which derived from the Peronist Movement itself. This group of revolutionary Peronists contained men of proven and longstanding trade union militancy such as José Sabino Navarro and José Enrique Carral. Sabino Navarro [1] had been a car worker at the Deca car factory and became a member of its comisión interna (shop stewards committee) in the mid-1960's. He had participated in the anti-bureaucratic campaign which took Kloosterman to the leadership of the Carworkers' Union (Sindicato Mecánicos y Afines del Transporte Automotor - SMATA) and it was only after the new leadership had betrayed its combative mandate and supported his sacking that Sabino Navarro abandoned trade union struggle for armed struggle in 1969.

Carral's Peronist pedigree went back much further. Born of Peronist parents, this railway worker participated in the Peronist Resistencia, the 1964 trade union Plan de Lucha, the 62 de Pie Junto a Perón and the 1968 CGT of the Argentines. His union activities, which included the organisation of a revolutionary group of young railway

---

1. On Sabino Navarro, see "José Sabino Navarro: un Trabajador, un Montonero, un Peronista," El Descamisado, no. 12 (7th August 1973) p. 30; and "Montonero José Sabino Navarro. Volverás en Brazos de tu Pueblo," La Causa Peronista, no. 4 (30th July 1974), pp. 9-11.

workers in the mid-1960's, had always been accompanied by violent direct action. Originally a Resistance bomber, then the bomber of Labour Minister San Sebastian's house in 1967, Carral eventually joined the Montoneros in 1971. Like Sabino Navarro, he was sacked for his union militancy in 1970 and then devoted himself completely to armed struggle until being killed in February 1973 after "expropriating" cars in Lanus. [1]

These five currents, three of them variants of nationalism, one from the traditional Left and the other from Peronism itself, were the principal political components of the early Montoneros who, as will be seen, were to grow rapidly through a process of organisational mergers as well as individual recruitment. Socially, the limited data available, which deals only with leaders and "martyrs", strongly indicates that a majority of the early Montoneros came from a petty-bourgeois background. [2] In part, the radicalisation of significant sectors of this class in the late 1960's and early 1970's had roots in their socio-economic decline since 1955. [3] This led significant numbers to question a system which had previously satisfied their needs and they began to look towards the labour, popular and left-wing movements in the hope of finding a common solution to their problems at the expense of monopoly capitalism. [4]

---

1. On Carral, see "Paco: Dió la Vida por Perón," El Descamisado, no. 40 (19th February 1974), p. 23.
2. See Appendix A.
3. This is the thesis put forward by Peralta Ramos, op. cit.; Oscar Braun, El Capitalismo Argentino en Crisis (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1973); and Elsa Cimillo et al, Acumulación y Centralización del Capital en la Industria Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1973), though it has not yet been quantified.
4. For an account of the reaction to Onganía's economic policy, see Ernesto Laclau, "Argentina - Imperialist Strategy and the May Crisis," New Left Review, no. 62, (July-August 1970), pp. 3-21.

However, the explanation cannot be left at the level of economic statistics. Political factors also played a prominent role in the radicalisation of petty-bourgeois youth. The numerous splits suffered by the old Radical Party (Unión Cívica Radical - UCR) and traditional Left, to whom the petty bourgeoisie had previously given substantial backing, were more often than not reflections of the disillusionment of their younger members with the old parties' leaders and policies. Moreover, with the military takeover led by Onganía in 1966 and its immediate ban on party political activity, petty-bourgeois youth was forcibly denied its traditional forms of political expression. It was driven towards challenging the system which denied it access and in confronting the highly unpopular military government, many youths changed their political identity to that of the only real opposition force - the Peronist Movement.

Of crucial importance here was Onganía's university policy, which awakened and radicalised many formerly liberal, reformist and conservative students and also some academics. The 1966 military intervención of the University of Buenos Aires (i.e. the governmental appointment of a trustee to replace the former university authorities) led to a major purge of liberal academics, police invasions of university campuses and fierce repression of student protests. Within three years the outcome was clearly seen in the student-worker unity, almost unheard of in Argentine history, which materialised in the streets and at the barricades during the provincial uprisings of 1969.

There was also the impact of the new ideas within the Catholic Church, the emergence of revolutionary ideas within the Peronist Movement and the external impact of Cuba, all of which have been discussed above. Though the Guevarist ideological influence was less important

than in the case of the non-Peronist Left, Montonero recruits from the Revolutionary Communist Party were ardently pro-Cuban and a number of leading Montoneros including Abal Medina did visit the Caribbean island in the late 1960's. For the movimientista Left, the importance of Cuba was more methodological than political. However, there were also domestic factors which help to explain the attraction of guerrilla warfare in this period. It was a response not only to the violence of the Onganía regime but also to the political stalemate in the struggles between Peronism and anti-Peronism. In a situation characterised by Cooke as "a regime unable to stabilise itself but with sufficient material power to survive and a mass movement powerful enough to submit it to constant harassment but not to overthrow it", [1] armed struggle was seen as the catalyst which would help to overcome the stalemate.

A militant trade union response was not open to most of the young radicals due to their social origins and, in some cases, tender age. For those who had been workers, attempts in this direction had been frustrated, as seen in the failure of Ongaro's General Labour Confederation of the Argentines (CGT de los Argentinos) to successfully undermine the power of the big union bosses and to develop into a revolutionary instrument. Moreover, the Cordobazo, the student-worker insurrection which took place in the industrial city of Córdoba in May 1969, led many radicals to consider that street battles and barricade fighting were not enough to defeat the armed forces of the State. [2]

The Montoneros were to claim that their politico-military

---

1. Cooke, Apuntes para la Militancia, op. cit. p. 29.

2. On the Cordobazo, see Beba Balvé et al, Lucha de Calles, Lucha de Clases (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Rosa Blindada, 1973); and Francisco J. Delich, Crisis y Protesta Social (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1974).

organisation was the solution to the defects of the above initiatives, for it offered workers not only a political leadership but also an embryonic revolutionary army. Their choice of urban guerrilla warfare rather than a Leninist strategy.has to be seen in the light of the failure of the Argentine Communist Party, the main party claiming Lenin's mantle, to offer a genuine revolutionary alternative to the young radicals. Like the smaller Socialist Party reformist splinters, the Communist Party had by this time postponed the struggle for Socialism, seemingly indefinitely, and was still repeating its tired old slogans about "the democratic, agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution".[1]

The proliferation of both Peronist and non-Peronist armed organisations in the late 1960's is thus partly to be explained by the fact that whereas there was a radicalisation of broad sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, the main political organisations of the Left did not offer them a revolutionary way forward. It was largely the anti-Peronist stance of the Communist Party coupled with its departures from, while still invoking, Leninism which not only alienated the young radicals from that party but also led them to reject Leninist revolutionary theory. Moreover, the reformism of this main traditional Left party and the Stalinist methods it used to prevent change from within, as well as the example of guerrilla successes in other countries, all contributed to the attraction of guerrilla warfare theories which promised short-cuts to the revolution.

Here, interesting parallels can be drawn with Lenin's explanation of the rise of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and their terrorist methods

---

1. Programa del Partido Comunista de la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Anteo, 1963), p. 2.

in Russia. He criticised the Socialist-Revolutionaries for failing to understand the basic defect in the Russian revolutionary movement at the turn of the century:

> "Because of the extremely rapid growth of the movement, the leaders lagged behind the masses, the revolutionary organisations did not come up to the level of revolutionary activity of the proletariat, were incapable of marching on in front and leading the masses".

He went on to warn that armed struggle was an illusory way out of this dilemma since it would mean "not only thereby breaking off work among the masses, but also introducing downright disorganisation into that work". [1] The Montoneros, however, were to exhibit no indications of Leninist influence.

The core group of the original 12 Montoneros were the radicalised Catholics. They spent two years between 1967-9 planning operations and preparing for action, this being vital to their survival and success although professionalism was not immediately attained. Later, the survivors were to admit that they had behaved in an "almost suicidal" manner - "We went about in stolen cars, without any kind of papers. We didn't even have false documents. The only one who had was Fernando". [2] "Fernando" was Abal Medina who, after receiving military instruction in Cuba in 1967, was the one to suggest that Montoneros be the name of the group. Seeking a name, rather than initials, with both political and folkloric significance in Argentine history, they decided to adopt the name of the gaucho followers of the 19th century caudillos who resisted the authority of Buenos Aires and British influence. The word montoneros

---

1. V.I. Lenin, Revolutionary Adventurism, 1902 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), p. 11.

2. "7 de Setiembre - Día del Montonero," El Descamisado, no. 17. (11th September 1973) pp. 5-8.

had originally been used by the landed oligarchy to denigrate these small regional armies, montón meaning a mob, but the term was taken up proudly by nationalists in the same way as descamisados (shirtless ones) was in the 1940's.

Most members were trained through minor armed actions aimed at accumulating money and arms. In actions such as the seizure of arms from the Federal Shooting Range of Córdoba in February 1969, the proto-Montoneros, "in order not to be detected, pretended to be common delinquents in each one of the attacks on police stations and banks". [1] As an organisation, they played no part in the 1969 Cordobazo but this event along with the rural guerrilla failure at Taco Ralo in 1968 confirmed their conviction that armed struggle had to take place primarily in urban areas, Argentina being at least 70% urban populated. Rather than await new cordobazos, the embryonic Montoneros structured themselves as "an indispensable instrument for being able to hit the enemy continually". [2]

Structurally, the Montoneros were compartmentalised into a series of fighting comandos which originally took names such as "Eva Perón", "San Martín", "Uturuncos" and "May 29" (date of the Cordobazo), representing continuity with the past symbols of nationalism and popular struggle. Later, Montonero comandos were christened predominantly with the names of slain Montoneros. These were the fighting units of the organisation which was also structured along functional lines, there originally being a "maintenance department" (responsible for acquiring vehicles and logistical aid for operations), a "documents department" (providing false military and police documents, enabling freedom of

---

1. "La Unidad de FAR y Montoneros," ibid., no. 22 (16th October 1973), pp. 6-7.

2. "Córdoba: A Cinco Años del 29 de Mayo, un Montonero Cuenta el Cordobazo," El Peronista, no. 6 (28th May 1974), p. 26.

travel), a "war department" (which planned kidnappings, holdups, etc.) and a "psychological action department" (responsible for preparing declarations and communiqués).[1] Given that the Montoneros numbered no more than a score by the end of 1970, one can see that their aparatismo (the proliferation of military and political apparata with correspondingly large numbers of officers) goes right back to their origins.

Geographically, the original Montonero base centred on two key cities, Buenos Aires, from where Abal Medina directed the organisation, and Córdoba, where Emilio Maza was the local comandante. For those early members coming from relatively comfortable social backgrounds, the move into clandestinity involved a major wrench from previous living conditions. The early Montoneros, in Córdoba at least, lived a miserable existence, their daily diet being an unappetising combination of Knorr stock cubes and rice![2]

Ten out of the original twelve participated in their first public operation, the kidnapping and execution of ex-President Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, an action subsequently referred to as the Aramburazo. The Montoneros' sense of history, at least of Peronist history, was shown in the choice of May 29th for this Operativo Pindapoy, it being the first anniversary of the Cordobazo as well as Army Day. Aramburu was tried on a number of counts, the main ones being his authorisation of the shooting of Peronist rebels in 1956, his repression of the Peronist Movement while President and the spiriting away of Evita's corpse. Apart from wanting to submit him to "revolutionary justice", Aramburu was singled out because of his conversion to the view that there had to be elections

---

1. Buenos Aires Herald, 6th July 1970.
2. See "Montonero Emilio Maza: La Calera," La Causa Peronista, no. 2 (16th June 1974), pp. 22-23.

with Peronist participation. The early Montoneros did not believe that an electoral solution was possible. To them, Aramburu's scheme, which anticipated that of Lanusse by almost two years, was seen as a greater danger than Onganía's repressive government, for it sought to integrate the bulk of the Peronist Movement, care of its more conciliatory leaders, into a quasi-democratic system, isolating the revolutionary wing and also, so the Montoneros thought, Perón.

Since Aramburu was at the time conspiring against the Onganía regime, some of the former's supporters suggested after the Aramburazo that there had either been collaboration between the Montoneros and the state intelligence services or that the latter alone were responsible, with the Montoneros merely serving as scapegoats. In support of the former thesis, it was alleged that Firmenich had been a regular visitor to the Interior Mininistry in May 1970. [1] Supporters of the second interpretation, on the other hand, pointed to the failure of Aramburu's relatives to recognise captured and killed Montoneros and to the way in which, during the persecution which followed, the police appeared to make no attempt to take cornered Montoneros alive. The Montoneros roundly denied the allegations and later provided a detailed account of the operativo.[2]

Though definitive proof is absent either way, it seems highly unlikely that the Montoneros collaborated with the government, given that their political project of "national" socialism was antagonistic to everything that Onganía represented. They were not, as some writers have assumed, still right-wing Catholic nationalists in 1970 who only

---

1. Próspero Germán Fernández Alvariño, Z. - Argentina, El Crimen del Siglo (Buenos Aires: Published by the author, 1973), p. 279.
2. "Cómo Murió Aramburu," La Causa Peronista, no. 9 (3rd September 1974), pp. 25-31. The article was used by the government as a pretext for banning this Montonero publication.

moved to the Left later. Their earliest policy statements were if anything more radical than those of later years, though Catholicism was still very much present in their Communiqué no. 4, which informed the nation of Aramburu's death and ended with "May God have mercy on his soul". [1] The Montoneros also wrote a letter to Cardinal Caggiano, justifying their act to him as "an act of higher revolutionary justice".[2] Amateurism, which could have proved fatal, was also present in the first Montonero blow - Aramburu was not held in a top security people's prison but at the Timote estancia owned by the parents of Carlos Gustavo Ramus, one of the participants.

In the midst of arrests which deprived them of valuable members and supporters, the Montoneros then had to launch a second spectacular blow, even though it may have seemed practically over-ambitious, in order to demonstrate that they could sustain a continuous campaign and that the apparently powerful enemy was vulnerable. For this purpose, the Córdoban town of La Calera was occupied on July 1st, in emulation of the Tupamaros' Pando operation. Though the town was successfully occupied for an hour, communications cut and a bank relieved of 100,000 new pesos, as in the Uruguayan case the withdrawal went wrong. Police pursuit ended with the shooting of Emilio Maza and 12 arrests in Córdoba. Worse was to come on September 7th when, due to a subsequently admitted failure to take "elementary safety precautions", [3] police surprised four Montoneros in the La Rueda pizza house in William Morris. Founder and leader Abal Medina was killed alomgside his longstanding friend Ramus in the ensuing gun battle, during which Luis

---

1. Ibid., p. 31.
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 13th June 1970.
3. "Documento: Hablan los Montoneros," Cristianismo y Revolución no. 26 (November-December 1970), pp. 11-14.

Rodeiro was captured and Sabino Navarro managed to escape.

By the end of 1970, the Montonero sections in Buenos Aires and Córdoba had suffered heavy losses and an incipient third group in Santa Fe had not yet got off the ground. For several months the Montoneros were forced into hiding in a handful of houses in their two main cities. One act of treason could have finished the organisation then and there, though the availability of alternative Peronist Left guerrilla organisations suggests that the general course of history might not have been substantially altered.

That the Montoneros survived this critical period was due to several factors which favoured them. Firstly, the military regime was already beginning to disintegrate and repressive policies were being tempered by the search for a political solution to the problems affecting Argentina. Onganía, whose days had been numbered ever since the Cordobazo, fell immediately after the Aramburazo. His successors, Levingston and then Lanusse, were unable to unleash the full repressive force of the state against "subversives" while seeking to prepare the ground for a transfer to moderate civilian rule.

Secondly, the Peronist affiliation of the Montoneros provided them with much needed protection and aid. Unlike some of the other guerrilla organisations, they were able from early on to count on significant surface support, especially from Peronist Youth groups. This showed the regime that the solution to "subversion" demanded something more than rooting out a few "terrorists". The deaths of Ramus and Abal Medina gave rise to the first pro-Montonero demonstration by 1,000 youths in the Barrio Casas shanty town. Subsequently, September 7th went into the Peronist Left calendar as the "Day of the Montonero", a date on or near which there were annual demonstrations to record the

memory of these two leading figures. Ramón Cesaris, like Abal Medina, Ramus and Firmenich an alumnus of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, became a further "martyr" when a tear-gas grenade was fired into his face from a few metres away during the 1972 homage. It was that shooting which inspired President Lanusse to comment that "from today, young people will know that we don't carry guns for show". [1]

Thirdly, the original nucleus of twelve was strengthened by the affiliation of and cooperation with other guerrilla organisations. The first group to join was Sabino Navarro's small band during the first half of 1970. Though his literary tastes were limited to Fanon, Perón and Evita, Sabino Navarro had been a leading participant in the two important Congresses of Revolutionary Peronism in 1968 and 1969 which debated whether objective conditions were "ripe" for armed struggle. The first brought together names like Cooke, Gustavo Rearte, Alberte (Perón's delegate), Di Pasquale, De Luca and Lucero whereas the March 1969 Córdoba meeting was broader, with even extreme right-wingers like Brito Lima trying to get in but being excluded on the grounds that he was a "police agent". [2] The participants were to become known as the Revolutionary Peronist Tendency, but in fact lacked the coherence to stay together.

A tripartite split which occurred at the Córdoba conference reflected the major dividing lines within the Peronist Left of the time. The two minority factions were the remains of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (MRP) and Rearte, both calling for further political organisation of the working class before guerrilla warfare was essayed, and a trade union faction attached to the CGT of the Argentines which

---

1. Lanusse, quoted in Ignacio González Janzen, Argentina: 20 Años de Luchas Peronistas (Mexico: Ediciones de la Patria Grande, 1975), p. 103.
2. "Montonero José Sabino Navarro. Volverás...," op. cit.

urged the promotion of militant trade unionism. Sabino Navarro was a leader of the majority grouping which appealed for the immediate initiation of armed struggle, an appeal which for the most part was no more than verbal bravado. Sabino Navarro was forced to form his own group for this purpose in 1969 without the support of the verbal guerrillas.

Sabino Navarro's group brought to the Montoneros a degree of practical political experience, vital political contacts and military proficiency. Is members were much better trained than the original Montoneros, some of whose cadres like the doomed Maza lacked any military training at all. They trained the Montoneros and their leader reorganised the Córdoba section before becoming overall leader of the Montoneros soon after the death of Abal Medina. Sabino Navarro played an important part in rebuilding the organisation after its near collapse of late 1970 but he too was to die a young man's death. In July 1971 he was killed at the end of a three-day gunbattle in the Córdoba hills, reputedly surrounded by several hundred troops and policemen.

In addition to the incorporation of Sabino Navarro's tiny group, the Montoneros were the beneficiaries of a process of convergence with other Peronist guerrilla groups, seen in the formation of a weak coordinating body called the Peronist Armed Organisations (Organizaciones Armadas Peronistas - OAP). As will be seen below, this process eventually led to the integration into or fusion with the Montoneros of nearly all the Peronist "special formations" and the winning over of major sectors of the others. Thus the Montoneros were able to survive the repressive aftermath of the Aramburazo which claimed the life or liberty of most of the original twelve. Luck also helped them - Norma Arrostito, who had participated directly in the Montonero trial of Aramburu as prosecutor, was acquitted when she was subsequently tried by the regime's courts. A further irony was that one of her judges,

Ambrosio Romero Carranza, had signed a statement of homage to Aramburu.

Although the Montoneros claimed that the Aramburazo was "the first military deed carried out by a revolutionary organisation which implied a political definition in itself", the suggestions of Montonero collaboration with the State security services which followed obliged them to clearly define their political position through a number of documents and interviews. In a document issued at the end of 1970, they stressed their historical continuity with the national and popular struggles of the past, identifying themselves with all the usual heroes of historical revisionism plus all the symbols of post-1955 Peronist revolt, from General Valle's military rising of 1956 to the Uturunco guerrillas of 1959-60. Apart from references to "traitors", no political differentiation appeared to their Peronist hagiography, the Montoneros maintaining that:

> "one cannot speak of a division of the popular forces into Left and Right because the combative sectors of Peronism continued seeking the revolutionary path, differentiating themselves increasingly from the negotiating and blackmailing bureaucracy". 1

Though the logic of this argument is obscure, what is evident is that the Montoneros failed to discriminate between those sectors fighting for a mere return of Perón to power and those seeking a socialist transformation. Ignoring class analysis, their view of Peronism being composed of a bureaucratic and a revolutionary tendency reflected their prioritisation of methodology over ideology. The revolutionary tendency for them was made up of those who had struggled, through coup attempts, general strikes and especially guerrilla warfare, irrespective of ideology and political objectives.

Three characteristic Montonero features can also be seen from

---

1. "Documento: Hablan los Montoneros," op. cit.

this document. The first is their superficial and distorted appreciation of Peronist history - the 1964 "Return Operation" was dated 1965 and in portraying Perón and Framini as revolutionaries, Perón's volte-face with regard to the 1964 Revolutionary Peronist Movement and Framini's anti-communist declarations of the early 1960's were ignored. Secondly one can see the presence of 'the primacy of politics' in the Montonero assertion that the main feature of Argentine society was a "Peronism/Anti-Peronism contradiction". Thirdly, their tercermundismo also appeared in a reference to Perón being "the leader of the Movement and of the liberation struggles of the peoples of the Third World". [1]

Finally, the Montonero strategy was defined as one of:

> "popular war (leading to) the seizure of power and the construction of 'national' socialism in which the three banners of Economic Independence, Social Justice and Political Sovereignty will be made a reality".

They dismissed the possibility of an electoral solution to the Argentine crisis ("either there will be no elections while General Perón lives or there will be elections without Perón"), but in espousing the armed road did not reduce their strategy to "a mere confrontation of military apparata". Through organising on all fronts - political, military, trade union and student - they hoped that armed struggle and mass struggles could be successfully combined, "mutually feeding and maintaining each other". Exactly how the different forms of struggle were to be integrated so as to avoid guerrilla isolation and how urban guerrilla warfare was related to the "accession of the workers to power" was never dealt with. However, in declaring that "our struggle is just the armed continuation of the political struggle of our Movement", [2]

---

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

it was implicit that the function of the Montoneros was considered fundamentally a military one, with the other tasks of the overall strategy being left in the hands of the Peronist Movement as a whole. This meant that the success of the combined strategy of popular war, seen as that of the Peronist Movement and not only of themselves, depended upon the Movement and Perón being as revolutionary as the Montoneros believed them to be.

In an interview conceded early in 1971, it became clear that the Montoneros felt that the rest of the Movement would play their part, it having allegedly lost most of its bourgeois and bureaucratic sectors through a post-1955 process of social and political darwinization. The "traitors" in the Movement were dismissed as completely lacking in representativity, but this did not explain why they seemed so secure in their positions of authority. Most of the early Montonero definitions were compatible with the radical rhetoric of Perón but a couple of qualifications must be made here. Firstly, while Perón left his socialismo nacional vague, the Montoneros filled the notion with a socialist content when calling for "the destruction of the capitalist State and its army"; and secondly, they were never to agree on the Third Position. Though Perón expanded this concept to relate to Third World struggles, he never abandoned his idea of the "two imperialisms". The Montoneros refused to accept the latter orthodoxy, restricting their Third Position to "active ties of solidarity with the peoples of Latin America, Asia and Africa, those of the so-called Third World exploited by colonialism and imperialism". [1]

When in the early 1970's Perón engaged in activities directed

---

1. "El Llanto del Enemigo," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971), pp. 70-73.

towards an electoral solution, the Montoneros remained blind to the real strategic and political differences they had with their leader. In November 1970, Perón promoted the "Hour of the People", a joint declaration which brought together Balbín's Radicals, the Popular Conservative Party, Progressive Democratic Party, Argentine Socialist Party and the bloquista Radicals of San Juan with the Peronists in a call for elections. In the months which followed, the group issued a series of joint policy statements of a moderate nationalist-reformist nature, which eventually formed the basis for the victorious 1973 Justicialist Liberation Front (FREJULI) electoral alliance. In no way were these political programmes socialist, nor could they be given the social composition of the parties which drafted them, yet the Montoneros managed to find a revolutionary rationale for Perón's reformist behaviour.

For the Montoneros, the "Hour of the People" was just an example of their wily leader engaging in a:

> "tactical manoeuvre designed to keep the regime sitting at the negotiating table while the Movement develops its organisation and methods of struggle in preparation for the next steps in the war". 1

They attacked Paladino, Perón's delegate in charge of this policy, for confusing strategy with tactics but subsequent events were to show that it was the Montoneros themselves who mistook Perón's strategy for his tactics and his tactics for his strategy. Perón's stratagem of claiming innocence and non-authorisation when his delegates, fulfilling his orders, aroused the wrath of an important section of his Movement, worked remarkably well.

Minor doubts which the Montoneros had over the "Hour of the People"

---

1. Montoneros: "Las armas de la Independencia hoy están apuntadas hacia el Pueblo," ibid., no. 30 (September 1971), pp. 13-15.

dealings were swiftly swept away by an exchange of correspondence with Perón. In a letter of February 1971, delivered by Ongaro, they spoke of the pact being "tactically correct" but expressed doubts over the way in which "the revolutionary armed option, i.e. us, is being used as a means of pressure to reinforce the tactical offensive, i.e. elections", saying that the continuation of such a situation was "absolutely impossible". [1] They failed to realise that Perón's electoralism was strategic and appear to have been fully satisfied with Perón's reply claiming that he was "completely in agreement" [2] with their views. Quite apart from their misjudgement of Perón, the Montoneros showed here a completely unrealistic separation of tactics from strategy. What they failed to realise is that "tactical compromises" (had it been a case of tactical compromise) often effect a change in strategy, whether the latter is conscious and desired or not.

On the military front, having completed stages of "preparation" and "organisation", the Montoneros conducted numerous operations in the 1970-73 period. Though less militarily active than the Guevarist People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) in this period, [3] the Montoneros' actions probably had greater political effect. For rather than seek to do battle with the army and police, nearly all their operations were aimed at either accumlating resources (financial, military, & logistical) or at stimulating popular support and sympathy. The latter was achieved through an extremely discriminate selection of targets and a minimal

---

1. "Los Montoneros a Perón," 9th February 1971, La Causa Peronista, no. 9, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

2. "Perón a los Montoneros," 20th February 1971, ibid., pp. 28-29

3. This is at least true of publicised guerrilla actions, as can be seen from the chronologies contained in Cristianismo y Revolución, passim; and Kohl & Litt, op. cit., pp. 339-364. The same pattern became evident through my own chronological newspaper work on the Buenos Aires Herald, La Nación and La Razón, all of Buenos Aires.

deployment of offensive violence. One of the most striking features of these first three years is that very few people were killed by Montoneros, this enabling support to come even from those with moral qualms about violence. Indeed, political violence in general was much less extensive than in the more recent period-according to the Montoner records, the balance of the "Argentine Revolution" of 1966-73 was approximately 500 political prisoners and 100 killed. [1]

The Montoneros consciously selected targets of great symbolic significance to the Peronist Movement. Early in 1971 they occupied the historic Casa de Tucumán where Argentine Independence had been declared in 1816, as "an act of homage and a reminder of the economic independence which Perón declared in 1946" (in the same place). [2] Bombs inevitably exploded all over Argentina on important Peronist anniversaries such as that of the 9th June 1956 military revolt and subsequent executions, and of Eva Perón's death on 26th July 1952. Favourite targets in the early yeary were symbols of oligarchic privilege like the numerous Jockey Clubs, golf course buildings and luxurious country clubs which were blasted. This was done with a lot of verve and style, in such a way as to facilitate the growth of a romantic aura around the authors. For example, when the clubs of the rich were being detonated, nearby roads were closed off with signs reading "Halt! Dynamited Zone". [3]

Instead of killing ordinary soldiers and policemen, most of them being of humble origin, the Montoneros in their first three years of public life managed to demonstrate the vulnerability of their enemy

---

1. "Compañeros presos: la aurora de la liberted," El Descamisado, no. 1 (22nd May 1973), back page.

2. Buenos Aires Herald, 15th February 1971.

3. Ibid., 21st October 1971.

without enabling that enemy to successfully portray them as "bloodthirsty terrorists". They showed their power and their compassion by, for instance, disarming the police guards outside the West German Embassy in February 1971 without harming them or going on to spray machine-gun bullets inside the Embassy. Another show of strength was their occupation of the small town of San Jerónimo Norte for half an hour in June of the same year. By seizing the police station, local bank and law court, the Montoneros not only achieved a psychological triumph but also netted funds, heavy arms and important documents such as identity cards and driving licences.

Foreign executives and companies were singled out for punishment but here too assassination was not yet on the Montonero agenda. Discouragement of foreign investment in Argentina came in the form of blowing up executives' houses but not executives. Property, not people, was the subject of Montonero violence, as in the case of the destruction of 38 Fiats in Caseros in November 1971. There were few public kidnappings, that of Vicenzo Russo, production manager of Standard Electric Argentina (a subsidiary of ITT), in December 1972 being a one million dollar-worth exception to the general rule. 1970-1973 for the Montoneros was essentially a stage of armed propaganda and accumulating resources rather than seeking to directly weaken the military capacity of the regime. Armed propaganda mainly took the form of attacking the property of companies or executives involved in industrial conflict with their workforces. Towards the end of 1972, it took on a new dimension with the Montonero seizure of a radio station outside Resistencia, used to broadcast a 17-minute call for the return of Perón.

What physical violence there was either came in joint operations with other armed organisations, which were highly selective, or in cases where victims put up violent resistance to kidnapping attempts.

Instances of the latter were the March 1972 death of Roberto Uzal, member of the extreme right-wing Nueva Fuerza party, and that of Colonel Héctor Iribarren, head of the 3rd Army Corps' intelligance service in April 1973. Due to their selectiveness in the use of violence, the Montoneros were not seen by the masses as people with blood on their hands but as participants in the popular struggle against the military regime, often making it appear weak, incompetent and ridiculous.

They undoubtedly contributed to the retreat of the military in 1973 through harassment of the regime and helping to create a climate of insecurity which made military officers and foreign investors see the need for a political solution to the crisis. This was not achieved without losses on the part of the organisation. August 1972 was a black month for the Montoneros, producing the death of one of their founding members, Carlos Capuano Martínez, as well as those of Susana Lesgart and Mariano Pujadas in the Trelew Massacre. However, in these years Montonero losses were far lower than later on and membership did not entail the probability of short-term death. Moreover, the fears which Montonero deaths might have given rise to were minimised by presenting those slain in battle as heroic martyrs. A later Montonero epitaph for Capuano Martínez exemplified this treatment:

> "He knew that if he died, it would be at the hands of the enemies of the people, of the enemies of Peronism, which is the most beautiful form of dying. It makes the comrades proud; it distresses our hearts but makes us happy to know that sacrifice is no mere gesture but a form of life. Just as Evita, the owner of our revolutionary tenderness, would have wanted it"..."You incarnated, little Carlos Capuano Martínez, standing upright with gun in hand in the midst of this Peronist Revolution, the purest essence of our people". 1

Later on, after the 1976 military coup, Montonero combatants

---

1. "Carlos Capuano Martínez, Por compañero, Por peronista, Por Montonero, Ya Sos Entraña de Tu Pueblo," La Causa Peronista, no. 7 (20th August 1974), pp. 22-23.

became eligible for a similarly traditional form of reward for acts of heroism: medals. For their activities during the World Cup, the "Miguel Zavala Rodríguez" Combat Platoon of the "Captain Alberto Camps" Special Troops Section and the leader of the "Martyrs of the Resistance" Combat Platoon were all awarded the Order of Hero of Combat, Commander Carlos Olmedo grade, by the national leadership of the Montonero Party and High Command of the Montonero Army. [1] Though post-1976 Montonero reorganisation is outside the brief of this thesis, this development at least confirmed and possibly accentuated Montonero militarism.

However, though the Montoneros played a role in the demise of the 1966-73 military government and won considerable popular sympathy, the armed method which they employed prevented them from dictating what was to happen after the fall of the military from power. They did manage to develop a degree of surface organisation through the promotion of Peronist Youth unity and growth but their central orientation towards guerrilla warfare prevented them from performing the key task of revolutionaries, namely the organisation of the working class, Contact with militant trades unionists and armed propaganda actions aimed at helping workers to win strikes were no substitute for the vital need for daily political and union activity in the labour movement. By ignoring consistent trade union work, the Montoneros did nothing to weaken the grip on the labour movement of those "bureaucrats" whom they condemned as "traitors".

The urban guerrilla campaign played a significant destructive role but proved incapable of producing a positive political alternative of its own. This was in fact recognised by Ramón Torres Molina, a Villa

---

1. "Condecoración," Estrella Federal (official organ of the Montonero Army - Ejército Montonero), no. 5 (September 1978) p. 12.

Devoto Prison inmate since 1969, who in January 1971 issued a clandestine critique of the urban guerrilla. In it, he pointed out that:

> "a resistance war exhausts the dictatorship politically and demonstrates its unpopularity but tends to create political solutions which are not those of the guerrillas themselves. Through urban guerrilla struggle one can force the dictatorship into conceding elections, but this tactical triumph of the guerrillas would be a strategic defeat, since it would push perspectives for the seizure of power into the distance...The generals of the dictatorship know that the counter-insurgency measure par excellence is elections". 1

These prophetic words were lost on the Montoneros.

The political pay-off from Montonero actions went to Perón in whom they placed their trust. Perón saw quite clearly that he had little to lose by urging his special formations to hit the regime until it fell, for he realised that by engaging in guerrilla activities the Peronist Left would be, to some extent, put into political quarantine. They would be able to awaken popular sympathy through their actions but would not at the same time be able to organise and politicise masses of workers on the basis of a revolutionary programme. To embark on revolutionary warfare seriously, most of the best Peronist militants inevitably had to cut themselves off from social contact, living and fighting in the anonymity of an underground existence. To attempt serious union work under such circumstances would have been suicidal.

Montonero methodology also, indirectly and paradoxically, played into the hands of Lanusse's Great National Agreement (Gran Acuerdo Nacional - GAN) scheme, for though it helped force a military retreat, it enabled them to depart in an orderly manner with the survival of capitalism guaranteed. By default, the Montoneros' guerrilla methods combined with their subordination to Perón enabled an electoral

---

1. Ramón Torres Molina, "La etapa actual de las guerrillas argentinas," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971), pp. 17-19.

solution to emerge in 1973 which mainly benefited the "national" bourgeois parties. Though to some extent Perón outmanoeuvred Lanusse in order to eventually impose his own candidature for the presidency and thus partially undermine Lanusse's plan, the outcome was nevertheless one which benefited civilian reformists and right-wingers rather than revolutionaries.

Precise details of the 1971-73 indirect dealings between Lanusse and Perón are not known and may never be. By the time he assumed the presidency in March 1971, Lanusse was certainly a party to the idea that there had to be elections with Peronist participation in order to stem the tide of mass popular unrest. At the same time, the residency qualifications which he laid down for potential presidential candidates in 1972 made it virtually impossible for Perón to stand personally the following March. It would therefore seem that though Lanusse considered that Peronism had a major role to play in restoring order, he was hoping for an election result which would force Peronism into some power-sharing arrangement with reliably "moderate" parties.

For his part, Perón agreed on the need for a multi-party approach, as seen in his pre-electoral and electoral alliances, but wanted to play a more dominant role than that envisaged by Lanusse and the military. He did not return in time to comply with the residency stipulation, partly because his personal security was not guaranteed and partly because he could not afford, politically, to be seen fulfilling military conditions. Instead, he chose the reliable Héctor Cámpora as the man to preside over a brief stage of concessions aimed at achieving popular demobilisation and the demilitarisation of the combatant Left, before he personally took over.

There would thus seem to have been some disagreement between Perón and Lanusse over how prominent Perón and Peronism were to be in

the implementation of the Great National Agreement. However, one should not allow this to mask the fact that the two leaders were the major parties to this "solution" and certainly agreed upon the key issue of Perón's return. Though there was manoeuvring on both sides, there was agreement on the need to channel popular militancy away from direct confrontation with "the system" and towards legal participation in an institutionalised order, and on Perón being the only politician with the authority to fulfil such a task. Thus, recognition of friction between Lanusse and Perón should not be used, as it was by the Peronist Left, as evidence in dismissing the claim that Perón's return represented "the last card of the bourgeoisie". [1]

As will be seen later, towards the end of 1972, the Montoneros began to prepare for a phase of predominantly political activity as the March 1973 elections drew near. The assumption of presidential office by Cámpora in May 1973 led the Montoneros to store their guns away and turn towards mass political activity, taking full advantage of the freedom which the Peronist restoration initially brought about. By June they were inviting the Guevarist ERP to contact them in order to arrange a surrender of the latter's arms. Though the activities of the Montonero surface front organisations will be analysed in the next chapter, it is appropriate here to examine changes in the Montonero political line during the 16-month truce and to look at why the latter was abortive. These sixteen months were months in which Montonero illusions and schemas were dramatically challenged by political and social reality. The honeymoon began with all the euphoria which surrounded Cámpora's installation as President, when Montonero supporters filled the streets

---

1. For further discussion of the GAN and how it has been interpreted, see Ronaldo Munck, "The crisis of late Peronism and the working class (1973-1976)," SLAS, Bulletin of the Society for Latin American Studies, no. 30 (Spring 1979).

of Buenos Aires which echoed to cries of "Chau Militares!" (Bye-bye, soldier boys!) and chants of "se van, se van y nunca volverán" (they're going, they're going, never to return). [1] It ended with the Montoneros feeling that they were back where they had been before the May 1973 election and asking:

> "What is the difference between that military dictatorship and this government?....In the name of Peronism and constitutional legality it does the same as the military before". 2

Having at one time questioned the Peronist slate of Cámpora-Solano Lima, feeling that Perón should himself stand in the March contest the Montoneros fully supported Cámpora's short May 25th to July 13th administration, which was essentially one of liberalisation. They were aware, however, that the conquest of government did not signify a seizure of power because "the majority, when they are not organised and armed, can be overthrown by the owners of economic and political power". Support for the Cámpora government, whose release of political prisoners and opening up of diplomatic and trade links with socialist and Third World countries did not amount to a socialist programme, was premised upon the view that Argentina was passing through a 'liberation' phase which was "a transitional stage towards the construction of 'national' socialism". While calling on the government to eliminate the "military clique", to take control of all the basic economic resources in foreign hands and to restore employment and wages to at least 1955 levels, the Montoneros called for organisation and mobilisation for the "support and control" of the Government, as "the only guarantee of the people led by General Perón taking total power". [3]

---

1. "Chau Militares!" El Descamisado, no. 1, op. cit., p. 5.
2. "Quién Votó a Isabel - López Rega?", La Causa Peronista, no. 8 (27th August 1974), pp. 2-3.
3. "FAR y Montoneros: Apoyar, Defender y Controlar," El Descamisado, no. 2 (29th May 1973), p. 2.

Due to the Montonero belief that the struggle of the period was one of "Liberation" versus "Dependency", they failed to articulate a coherent alternative policy to that of the Peronist leadership, trusting that the leaders, with the exception of a few renegades, would initiate a national revolutionary process. Their failure to recognise the existence of antagonistic class interests and political projects within Peronism (Mario Firmenich: "there is no difference between the Patria Peronista and the Patria Socialista", [1]) led the Montoneros to be surprised and bewildered at the unleashing of right-wing Peronist violence against the Left, beginning with the Ezeiza massacre of June 20th 1973 in which dozens were killed. At the same time, it encouraged them to justify policies which were far from socialist - like the Social Pact formulated under the Cámpora government, a labour-business-state alliance designed to combat inflation and increase production with the redistribution of wealth being postponed.

The Social Pact, which formed the foundation of Perón's plan for "National Reconstruction", was condemned by the Marxist Left who saw it as an attempt at a national reconstruction of capitalism, which indeed it was. For the Montoneros, however, with their stages approach to revolution, the Pact was the "superstructural expression of the class alliance between the workers and the small and medium national entrepreneurs", with these classes being "the social base of the National Liberation Front". [2] It was several weeks before, faced with the continuation of wage struggles, they criticised the Pact for not representing workers' interests and called for its modification. The Montoneros only called for the Pact to be "smashed" one year after

---

1. "Construir el Poder Popular," ibid., no. 4 (12th June 1973), pp. 2-4.
2. "Qué pasa con el pacto social?", ibid., no. 31 (18th December 1973), pp. 2-3.

Cámpora's election, when Montonero leader Firmenich told a mass rally in the Atlanta stadium that a new Pact had to be negotiated in order to give the workers "51% of power". In response to insistent rank-and-file chants of "all the power", he went on to declare that:

> "in the process which we are going through, all the power cannot belong to the working class. It is a problem of the balance of forces, it is a problem of the passage through national liberation towards 'national' socialism". [1]

Only one year after Peronism's return did the Montoneros fully realise that the Pact was not really one between the workers and small producers for its architect, Economy Minister José Ber Gelbard, represented the interests of not only "the most powerful national entrepreneurs but also the group of foreign industrial companies which operate in our country". [2]

Montonero faith in Perón was so great that "deviations" from the expected national liberation path were either ignored or only criticized in muted tones. After the removal of Cámpora, the nomination of Isabel as Perón's running mate for the September elections was something which the surprised Montoneros "neither understood nor understand". They disagreed with it - "she was not the most representative of those 18 years of struggle" - but decided to remain "silent in a disciplined manner" having total confidence in Perón - "we are going to do what he orders". [3] Cámpora's ouster through a right-wing "palace revolution" engineered by López Rega on July 13th was condemned but Cámpora's subsequent "resignation" was praised as an indication of the latter's "loyalty" to Perón who, the Montoneros naively thought, would put paid

---

1. "Palabras de Firmenich," Militancia, no. 37 (14th March 1974) pp. 37-42.
2. "El Pacto Social: Instrumento de la Liberación o Instrumento de Dependencia," El Descamisado, no. 44 (19th March 1974), pp. 16-19.
3. Dardo Cabo,, "Carta del Director: Compañeros," ibid., no. 13 (14th August 1973) pp. 2-3.

to "the witch López Rega", the self-styled "Daniel the Prophet".

When Perón assumed the presidency in October 1973, the Montoneros were full of optimism and declared: "Today, Perón is Argentina. He is Sovereignty. He is Homeland". [1] A few weeks later, they were to claim that he had nothing to do with the Justicialist Party leaders' "Reserved Document" which condemned "terrorist and subversive Marxist groups" and "infiltrators", [2] yet they were unable to impugn Perón's signature at the bottom or explain his failure to explicitly condemn it. Instead of challenging the rightward drift of Perón's government, for months the Montoneros stoically soaked up the verbal punishment he was meting out to them. They initially obeyed his order which banned criticism of government ministers, fully accepting the Peronist principle of verticalismo, or vertical discipline and authority. As Dardo Cabo wrote:

> "He who leads is Perón: either one accepts his leadership or one is outside the Movement...because this is a revolutionary process, it is a war, and although one may differ, when the General gives an order for all (the Movement) it must be obeyed" 3

- a rather long-winded way of saying, "Perón Rules - OK!"

Perón's ultimate responsibility for the right-wing violence, complicity in the attacks on popular provincial governors and his support for the trade union leadership against militant groups of workers was minimised in the early months by the Montoneros. Their apologia depicted Perón as surrounded by cerco composed of a clique of imperialist agents, traitors and bureaucrats, who were cutting the leader off from

---

1. "El final de una batalla: Perón Presidente; El Comienzo de otra: Liberación," ibid., no. 19 (26th September 1973), pp. 2-3.
2. "Y Esto, Qué Es?", ibid., no. 21 (9th October 1973), pp. 2-3. For the text of the document, see La Opinión, 2nd October 1973.
3. Dardo Cabo, "Compañeros," El Descamisado, no. 26 (13th November 1973), pp. 2-3.

his mass following. In this fictional drama, Perón's Social Welfare Minister José López Rega was accorded the role of villain-in-chief, distorting Perón's policy directives and preventing mass opinion from reaching him. Behind this fantasy was the Montonero belief that the revolution depended upon a dynamic Perón-People symbiosis - "when Perón and his people come together, only Perón and the people triumph". [1] In turn, this rested on a highly romanticised historical view of Peronism, as reflected in such statements as "This is Peronism - histories of struggles, names of martyrs, dates of combats and a beautiful woman: Evita" [2] and "there has always been the right to dissent" in the Peronist Movement. [3]

Only after several months of disappointment in their leader did the Montoneros attempt any self-criticism and discover that they had differences with Perón. At a Peronist Youth cadre school in January 1974, Firmenich admitted that prior to Peron's return, "we created our own Perón, someone more than what he really is. Now that Perón is here, Perón is Perón and not the man we wish him to be". Moreover, he recognised that Perón was remaining loyal to his original 3rd Position and that for him "socialismo nacional is not socialism. What Perón defines as socialismo nacional is Justicialism", emphasising class alliance rather than class struggle. [4] However, the discovery of an ideological contradiction between Perón and the Montonero leaders did not lead to a withdrawal of support, for despite this clash the Montoneros felt strategically at one with Perón. Due to their view that revolution had to

---

1. "Con el pueblo hacia Perón," ibid., no. 16 (4th September 1973), pp. 2-3.
2. "Qué pasa general...está lleno de gorilas el gobierno popular," supplement, ibid., (14th March 1973), pp. 2-7.
3. Ibid., no. 38 (5th February 1974), front cover.
4. Mario Firmenich, Etapa y Conjuntura, typescript of speech delivered at a Peronist Youth cadre school (January 1974), pp. 7-8.

proceed in stages, the Montoneros fully agreed with Perón's postulation of an anti-imperialist multi-class alliance, but whereas class conciliation was an end for Perón, they felt that such an alliance taking anti-imperialist measures would inevitably initiate a process towards Socialism. The Montoneros therefore felt a strategic coincidence with Perón and indeed considered that they were the only section of the Movement to really embrace his class alliance schema, regarding the "bureaucracy" as sectarian.

It is important to record that this distinction between Perón's ideology and strategy was not an idea which the Montoneros released for public consumption, even among their own sympathisers. To keep in with Perón, their leaders minimised their differences with him in public, the result being that their old illusions in him as a socialist lived on in the minds of many of their supporters, soon to cede place to the view that "Perón betrayed us". [1] An example of the Montoneros soft public criticism of Perón was provided in March 1974 when they confessed that they had relied upon "Perón being at the head of everything (being) a sufficient guarantee" for the success of the revolutionary process... "We were confident that....Perón was going to carry out the rejuvenation, that he was going to democratise the union structures". This was now deemed to have been an error, "the error of believing that one man alone can change all or part of the situation". Criticism of Perón was thus absolutely minimal - his "errors" were attributed to "a poor analysis of the national situation" but were not regarded as counter-revolutionary. Rather, Perón was seen as envisaging a "very long-term liberation process" of a type that would "deceive" imperialism! [2]

---

1. Such an attitude was expressed by many former Peronist Youth members whom I interviewed between June 1975 and October 1976.
2. "Qué Votamos el II de Marzo," El Descamisado, no. 43 (12th March 1974), pp. 2-3.

Perón-Montonero relations took a hard knock on 1st May 1974 when Perón came face-to-face with "his people" and addressed a rally of 100,000 people in Plaza de Mayo. In response to the persistently chanted Montonero question, "What's going on General, why is the popular government full of gorilas?", Perón lost his self-control and unleashed a near-hysterical attack on "these stupid idiots who shout", calling them "infiltrators" and "mercenaries in the service of foreign money". Genuinely surprised, the pro-Montonero columns numbering some 60,000 people then withdrew from the plaza, chanting "the people are going", with Perón still in full cry. Predictably, the Montonero post mortem revealed that "something broke after 30 years". [1]

However, Perón's death on July 1st prevented political experience from forcing the Montoneros to develop from respectful criticism of his errors to a full understanding and critique of his political project. Perón's last major speech on June 12th, in which he denounced an "imperialist plot", was seen by the Montoneros as evidence that he was "to a great extent taking up the orientations and many of the criticisms which we were formulating". [2] They closed their eyes to the experience of the previous months, with Galimberti paying homage to Perón for "never defending any cause other than that of the people". [3] Since Perón by the time of his death had not used up all of his political capital with the workers, and perhaps even really believing that Perón had learnt from his May Day "mistake", the Montoneros continued using his name as a banner, asserting their continued Peronist orthodoxy while

---

1. Miguel Lizaso, "General: El Peronism no está de acuerdo," El Peronista, no. 3 (4th May 1974), pp. 2-4.
2. "Hablan los Montoneros," text of speech by Roberto Quieto in La Plata, La Causa Peronista, no. 4 (30th July 1974), pp. 6-8.
3. Rodolfo Galimberti, "Unidad Nacional o 'Gran Acuerdo Nacional'," ibid., no. 3 (23rd July 1974), pp. 2-3.

whitewashing all the anti-popular actions and statements of their deceased caudillo.

Differences between Perón's administration and the following one of Isabel Perón were so grossly exaggerated by the Montoneros that the latter was presented as a total negation of the former. The "government of brujovandorismo (an alliance between the López Rega fascist clique and the trade union bureaucracy) presided over by Isabel Martínez" [1] was accused of seeking "to transform the national unity which, with Perón alive and in spite of all its limitations, represented popular interests, into a GAN directed by imperialism". [2] By a GAN, they meant the integration of the Peronist Movement into a political system dominated by big labour bureaucrats and big business in alliance with foreign capital. The implication was that were Perón still alive, everything would have been different, yet this claim patently ignored the moves towards such a set-up under Perón. He had supported the Law of Professional Associations which strengthened the power of the trade union leadership and had greeted a merger between the supposedly "national" businessmens' association, the General Economic Confederation, and the monopolistic Argentine Industrial Union representing big industrialists tied to foreign capital. Moreover, he had made no attempt to expropriate or oust the foreign monopolies though he had regulated foreign investment; and he had done absolutely nothing to curb the right-wing attacks on labour militants and the Left, which were a vital corollary to such an unpopular project. Though there were important differences between the governments of Perón and his third wife Isabel - Perón's initial attempts to maintain the unity of his Movement and his

---

1. "Quién Votó a Isabel...," op. cit.
2. Galimberti, "Quienés son y para quién gobernan?", La Causa Peronista no. 9 (3rd September 1974). pp. 2-3.

attempts to halt the decline in real wages as opposed to Isabel's policy of heavy repression and total exclusion of the Left and her attempts to reduce workers' real wages - the broad lines of her project were already present in that of Perón.

Furthermore, Montonero analysis was unrealistic in two other respects. By lumping together the López Rega circle with the trade union bureaucracy (possibly because they combined in a pincer movement to press Economy Minister Gelbard into resigning in October 1974), the Montoneros overlooked significant conflicts of interest between the two factions. Though both had some interest in developing a corporate state structure, important differences were to emerge between them over wages policy. It was quite erroneous for the Montoneros to regard the four trade union leaders who had signed the Social Pact as "four bureaucrats who don't even represent their own grandmothers". [1] Though true that powerful anti-bureaucracy tendencies had developed in the Argentine labour movement in the late 1960's and early 1970's, there were still significant numbers of workers who were prepared to tolerate corrupt millionaire union bureaucrats, like metalworkers' leader Lorenzo Miguel (nicknamed "the Godfather" due to his Mafia methods), so long as they secured economic benefits for them from time to time. Here the Montoneros both underestimated the economism of the Argentine labour movement and the contradictions within the government headed by Isabel. The latter were clearly on view during the 1975 General Strike when the "bureaucrats" were forced into confrontation with the López Rega-Isabel faction, were compelled to place themselves at the head of a de facto general strike and used it to oust López Rega and his allies from the government, increasing their own power in doing so.

---

1. "Atlanta," 22nd August 1973 speech by Mario Firmenich, Militancia, no. 12 (30th August 1973), pp. 26-29.

This failure to understand the personality of the labour movement, a result of the lack of industrial experience on the part of most Montonero leaders, led the organization to a serious miscalculation. By the end of July 1974, Roberto Quieto, leader of the military wing of the Montoneros, was declaring:

> "We're losing our patience, our patience is exhausted...from now on there will be no more requests and demands will begin. We are going to accompany these demands with all the means of struggle that the people know....we've wasted too much saliva in conversations". 1

By 6th September the Montoneros were underground again, having declared war on a government deemed "neither popular nor Peronist". [2] The miscalculation, based on their view that the trade union leaders were totally unrepresentative, was that they could carry the masses along with them.

Another miscalculation was to consider that the tens of thousands of youths whom they had mobilised during the heady months of 1973 and early 1974 would massively join the revolutionary war. Many of them were either insufficiently committed to become guerrillas or felt that there were still possibilities for other forms of struggle. A lot were moreover indignant at the way in which the change of strategy was decided. The decision to resume warfare was taken by the Montonero leadership, no doubt for security reasons, with hardly any consultation of their supporters, some of whom only discovered that they were "underground" from the newspapers the following morning! [3] This was an indication of the authoritarian internal command structure of the Montoneros, something which they only claimed to remedy after the Videla

---

1. "Hablan los Montoneros," Quieto's speech, op. cit.
2. "Quién Votó a Isabel...," op. cit.
3. Interview with a Montonero supporter who held a minor government post during the Cámpora period, Buenos Aires, 27.9.75.

coup of March 1976. [1]

While above ground, the Montoneros had seen Peronist governments and leaders move increasingly to the Right, had been deprived of or given up all their major positions in the State and Movement and had had their daily Noticias and their weeklies El Descamisado, El Peronista and La Causa Peronista each banned in turn. Leaders Firmenich and Quieto had been momentarily detained, Peronist Youth offices had been bombed with impunity and, most important of all, the organisation had suffered numerous losses at the hands of fascist civilian commandos and the para-police Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (Alianza Anti-Comunista Argentina - the Triple A). Approximately 200 popular militants had been killed since May 1973 and right-wing violence had increased sharply since Perón's death. The Montoneros had themselves suffered more losses than in the three years of struggle against the military regime. [2]

Political repression was a fundamental factor in the Montonero decision to resume warfare. Not only had institutional participation been gradually denied to them but open mass activity had become exceedingly hazardous. This was not solely due to attacks on militants but because the right-wing terror extended to society at large. Among the hundreds of victims, there were several prominent left-wingers and militant activists - Rodolfo Ortega Peña, Silvio Frondizi, Julio Troxler, Atilio López and others - but there were also significant numbers of less overtly political journalists, lawyers, lecturers, entertainers and sportsmen

---

1. In April 1976, they created the Montonero Party (Partido Montonero) which claims to practice democratic centralism. See the Cuadernos Políticos interview with a Montonero leader, published in Revolución, a now defunct joint bulletin of various Chilean revolutionary tendencies (December 1977).

2. See the Buenos Aires Herald, 7th September 1974; and "Respuesta socialista al llamamiento Montonero," Avanzada Socialista (Buenos Aires), no. 120 (9th September 1974), pp. 8-9.

who were attacked or forced into exile. Behind this less discriminate right-wing violence was a successful attempt to sow fear among the general public, to dissuade them from any political involvement and public commitment.

Early on, organisations like the University National Concentration (CNU) and Organisational Command (C de O) had been primarily responsible. They had participated in the Ezeiza Massacre along with union bodyguards, all under the command of Perón's chief security guard, Colonel Jorge Osinde. However, though they remained active and unmolested by the police, their activities were soon overshadowed by Triple A operations. The main bases of this para-police death squad were the Social Welfare Ministry and the Federal Police, with López Rega and Police Chief Alberto Villar playing leading roles. Its personnel, with their numberless Ford Falcons and Itakas, both used by the Federal Police, became universally dreaded. Police connections were confirmed by the way in which, when there were strong protests, several of their kidnappings were transformed into "arrests". Moreover, links with other Latin American goon squads and intelligence services were apparent, especially in Triple A attacks on Chilean, Uruguayan and Bolivian refugees, including Allende's military chief General Prats and his wife. [1]

Parallel to this came an ideological offensive launched through the pages of El Caudillo, an extremely right-wing and anti-Semitic magazine edited by Felipe Romeo and financed mainly by paid advertisements from the Social Welfare Ministry. [2] This organ of the Right spoke of the

---

1. On the Triple A, see La Opinión, 6th July 1975; and "Historia de la Triple A," 3 Parts, El Auténtico (Buenos Aires), nos. 6 (26th November 1975), 7 (10th December 1975) & 8 (24th December 1975). Edition no. 6 of the latter Montonero fortnightly contained an incomplete list of Triple A victims. Nearly 300 names were printed.

2. Pablo Kandel and Mario Monteverde, Entorno y Caída (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1976), pp. 30 & 77.

need to do away with "the rearguard guerrillas" [1] (i.e. Peronist Left sympathisers) and took as its motto, "the best enemy is a dead enemy".[2] One of the Right's greatest successes was the replacement of popular university administrators (like Rodolfo Puiggrós and Raúl Laguzzi, both forced to flee to Mexico) by Alberto Ottalango. The latter, appointed by the octogenarian fascist Education Minister Oscar Ivanissevich, claimed that the single option open to Argentines was to be:

> "Justicialists or Marxists"....."Political parties will be a thing of the past....all the liberal parties will have to choose between Justicialism and Marxism. Here and now, one has to be either with Christ or against Christ"....."An attempt has been made to construct a pluralist society and one can see the consequences. We possess the truth and reason; the others don't and we will treat them accordingly". 3

This "treatment" extended even to Radical Party Congressmen, like Hipólito Solari Yrigoyen who was almost killed in a bomb attack. Clearly it hit both the Left and their potential recruitment areas and made some tactical or strategic change imperative. However, by resuming urban guerrilla warfare, the Montoneros did exactly what the extreme Right wanted them to do. By going underground, they cut themselves off from a large part of the mass political base which they had developed above ground and gave the government a pretext for introducing increasingly draconian measures. Moreover, through taking this step and through their attacks on trade union leaders, the Montoneros destroyed all possibility of forging alliances with labour sectors which were confronting the government over its wages and prices policies. Though a superstructural agreement with the CGT leaders was never on the cards, due to the long-standing enmity between the burocracia and the Left, the

---

1. "Volvemos para triunfar o morir junto a Isabel," El Caudillo (Buenos Aires), no. 68 (15th October 1975), p. 3.
2. Quoted in Kandel and Monteverde, op. cit., p. 30.
3. Ibid., p. 31.

fact that numerous strikes were not only over economic issues but also challenged the power of the union bureaucracy indicates that there were real possibilities of winning the support of the militant sectors. This anti-bureaucracy struggle was seen especially in the Córdoban car workers' industrial action of 1974 to prevent the national Car Workers' Union (SMATA) leadership from sacking the local leader and Revolutionary Communist Party member René Salamanca; in the Villa Constitución strike of early 1975, when local steel workers fought an exceedingly militant battle lasting two months for the right to elect their own leadership without national interference; and again in the slogans voiced by workers during the 1975 General Strike.

Though the Montoneros at first attempted to leave their political front organisations above ground, this proved totally impossible given the latter's total identification with the Montonero military units. The return to arms therefore meant a great reduction in their potential for mass activity and enforced clandestinity for all their leading militants who had previously gained support in the universities, poor districts and unions. Clandestinity was probably unavoidable by this time but mass work would still have been possible had they restructured themselves for clandestine political and trade union work rather than placing their main emphasis on combat.

The sixteen months of mass activity certainly provided the Montoneros with a stronger political base than they had enjoyed at the start of 1973 but those months had also revealed the political weaknesses of the organisation. Due to the simplistic character of their analysis and their naive faith in Perón, they had been consistently surprised by events, reacting to them like blind empiricists, stumbling from round to round like punch-drunk boxers. They had failed to establish clear and coherent future perspectives and act accordingly, the result being

that they were unable to take full advantage of the political opportunities which social polarisation engendered. By September 1974, the Montoneros found themselves in a political cul-de-sac and, reverting to their original mould, looked to a military offensive to resolve their problems, a decision which Socialist Workers Party leader Juan Carlos Coral described as "bourgeois narcissism". [1] The Montoneros justified the resumption of warfare with the Clausewitz dictum of war being a continuation of politics by other means but the coming period was to show, once again, that though urban guerrilla warfare can significantly weaken a government, due to its essential isolation from the mass of workers it is incapable of generating a political alternative of its own.

Montonero leader Mario Firmenich announced the change of strategy on September 6th but in fact there had been a number of anonymous operations during the preceding weeks. Of these the most important was the assassination of Lanusse's former Interior Minister, Arturo Mor Roig, on July 15th. This purely punitive action - retribution for Mor Roig's condonation of the 1972 Trelew executions and his being the main architect of the GAN which the Montoneros saw the government as resurrecting - set the keynote for the new Montonero campaign. For now the gloves came off and violence, though still discriminate, became far more extensively used, not only against capitalist and State property but also against political enemies.

In all probability, Montonero anonymous armed actions during the official truce were more numerous than was admitted in September 1974. The likelihood is that occasional fund-raising activities such as bank raids and kidnappings took place throughout the 16 months, for the organisation emerged from the "truce" much better equipped and financed.

---

1. Coral, quoted in Buenos Aires Herald, 15th September 1974.

Moreover, it should be noted that, long after the event, the Montoneros claimed responsibility for the September 1973 assassination of the General Secretary of the General Confederation of Labour, José Rucci. Though some versions attributed his death to rivalry with Lorenzo Miguel, the episode revealed either duplicity (since at the time they professed innocence and expressed regret) or opportunism (claiming an action of which they were not the authors) on the part of the Montoneros - probably the former. Either way, it was used by the Peronist Right as a pretext for a major purge of "Marxists", real or imagined, from positions in the Movement and State. Another of their victims during this period was the former leader of the Construction Union (UOCRA), Rogelio Coria. He had taken refuge in Paraguay when Cámpora was elected, fearful of retribution for his collaboration with the previous military regime and his accumulation of a huge personal fortune while a union leader, but made a fatal trip to Buenos Aires for venereal treatment at the end of March 1974.

An essential prerequisite for the dramatic military escalation of the 1974-76 period was a healthy guerrilla exchequer. Sound foundations for this were laid by the Montonero kidnapping on September 19th of Juan and Jorge Born, the director and general manager respectively of one of the major Argentine monopolies, Bunge y Born. Both men were tried for "acts against the workers, the people and national interests" such as promoting price inflation. [1] They were held in captivity for 6 and 9 months respectively, during which time the company was pressurised through the kidnapping of a further executive, the assassination of another and numerous death threats until they finally yielded.

The "kidnapping of the year", as the Montoneros modestly referred

---

1. Ibid., 20th September 1974.

to this coup, netted them a cool 60+ million dollar ransom - a world record, equivalent to one-third of the national defence budget. This sum was enough to keep the Montoneros going for at least two years and made them financially independent. Other conditions for the release of the Born brothers were the company's distribution of 3,600 million old pesos worth of food and clothing in poor areas all over Argentina; the company's placing of large Montonero advertisements in the Guardian, Le Monde, Corriere della Sera, the Washington Post and the Suddeutsche Zeitung; and modifications in industrial relations and working conditions at some of the Bunge y Born group's member companies.

On this occasion, the Montoneros managed to combine a massive expropriation of money with a political action bound up with industrial struggle. If seen by the Montoneros as a means of combining their military operations with the struggles of the workers, it was certainly highly paternalistic. Nevertheless, the action revealed the superior strength of the organisation compared with the earlier phase of armed struggle. Indeed, Jorge Born, upon his release in June 1975, gave the Montoneros' organisation his highest praise when he described it as being "as good as Bunge y Born". [1]

In the new period of armed struggle, political assassination became an important element in the Montonero repertoire. The shooting of policemen and fascists responsible for the deaths of popular militants is understandable, given the Peronist Left losses while above ground, but the political benefits derived from such punitive measures were at best nil and at worst were used to justify an escalation of State repression and right-wing violence. Most prominent among the early vendetta killings was that of Federal Police Chief Alberto Villar, whose motor

---

1. Born, quoted in ibid., 22nd June 1975.

launch was blown to pieces as he steered it away from a Tigre boat dock in November 1974. Villar, an expert in anti-guerrilla warfare, had created the counter-insurgent blue helmet brigade in 1970 and had played a leading role in seizing coffins of Trelew victims from a Justicialist Party HQ in August 1972. His death had been demanded at the Montoneros' March 1974 Atlanta rally when Firmenich, to chants of "Montonero, the people have a request, we want the heads of Villar and Margaride", responded with "we inherit all the slogans of our Movement". [1]

Though the blowing up of Villar was popular among the Peronist Left and showed the Montoneros to be well-equipped, its only political outcome was the government's imposition of a State of Seige which suspended constitutional rights. Villar's successor, Margaride, proved to be just as repressive as his predecessor. Nevertheless, the Montoneros developed a penchant for assassinating police chiefs, killing General Cáceres Monié (Federal Police Chief 1970-72) and later Videla's first Police Chief, General Cardozo, in June 1976. The latter blow provoked unofficial police reprisals in which 70 people were killed. These assassinations brought no more political benefits than had the killing of Police Chief Ramón Falcón by an anarchist way back in 1909 and only confirmed the weakness of individual and small group violence as a political method. The assassination campaign aimed at policemen, entrepreneurs, State officials and extreme right-wingers had two effects: punishment of repressors and exploiters and provocation of increased government repression, with the latter not only rebounding on the guerrillas but also against the Left and labour movement in general.

Drawing upon the economic capital derived from the Bunge y Born and other kidnappings, and upon the political capital gained through

---

1. "Palabras de Firmenich," op. cit.

their mass activity of the 1973-74 period, the Montoneros by mid-1975 had become the strongest urban guerrilla organisation yet seen in Latin America. Their operativos of the second half of 1975 far surpassed the most spectacular exploits of the Uruguayan Tupamaros in terms of military prowess. Unfortunately for them, however, their political support base at best appears to have remained static, this being the side-effect of urban military escalation inevitably leading to actions being divorced from mass struggles or merely being "in sympathy" with them or "in support" of them.

On two occasions in July 1975 the Montoneros displayed their military might through superbly synchronised attacks in the city of Córdoba. In the first operation, three days after the victorious General Strike, they bombed 2 police stations, 20 stores and 2 press offices, but this blitz, combined with a call for a popular rising against the government, was no substitute for attaining a leading position in the strike movement. After a similar offensive in Buenos Aires Province on July 25th, directed against 7 police stations, 3 town halls and the Ciudadela Artillery HQ, the Montoneros again hit Córdoba on the 31st, barricading off the main roads into the city with chains and overturned cars before attacking the provincial Government House. Though the police completely lost control of Córdoba for one hour in the latter attack, what all these actions lacked was popular participation. The attacks demonstrated that, for all the talk about combining military operations with mass struggles, Montonero strategy in practice subordinated the latter to the former.

However, there does appear to have been friction within the organisation over this question. Insistent rumours and leaks spoke of disagreements between the military wing of the Montoneros led by Quieto and the political wing directed by Firmenich. A report in one journal

interpreted the above Buenos Aires operation as being promoted by Firmenich, worried at Quieto's control over most of the military apparatus, as well as serving as a training exercise for milicianos, who occupied an intermediate position between combatants and sympathisers. [1] This incident was part of a broader dispute over whether to concentrate on political, including electoral, work through the new Authentic Peronist Party (Partido Peronista Auténtico - PPA) or to throw the bulk of Montonero resources into the military front. It would seem that the disagreements were not fully resolved by the time the military retook power in March 1976, though the poor showing of the Auténticos in the Misiones by-election and their banning in December 1975 may well have strengthened those advocating the more militaristic approach. Whether this interpretation is valid or not, Quieto was unable to capitalise on it. He was arrested in December 1975 when with his family on a beach at Martínez, having taken no security precautions whatsoever. This might suggest a loss of conviction, as might his important revelations when under detention. The Montoneros condemned him to death for the serious losses which his statements caused, though the military reputedly carried out the sentence themselves.

The second half of 1975 was characterised by generalised, well-coordinated operations of a high technical level. Over 100 Montonero bombs exploded throughout Argentina to mark the Trelew anniversary on August 22nd, followed by an encore performance of equal magnitude on September 15th-16th. The prevailing trend however in these months was towards, for the first time, seriously attacking the Armed Forces. The Navy was the first unit to experience the force of the Montoneros. In revenge for the Trelew massacre, the Montonero "Arturo Lewinger Command"

---

1. Carta Política (Buenos Aires), 1st August 1975.

marked its anniversary by blowing up one of the Navy's most modern missile-carrying frigates, the 3,500 ton Santísima Trinidad. Next it was the turn of the Air Force, which again suffered a vengeance attack, this time for the killing of leading Montonero Marcos Osatinsky. At the end of August, a comando bearing his name blew up the San Miguel de Tucumán airport runway by remote control and destroyed a Hercules C-130 transport plane carrying anti-guerrilla troops as it took off. Five were killed and forty badly injured.

Finally, a major attack on the Army took place on 5th October, an action in which the Montoneros momentarily transcended the frontiers of guerrilla warfare to engage in a "regular" confrontation. In a massive three-pronged offensive in the northern provincial capital of Formosa, the 29th Mountain Regiment was attacked by about 50 uniformed Montoneros. Simultaneously, another Montonero force hijacked a Boeing 737 to the city's international airport of Pacú while a third group seized the Federal Interventor and took control of the airport. Aided by the conscript Roberto Mayol, the regular Montonero troops penetrated as far as the arsenal of the enemy garrison before being repulsed. Though the Army claimed to have lost no arms, eye-witnesses saw heavy weapons being loaded onto the hijacked plane before it escaped, also carrying 30 combatants and wounded Montoneros. The plane finally landed in the field of a Santa Fe estancia from where its occupants vanished without trace, police and army pursuit being halted by the scattering of nails on escape roads.

Militarily, while not a victory, the Formosa attack was highly impressive. Though their eventual losses may have been as high as 47, against the enemy's 13, the operation illustrated that the Montoneros had an excellent intelligence service, that they were bordering on a "regular" military capacity and that they were financially strong enough to launch an action in which about 500 people participated either in

combat or support roles. Politically, however, it brought them little kudos for most of their victims were conscripts. A statement issued by the Socialist Workers Party (PST), which condemned the killing of "the nine workers who by force of circumstance found themselves in the Armed Forces as conscripts", [1] summed up the reaction of broad sectors of public opinion.

Montonero intentions, or at least those of their military wing, were to demonstrate their power, gain weaponry, free political prisoners and possibly to divert military attention away from the Guevarist rural guerrilla in Tucumán. The overriding objective in this and the other attacks on the Armed Forces was not, as some analysts have suggested, to try to provoke a military coup but rather to engineer a split in the Armed Forces. This momentarily almost materialised with the Air Force revolt led by Capellini in December 1975, but the effective result was to increase the level of repression and encourage the military to launch a coup. Maybe the Montoneros shared the ERP illusion that such attacks would help make the military hold back from launching a coup. [2] In 1973 the Montoneros had claimed that General Lanusse had given way and allowed the May 1973 elections because of guerrilla assassinations of military officers. [3]

In the final months of 1975 and early in 1976, military counter-insurgency operations, previously largely confined to Tucumán, were extended to most of Argentina. After the Formosa spectacular, the Armed

---

1. Quoted in La Opinión, 8th October 1975.
2. "Paralizar el País para Frenar el Golpe," El Combatiente, no. 204 (18th February 1976), p. 2: "through general mobilisation of our people and guerrilla action, it is possible to make the military draw back, to make them abandon their plans for a coup and in that way enable the conquest of a period of democratic liberties".
3. "Perón: La reconquista del Gobierno," El Descamisado, no. 5 (19th June 1973), pp. 11-15.

Forces were immediately brought into the direction of the repressive campaign through the Defence Council led by the President. Seven days later the provincial police were placed under military command. Other effects of the attacks on the Armed Forces were the illegalisation of the Montoneros by the military-pressured government on September 8th and the outlawing of the Auténtico surface party on Christmas Eve, the latter also involving the loss of the Montoneros' last legal paper, El Auténtico.

Illegalisation of the Montoneros was not in itself any great loss to the guerrillas - it only meant that were combatants brought to trial, which was seldom, they would face a further charge of illicit association. What it represented, however, was that the government was now prepared to use every means at its disposal against them, even if this objectively played into the hands of its military opponents. Previously, the government had felt compelled to use some restraint in its repression of the Montoneros, due to the pressures on it from many Peronists who at least recognised the role of the "special formations" in bringing about Perón's 1973 return. Now, however, Montonero actions had themselves provided a justification for the all-out war against the guerrillas,which began late in 1975 and escalated after the March 1976 coup.

The Montoneros suffered some important individual losses in 1975 - Peronist Youth leader Juan Carlos Dante Gullo and Dardo Cabo were captured in April, the latter to be later murdered after the Videla coup; Marcos Osatinsky, commander of the Montoneros' Western Zone and one of the main Marxist-influenced leaders of the organisation, was seized in August and killed days later; and Quieto fell into the hands of the military right at the end of the year. Their numerical losses in 1975 were significant but not critical. By March 1976 they were still an

important military organisation, their greater survival capacity as compared with the non-Peronist guerrillas being due to several factors. All however were related to their being part of the Peronist Movement. Their Peronist identity led them to surface and perform crucial mass work for 16 months and this provided them with a limited mass base which they could rest upon for sustenance after their resumption of warfare. As has been seen, this was not just a matter of being able to draw on their former Peronist Youth organisations for recruits and aid, but was also a factor in limiting government repression until the latter half of 1975. Though the Montoneros undoubtedly failed to take all of their mass base with them in September 1974, they retained sufficient allegiance to provide them with an adequate rearguard.

It was also due to the Montoneros' political identity that the main thrust of anti-guerrilla repression during the first year of Isabel Perón's government was directed against the People's Revolutionary Army in Tucumán. From February 1975, military counter-insurgency resources were directed overwhelmingly against the latter rural guerrilla and were only fully deployed nationally much later in the year. Once again, as in the guerrilla campaign of the early 1970's, it was seen that while the Montoneros could help to destabilise a government, they were for methodological reasons unable to present a coherent political alternative. The March 1976 result was a regime far more repressive than its predecessor and much more successful in weakening the Montoneros. Though it is beyond the terms of reference of this work to provide a detailed chronological account of the development of the Montonero campaign, its salient tendency was to lose political ground almost in inverse proportion to its military development. As Montonero operations became larger and involved more human and material resources, they became increasingly remote from the activities and struggles of the working class.

If one accepts that revolutionary politics must involve and indeed make the politicisation and independent organisation of the working class the main priority, then Montonero strategy can be viewed not only as non-beneficial to that activity but also as detrimental. For guerrilla actions were used by the Peronist government to justify repressive policies which, through the largely fictitious notion of the "industrial guerrilla", were applied to the labour movement as well as the guerrillas, hampering the development of militant labour tendencies.

Though it is impossible to conclusively prove that Montonero participation in the 1975 General Strike was not significant, some evidence of their divorce from the labour movement was supplied in September 1976 when, during a power workers' strike, they issued a call for a general strike. Montonero combat units went out and set fire to about 100 colectivo buses in solidarity with a general strike which failed to materialise. [1] This was inevitable given the militaristic strategy which the Montoneros had selected. They had chosen to adopt the political identity of the working class but refused to adapt, except partially and temporarily during the 16 months above ground, to its forms of struggle. This fatal alienating factor did not derive purely from an ideological or methodological choice. It was also a reflection of the social composition of the Montonero tendency which, as will be seen from the analysis of the political organisations of movimientismo, was predominantly petty bourgeois.

OTHER 'MOVIMIENTISTAS' AND THEIR UNIFICATION

Montonero growth in the 1970-74 period was greatly facilitated by mergers with other Peronist guerrilla organisations. Of these, by far

---

1. Personal interview with a Montonero, Buenos Aires, 30th September 1976.

the most important were the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias - FAR) who cooperated with the Montoneros in several actions from 1971 until fusing with them in October 1973. Their route to the movimientista wing of the Peronist Left was radically different to that of the Montoneros for, whereas many of the early Montoneros had started out on the Right, the FAR's political journey had pure Guevarism as its embarkation point. Drawn from opposite poles, the two forces gradually came together through a growing recognition that the Argentine working class was predominantly Peronist and that revolutionary strategy had to come to terms with that fact.

FAR origins date back to 1966 when a small group, in later years referred to alternatively as the proto-FAR or proto-R, was created with the aim of becoming the Argentine appendix to Guevara's Bolivian foco. It was composed of "people from the traditional Left, a few Peronists and many new elements without a political background", united in their common enthusiasm for the Cuban Revolution. [1] Socially, the group was solidly petty bourgeois with most of its members passing through the student movement at some time or other. [2] Their leader was Carlos Enrique Olmedo who, after studying at the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, became a reputedly brilliant student of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters in the University of Buenos Aires. Other prominent early members were Roberto Jorge Quieto who, after a spell in the Communist Party, became a law student and joined the FAR in 1967, and Juan Pablo Maestre, an IBM programmer with Gillette (where Olmedo also found employment). Among the student members, Alberto Miguel Camps and his compañera Raquel Liliana Gelín had the distinction of being one of the

---

1. Héctor Víctor Suarez, "The Revolutionary Armed Forces: With Che's Weapons," in Kohl and Litt, op. cit., pp. 379-386.

2. See Appendix A.

earliest clandestine couples.

Both politically and economically, the proto-FAR was a dependent of the Cuban Revolution. Even Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, the name it adopted in 1970, was the same as that of Cuba's military. Olmedo visited Cuba twice in the mid-1960's to conclude details of Guevara's Bolivian venture which was, however, frustrated before the Argentine group was ready for action. The death and failure of Guevara had a profound effect on the proto-FAR and led them to question their own ideas. Their post mortem noted that "Che lacked an organisation; Che was not inserted in a national political experience; Che was not recognised by the Bolivian popular classes as responding to their needs and commands". Moreover, the fledgling Argentine group realised that these were also "our own defects". [1]

Thus from 1967 onwards, Olmedo's group began to look towards the Peronist Movement for "a national political experience", though their conversion was not immediate. Strategically, they clung on to rural foquismo until 1970, seeing the cities as merely sources of logistical supports for the rural foco. Though seeing a dialectical relationship between foquismo and revolutionary conditions in society, and thus criticising Debray in the name of Guevara, they regarded foquismo as a catalyst which would accelerate the maturation of revolutionary conditions:

> "the very deed of arming oneself, equipping and going into action creates consciousness, organisation and revolutionary conditions" ...."It is not necessary to wait until all the conditions are present; it is possible to contribute to creating them through action"...."It is not possible to wait until all the conditions are present; these will never all be present at the same time if revolutionary action is not started". 2

By 1969 they were still thinking in terms of continental rural

---

1. FAR interview, "Los de Garín," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971), pp. 56-70.

2. Ibid., pp. 57-58.

guerrilla warfare and still to some extent looking to Bolivia and planning to join up with Inti Peredo, Che's successor. However, the Cordobazo and other provincial risings of 1969, the example of the Tupamaros and the emergence of the urban Peronist "special formations" led the proto-FAR to revise its strategic conceptions and look to urban warfare. The Bolivian defeats combined with a growing awareness of their own isolation from Argentine popular struggles led the group to "nationalise" their foquismo through becoming a pro-Peronist urban-based poltico-military organisation, the FAR, in 1970. By this time, three years of preparatory work and small anonymous expropriations had provided them with a solid organisational structure. The proto-FAR phase had produced only one spectacular operation, the 26th June 1969 firebombing of 13-14 Minimax supermarkets to protest against a visit to Buenos Aires by their owner, Nelson Rockefeller. This too had been anonymous - the organisation wisely did not announce its existence to the world until strong enough to sustain a continuous campaign.

It is interesting to examine exactly how these Guevarists became "Peronised". The first step was Guevara's defeat in Bolivia which, as has been stated, led to the search for a nationally-based variant of socialism. Step two was a concurrent attempt to overcome their erstwhile isolation from the labour movement by taking a more sympathetic attitude towards Peronism. Finally, the culminating step three was to characterise Peronism as a revolutionary movement whose aim was socialism. If one leaves aside armed struggle which, despite its rural to urban transformation, remained a constant, what the FAR conversion to Peronism represented was the abandonment of a revolutionary theory based upon the Marxist notion of objective working-class interests to one based upon the subjective political identification of the Argentine working class at a particular time in its history. It therefore involved a radical departure

from the analytical method of Marx rather than a demand that Marxist analysis do justice to national peculiarities.

The FAR thus became Peronist and relegated Marxism to the status of a "theoretical instrument" with the argument that it was "not a universal political banner". They opted for a:

> "revolutionary nationalism (which) would imply a positive evaluation of the Peronist experience,....which would be much more difficult to know how to develop without the aid of Marxism-Leninism but which is not constructed with the mere aid of Marxism-Leninism but with ours, with that of the experience of the Peronist people". 1

FAR motivation here was to "be together with the people, to share their experience step by step", [2] something vital for revolutionary success, but to take "the experience of the people" - and only the Peronist experience - as the basis for a revolutionary theory and identity in practice led them to adopt popular illusions in Perón. While recognising that Perón had stood for class conciliation in the past, the FAR believed that he had now learnt from experience and now understood "why freedom, justice and sovereignty are only possible under socialism". [3] Perón's encouragement of the armed revolutionary wing of his Movement was seen as evidence that his metamorphosis was not merely verbal.

Such were the arguments of Olmedo as he polemicised with the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) through an exchange of documents in what he appropriately referred to as "a dialogue between deaf men". [4] These documents reveal that the FAR when converted to Peronism

---

1. Ibid., p. 62.
2. "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias: Aporte al Proceso de Confrontación de Posiciones y Polémica Pública que Abordamos con el ERP," Militancia, no. 4 (5th July 1973), pp. 35-38.
3. "Los de Garín," op. cit., p. 63.
4. For an English summary of the documents, published in Militancia, nos. 3 (28th June 1973) & 4, op. cit., see Hodges, Argentina, 1943-1976...,op. cit., pp. 88-93.

immediately took up a movimientista position, as reflected in the statement that "Today, no Peronist believes in coexistence between the Argentine worker and the capitalist...of a foreign company. No authentic Peronist, of course". [1] Here there is both the visualisation of foreign vis-à-vis national capital as the main enemy and the view that Peronism, rather than being an alliance of ultimately antagonistic classes, was mainly differentiated along political lines into "authentic" and "non-authentic" Peronists.

In order to see themselves as Peronists, the FAR like the Montoneros invoked the notion of authenticity. They took the most radical rhetoric of Perón as the official ideology of the Peronist Movement as a whole and this enabled them to conceive of themselves as "true", "loyal" and "authentic" Peronists and their opponents within Peronism as "traitors". In order to reach a positive evaluation of Peronism, the FAR jettisoned everything in their original ideological baggage which suggested major contradictions within, or limitations of, the Movement. They evaded class analysis by presenting Peronism as a "social force" [2] while at a societal level seeing the Peronism/Anti-Peronism antagonism as fundamental. Social darwinization of the Movement was pointed to in an attempt to explain how a bourgeois movement had become revolutionary: "Today in 1971, all the (1946-55) allies of the working class, the protagonist of 17th October (1945), have abandoned its camp". [3] This had supposedly left Peronism, while not totally proletarian, as a revolutionary "social force" whose central axis was the organised working class. What the theory ignored, however, was explanation of why the workers were not in

---

1. "FAR: Aporte al Proceso...," op. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. "13 Preguntas a las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias," Nuevo Hombre, no. 17 (10-16th November 1971), pp. 2-3.

the leadership of the Movement and how they were to attain and exercise hegemony. The FAR's silence on these points only underlines the trust which they placed in Perón himself as leader.

One also finds in the early FAR documents an explanation of the allure of guerrilla warfare. The FAR spoke of the need for revolutionaries to find the means "which lead the working class to the conquest of power... (and) must find the short-cuts which make this conquest nearest and shortest". [1] This reference to "finding the short-cuts", repeated in another document, [2] reflects both the influence of Guevarist ideas on the catalytic impact of foquismo and petty-bourgeois impatience at the reluctance of the proletariat to rise up immediately. The FAR believed that they could accelerate social and political processes by resorting to arms, by disorganising and demonstrating the vulnerability of the enemy through guerrilla attacks. That this would have a catalytic effect on the masses was, however, an illusion for as Trotsky had argued some sixty years earlier, guerrilla success, rather than stimulating the masses, more likely:

> "reconciles them to their powerlessness, and turns their eyes and hopes towards a great avenger and liberator who some day will come and accomplish his mission"..."the greater their impact, the more they reduce the interest of the masses in self-organising and self-education". 3

The public baptism of the FAR took place on 30th July 1970 when they took control of the small town of Garín (population 30,000), occupied its police station and telephone office, and then carried out a bank expropriation. Both the Tupamaros' Pando occupation and the Montoneros' La Calera operation served as models - indeed the FAR referred to their operation as

---

1. Ibid.
2. FAR: "Documento de Actualización Política," (c.1972), quoted in Avangada Socialista, no. 121 (17th September 1974).
3. Leon Trotsky, Why Marxists Oppose Individual Terrorism (1911), republished in the Militant, organ of the Socialist Workers Party (USA), 7th September 1973.

pandito (little Pando) while making their plans. Given the guerrilla losses which followed the two prototypal actions, the objective of the FAR here was to demonstrate that such an operation could be a success - and this time it was.

During the three years which followed, the FAR developed into an active urban guerrilla organisation and became well-known for its independent and co-sponsored armed actions. Its failure to attain the stature of the Montoneros can be attributed to a number of factors. In the first place, it appears to have suffered more at the hands of the State security forces, perhaps because it attacked leading police and military personnel too soon. At the end of 1970 Raquel Liliana Gelín became the first Argentine female guerrilla to die, killed in battle after a Córdoban bank raid which was her first and last piece of action. At the same time 16 members of the organisation were captured. A further four arrests early in 1971 led to the loss of important documentation which held up FAR development for several months. 1971 was a terrible year for the FAR. It witnessed the deaths of Juan Pablo Maestre, leader of a commando unit at Garín, killed by a death squad in July; Olmedo, Villagra and Baffí during a November gunbattle in Ferreyra, Córdoba; and of Angel Castilla, assassinated on his doorstep the following week. Moreover, María Angélica Sabelli, Alfredo Elías Kohon and Carlos Heriberto Astudillo, all students, were to perish in the Trelew executions of August 1972.

Secondly, the FAR's relative weakness appears to have been a result of its rather exotic (in Peronist eyes) origins. It had been slow to move towards Peronism and lacked leading militants with records of Peronist activity. This made the construction of a political support base both slow and difficult. Finally, the latter was also hindered by the emphasis which the FAR put on combat rather than attempting to

integrate guerrilla actions with mass struggles. In other words, the FAR was more militaristic than the more successful Montoneros, and this found a mild reflection in the FAR statement that "It is necessary to destroy (the) bourgeois army, generating the conditions for a confrontation, for a civil war and that is, in short, the role of the foco". [1]

Two of the best-known FAR operations were assassinations. In July 1971, with the aid of other armed organisations, they ambushed and killed a retired army officer, Major Julio Sanmartino, for deserting the Peronist Movement in the 1950's to become more recently a police chief and prisons' director of Córdoba. A similarly purely punitive measure was taken in April 1972 when, together with the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), the FAR assassinated the former commander of the II Army Corps in Rosario, General Juan Carlos Sánchez, who had boasted that he had wiped out 85% of Rosario's guerrillas. Beside his bullet-riddled body, his executioners left a calling card signed by the "15% who survive". This was perhaps the only action by a Peronist guerrilla organisation during the 1970-73 period to be condemned by Perón.

Such actions, though a factor in making the military decide to call elections, in no way enhanced the FAR's aim for workers' power. They were not related to the experiences of struggling workers and were totally alien to their forms of struggle. Though the FAR claimed that to opt for guerrilla warfare was not a question of choosing a military rather than a political strategy, it is clear from their documents that revolutionary political struggle was equated with military struggle and, moreover, that the FAR's political activity amounted to little more than the latter: "this struggle is merely politics by other means and not by any means but by the effective means". [2]

---

1. "Los de Garín," op. cit., p. 58.
2. Ibid., p. 62.

When outlining their "triple operational line", the FAR illustrated that their "line of insertion" (i.e. that linking combat to popular struggle) was by no means central but rather just one element in a tripartite scheme which also included an "expropriatory line" and a "line of counter-blow". [1] In stressing combat and equating guerrilla struggle with revolutionary political struggle, the FAR effectively abandoned the task of winning the working class to their ideas. They felt that Argentine workers were either already revolutionary or that, stimulated by guerrilla activity, they would learn from their experiences alone. The self-appointed task of the guerrilla vanguard was, through growth, to offer the working class "an instrument of power, a People's Army" which would lead them to eventually build "a Socialist Argentina on the ashes of the bourgeois State". [2]

If the working class did not live up to the expectations which the FAR had in them, it was partly because guerrilla warfare had driven a wedge between a major section of the revolutionary Left and the labour movement. The FAR's adoption of a Peronist identity had opened up possibilities of closer contact with the workers but this advantage was almost totally negated by the organisation's overwhelming emphasis on combat. What the FAR failed to see was that in order to seize power militarily, one had first to win over the working class politically. There was much insistence on this in the Marxism-Leninism which the FAR had largely discarded. Moreover, one should note that even in their earlier phase, the proto-FAR had exhibited considerable disdain for theory as a guide to action: "We always said that we put things into practice before we made up theories about them", one leader said in 1971. The FAR emphasis on action by the guerrilla, coupled with reliance on the experiences of the

---

1. Ibid., p. 69.
2. "13 Preguntas...," op. cit., pp. 3-4.

working class, proved to be an unsatisfactory revolutionary formula. Though the Cuban Revolution, their inspiration, had been a partial exception to the rule, successful revolutions have almost invariably shown the importance of a revolutionary party gaining influence and support through participation in mass activity. In dropping their early Guevarist self-identification, the FAR did not move on to a coherent revolutionary theory but to a new identity based upon popular experience and to a modified methodology - urban guerrilla warfare. They rejected Marxism-Leninism when used as a "political straitjacket", [1] only to find refuge in a tighter one.

Nevertheless, despite its being overshadowed by the Montoneros and non-Peronist People's Revolutionary Army, the FAR did make an important contribution to the growth of the Montoneros. The proto-FAR established contact with the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) in 1969, discussed the role of the Peronist bureaucracy with them, and then conversed with the Montoneros early in 1971. Their early differences with the Montoneros are somewhat obscure but revolved around the question of whether or not the "special formations" were to seek to become the "armed wing" of the Peronist Movement. [2] Subsequently, until 1973 the three groups plus the smaller Descamisados Commando coordinated their activities through the Peronist Armed Organisations (OAP), a loose coordinating body where attempts were also made to reconcile political differences through discussion.

Political differentiation among the above organisations was at first less important than their common Peronist affiliation and the need which each felt to respond "with armed struggle to the armed struggle which (the dictatorship) was conducting from the State". However, with the fall of Onganía, differences arose over how to react to the change in the

---

1. Héctor Víctor Suarez interview, op. cit., pp. 381 & 384.
2. "13 Preguntas..., op. cit., p. 3.

regime's strategy. Though the specific alignments in the controversy are not clear, it thwarted a unitarian Peronist guerrilla initiative in 1971. There were also early attempts to unite the Peronist and non-Peronist armed organisations, on the basis that they all shared an ultimate socialist objective, a method and a common enemy, but these also faltered due to the Montonero insistence that "being Peronist or not was not accidental nor a circumstantial and anecdotic fact...it was an absolute determinant of whether one was revolutionary or not in Argentina". [1]

The Peronist Armed Organisations was therefore created on the basis of the above three criteria plus a common Peronist identity. Political differences, however, were still strong enough to prevent the coordinator from attaining a formalised structure. By the end of 1971 there was "an almost total divergence between the FAP, FAR and Montoneros organizations and a greater degree of agreement between the Montoneros and Descamisados". The Montonero analysis of this period probably had the FAR in mind when it claimed that some groups:

> "unilateralised the struggle in armed struggle, while for (the Montoneros) the problem was one of integral popular war which would have to be developed on all the fronts of militancy". 2

In other words, while the Montoneros promoted the growth of the Peronist Youth, others merely concentrated on armed actions.

Differences over how to react to Lanusse's Great National Agreement (GAN) scheme are said to have deepened through discussions, with the exception of Montonero-Descamisados relations. These organisations merged at the end of 1972. In the end, however, differences between the Montoneros and FAR were overcome, not so much through their joint military operations but through joint surface activity. During the run-up to

---

1. "La Unidad de FAR y Montoneros," op. cit.
2. Ibid.

Perón's first return trip in November 1972, the two organisations worked together in the Luche y Vuelve (Struggle and He'll Return) campaign. Through this and the subsequent electoral campaign, common activity eventually led to a unification of FAR and Montonero political and organisational conceptions. They reached de facto unity by early in 1973 and then formalised this through their fusion of 12th October 1973. The name Montoneros lived on and that of the FAR passed into history. Unity with the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) was not achieved in this period due to the irreconcilability of movimientista and alternativista conceptions. However, as will be seen in the final chapter, a movimientista current led by Carlos Caride did emerge in the Peronist Armed Forces during 1972-3 and eventually went over to the Montoneros in mid-1974. Moves in the opposite direction were far less numerically important though the shift to alternativismo on the part of the Montoneros' José Sabino Navarro Column and the Cooke-Pujadas Recovery Column did reflect a radicalisation in the face of mainstream Montonero ideas being challenged by the new reality of Peronism in office.

Both in Latin America and internationally, guerrilla mergers are highly unusual, not just because of the sectarianism and real political differences which divide the Left in general, but also because the clandestinity and security requirements demanded by armed organisations make cooperation and political debate extremely difficult and hazardous. This process was crucial to the development of the Montoneros, though it had to overcome a lot of obstacles on the way - not least this organisations' antipathy to Marxism. In November 1971, the Montoneros had claimed that they were "authentic" Peronists who had nothing to do with the "foreign ideologies" of the other guerrilla groups. [1]

---

1. Quoted in Buenos Aires Herald, 14th November 1971.

Joint operations were important stepping-stones along the route to unity. Montonero-FAR combined operations, mainly armed propaganda actions, started on 26th July 1971 when they attacked a Tucumán police station to mark the anniversary of Evita's death. There were also numerous Montonero-Descamisados combinations, notably the joint assassination in December 1972 of Luis Guerrero, general secretary of the Avellaneda section of the Metalworkers' Union (UOM). The explanation for this departure from the early Montonero general abstinence from killing trade union bureaucrats lay in the fact that Guerrero had incurred Perón's wrath by going against his orders. He had got himself nominated as candidate for the Buenos Aires provincial vice-governorship, as running mate to the wealthy right-wing landowner Manuel de Anchorena.

The most famous of the joint Peronist Armed Organisations' actions was a costly failure. In November 1971, the FAR, Montoneros and Peronist Armed Forces attempted a joint response to the banning of the left-wing Fiat Concord plant union SITRAC by the Córdoban government. Their aim was to kidnap a high Fiat executive in order to force the re-employment of 246 sacked militants, the re-legalisation of the union and an end to the military occupation of the Fiat plant. However, their intended victim was late in arriving, his would-be kidnappers were spotted and in the ferocious gunbattle which followed the Peronist Armed Organisations lost Olmedo, Villagra, Baffí and Peressini.

Little is known of the Descamisados group, a small group which failed to produce any public documents apart from the occasional communiqué claiming responsibility for an operation. Far more interesting was an equally small group called the National Revolutionary Army (Ejército Nacional Revolucionario - ENR) which also became part of the Montoneros. Of all the Argentine guerrilla organisations, this "Army", composed of a handful of people, was the most militaristic. Its sole function was that

of a "hit squad": to liquidate "traitors". In August 1970, it announced that its "Hero of the Resistance, Domingo Blajaquis Commando" had been responsible for the June 1969 assassination of Augusto T. Vandor, the leading collaborationist Peronist union leader of the 1960's.

Vandor had been condemned to death on 27 counts which included betrayals of the 1959 General Strike, the 1964 CGT Plan de Lucha and Perón's 'Return Operation' of the same year; alleged links with the state intelligence services and the CIA; repeated challenges to Perón's leadership and his direct involvement in the killing of two militants Domingo Blajaquis and Juan Zalazar in May 1966. Operación Judas, as it was called, was not claimed by the "Army" at the time due to its lack of "sufficient strength to guarantee the continuity of its action". A communiqué in Cristianismo y Revolución in April 1971 ended with the chilling words: "There will be no pardons for the judases. Let all trade union leaders freely choose their destiny". [1]

This was followed up in August 1970 with the slaying of former CGT general secretary José Alonso, who had been the leader of the anti-Vandor union faction in the early 1960's but had adopted conciliatory attitudes towards the regime of the late 1960's. The National Revolutionary Army's "Emilio Maza Montonero Commando" gunned him down for "treason to the working class and the Peronist Movement", being "an agent of a murderous regime, a police informer", etc.. The rationale behind such an act was "very elemental". The "Army" saw Argentina divided into two camps:

> "On the one hand, imperialism; on the other the Nation. The principal force of the Nation was the Peronist Movement and within that the working class. Any infiltrator, therefore, from the imperialist camp within the heart of the Nation, i.e. within the Movement and the Peronist working class, was a priority target

---

1. "Declaración del ENR con motivo del ajusticiamiento de Augusto T. Vandor," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28, (April 1971), pp. 52-53.

for being eliminated". [1]

The declared aims of the Alonso killing (Operativo FOCA) were "to show the whole Peronist working class that it had a superior weapon to all those employed during those 18 years" (of resistance) and "to tell all the comrades who already had guns in their hands what was the fundamental objective: the traitors infiltrated in the Peronist working class". The "main mission of revolutionaries" was "crushing traitors". [2] In order to escape execution, trade union leaders were invited to launch a Plan of Action for wage rises, the release of political prisoners and the return of Perón, within 30 days. Their elitism and supercilious attitude towards the labour movement were evident in every word of their communiqués.

The National Revolutionary Army's Communiqué No. 2 claimed that:

> "the bringing to justice of the traitor José Alonso has been approved by the Argentine people. Proof of this is that the workers, honorable trades unionists, combative Peronism, General Juan Domingo Perón, the 3rd World Movement and the students have not lamented the death of a traitor". 3

The facts were otherwise. A CGT general strike called to protest against the killing was highly successful and 2,000 people attended the funeral. Some 15,000 mourners attended Vandor's and it was not just the official Peronist 62 Organisations union body which condemned his killing, but also the main radical labour organisation of the time, the CGT of the Argentines. Speaking for the latter, Ricardo de Luca condemned the assassination and pointed out that it was "not Argentine labour's way of solving disputes". [4]

While styling itself "revolutionary", the killers of Vandor

---

1. "Quiénes, Cómo y por qué lo Ejecutaron. La Muerte de José Alonso," La Causa Peronista, no, 8 (27th August 1974), pp. 25-29.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Buenos Aires Herald, 1st-3rd July 1969 & 28-30th August 1970.

and Alonso were clearly nothing of the kind, at least back in 1970. At that time the National Revolutionary Army used as its symbol the 8-pointed red star which had been the emblem of Federalism during the Rosas Government. It may well have revised some of its political conceptions before affiliating to the Montoneros a few years later but its methodology survived to become a new element in that of the Montoneros - as seen in the assassination of trade union leaders such as Rucci and Coria. The "Army's" mentality was present at a Peronist Youth cadre school in January 1974 when Firmenich, asked what the Montoneros could offer the union bureaucracy in order to interest it in negotiations with them, replied:

> "What can we offer them? We can offer them an armistice which respects their power. This could subsequently take the form of us not annoying Lorenzo Miguel (the Metalworkers' Union leader) all the time, of us not killing him, all sorts of things". 1

Possibly it was from the National Revolutionary Army that the Montoneros inherited the idea that, in addition to organising in the unions while above ground, they could resolve the problem of obstinate union bureaucrats by military means. It is clear that they did not realise how alien such methods were to the mass of workers who mainly looked to union elections for a solution, despite the problems posed by the bureaucracy's control of the electoral process, and occasionally to strike action and occupations. A pro-Montonero account of the period described Vandor's assassins as being "the armed wing of the workers"! Of course, the protagonists of such actions, at least during the period of military rule, could claim Perón's authorisation for he had written that: "There can only be one penalty for traitors: death". [2] Penalty it may have been but assassination was a totally ineffective method of acquiring a more representative labour leadership. The sole function of the killings was

---

1. Firmenich, Etapa y Conjuntura, op. cit., p. 17.
2. González Janzen, op. cit., pp. 75 & 97.

a negative punitive one for there was always a seemingly inexhaustible supply of corrupt bureaucrats lining up to fill dead men's shoes.

Clearly, a common commitment to urban armed struggle was crucial to the unification of the various Peronist Left movimientista groups of the early 1970's but it would be a mistake to infer that methodology outweighed political considerations. Were that so, one could not explain the movimientista - alternativista divide nor the former's distance from the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), of Guevarist orientation. There were a number of joint actions with the ERP in the 1970-73 period, of which the most famous was the partly abortive escape from the Rawson top security prison in August 1972. This operation, consisting of a take-over of Rawson from within while other guerrillas outside commandeered an aeroplane, enabled leaders of the ERP, Montoneros and FAR to escape to Chile. Santucho, Menna and Gorriarán of the ERP, Quieto and Osatinsky of the FAR and the Montonero Fernando Vaca Narvaja got away, but due to bad weather and transport problems a second group of 19 escapees arrived at Trelew airport a few minutes after their leaders' plane had taken off. The 19, after being surrounded, surrendered to the Navy and spent several days in captivity before the 22nd August shootings took place. Sixteen died, including Santucho's wife Ana María Villarreal, but three incredibly survived to give an account of the massacre. [1]

Subsequently, the three organisations came together in drawing up a black list of officers whose blood was demanded in revenge for the killings. In December 1972, a combined operation of the three claimed the life of one of the Navy's top intelligence chiefs, Rear Admiral Emilio

---

1. For accounts of the massacre given by the survivors, María Antonia Berger (FAR), Alberto Miguel Camps (FAR) and Ricardo René Haidar (Montoneros), see Francisco Urondo, op. cit., and Tomás Eloy Martínez, La Pasión Según Trelew (Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973).

Berisso, but the vendetta was halted soon afterwards due to the arrival of the March 1973 elections. Temporary unity between Peronists and non-Peronists at Trelew had been forced upon the guerrillas by their common condition of political prisoners and their common desire for freedom. It was not to last for whereas the Montoneros decided to take advantage of the legal opportunities created by the Peronist electoral victory, the Guevarist ERP continued to wage armed struggle, albeit with a momentary tactical change of targets. Relations between the Montoneros and ERP were at their worst during these sixteen months. At a joint Montonero-FAR press conference in June 1973, Quieto, at this time leader of the FAR, criticised the ERP's "ultraleftism" and "their incorrect conception of the nature of our Movement and of the various stages of the Argentine revolutionary process". He rejected their claim to be revolutionaries, asserting that "to be revolutionaries in our country it is necessary to assume the historical experience of our people, which is Peronism".[1]

Relations reached an all-time low in January 1974 when an ERP attack on the Azul military garrison was used by Perón to justify repressive penal code reforms and the ouster of the Left-leaning governor of Buenos Aires Province, Oscar Bidegain. The Montoneros saw this action as highly provocative (as it was intended to be) and declared that in 1955, "the ERP were the priests". They expressed a wish that the ERP be put in a stadium filled with 100,000 Peronists so that they could be told by the masses that guerrilla warfare was inappropriate in the new conditions. Those not swayed by the pressure of public opinion would be "a police problem".[2]

The official resumption of Montonero military actions in September

---

1. "Construir el Poder Popular," op. cit.
2. "Cómo y de quién le defendemos, General?", El Descamisado, no. 37 (29th January 1974), pp. 2-3.

1974 again brought the two organisations to coordinate their efforts. Cooperation became marginally greater than in the 1970-73 period, especially in 1975 with the creation of the Argentine Liberation Organisation (Organización para la Liberación de Argentina - OLA) in which they and a third group, the Workers' Power Communist Organisation (Organización Comunista Poder Obrero - OCPO) came together. There were indications of Montonero-ERP mutual logistical support and intelligence exchanges, of Montonero financial aid to the weaker ERP and some examples of combination - in October 1975 a mixed cell composed of an ERP company and a Montonero squadron was reportedly broken up by police in Greater Buenos Aires. [1]

However, this coordinating body, unlike the earlier Peronist Armed Organisations, never achieved any significant progress towards political unity. The main stumbling block was still Peronism. While the ERP sought to create an armed revolutionary alliance, as reflected in their slogan "all the guerrillas are our comrades", the Montoneros still regarded Peronism as the revolutionary instrument for the present "stage" and so attempted a reunification of the mass of the Movement around their own "Authentic" banners. Furthermore, the Montoneros regarded the rural foquismo of the ERP as old-fashioned and alien to a predominantly urban-populated society. Finally, the rapid decline of the ERP after the military were sent into Tucumán Province early in 1975 further weakened the desirability of unity as far as the Montoneros were concerned, for subsidisation of a weaker organisation was only likely to hamper their own growth, at least in the near future.

The appeal for the unity of all the armed organisations voiced by

---

1. La Opinión, 9th October 1975.

the Montonero Mariano Pujadas at Trelew airport,[1] a few days before he perished on 22nd August 1972, never found a resounding echo in the Montoneros. The most fundamental difference between the two organisations was over the "stage" which Argentina had reached, this leading the Montoneros and ERP to estimate national bourgeois political potential in very different ways. However, it must be said that the failure of the Montoneros and ERP to achieve anything more than a minimal operational unity was not crucial, for the more decisive factor in their failure was a common guerrilla inability to organically relate their actions to mass struggles. It was isolation from the labour movement rather than isolation from each other which left the guerrilla organisations politically weak, even when they were militarily strong.

---

1. Full text published in Urondo, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

CHAPTER V

'MOVIMIENTISMO' : THE POLITICAL FRONT

"FAITH WAS ONE OF OUR BIGGEST ERRORS"

- Córdoban worker, 29th April 1974 [1]

The great survival capacity of the Montoneros can to a great extent be attributed to the fact that they have never been a mere urban guerrilla organisation. In styling themselves a "politico-military organisation", Montoneros justifiably refer to the fact that their organisation has always attempted to combine armed struggle with mass political activity in a combined, integral strategy. Even though in practice, as has been seen, their mass political work has been severely and indeed critically limited during periods of underground revolutionary warfare, it has nevertheless been a crucial factor in counteracting the tendency towards social isolation which is inherent in militaristic political methods.

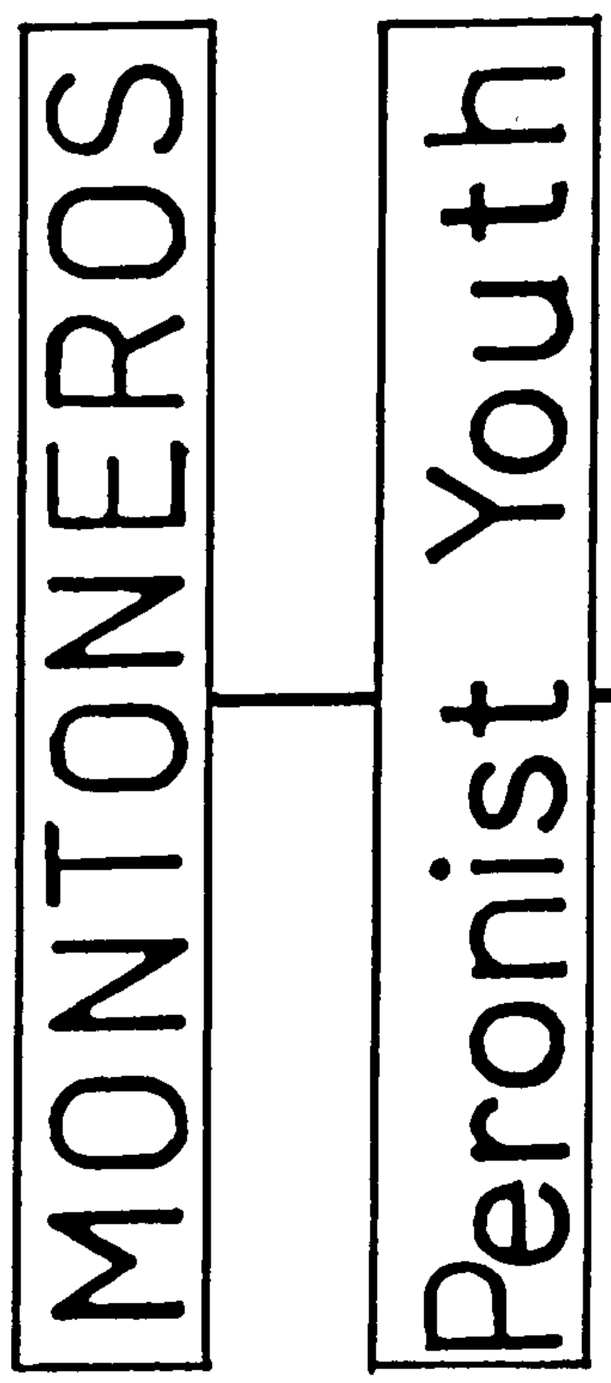
It is therefore important to devote attention to the political mass fronts developed by the Montoneros from the early 1970's onwards. Of these, the first and most significant example was the Peronist Youth (Juventud Peronista - JP) which, during the 16 months above ground, was joined by important sister organisations developed for work among university students and young workers, and less numerically noteworthy organisations designed to mobilise secondary students, shanty-town dwellers and the tenants of slum boarding-houses. Under the hegemony of the Montoneros, these organisations became known as the Tendencia Revolucionaria or Revolutionary Tendency of Peronism, though one has to treat the term cautiously for it is also applied generically to the whole of the Peronist Left. In 1975, these fronts were to join with other dissident sectors of Peronism

---

1. "Peronismo de Base: Conformes los burgueses....," De Frente, 2nd period, no. 1 (2nd May 1974), pp. 8-10.

to form the Authentic Peronist Movement (Movimiento Peronista Auténtico - MPA) whose performance will be analysed at the end of this chapter.

Before examining the principal front organisations individually, it is first necessary to clarity their inter-relationships and make some general points. The Montoneros, while defining their organisation as "politico-military", concentrated on armed actions in the 1970-73 period while promoting the formation of a strong Peronist Youth to perform mass political work as well as serve as a recruitment ground for guerrilla combatants. In 1973, however, with margins for legal activity greatly broadened, the surface organisation was restructured so as to provide specific functional organisations for all the social groups courted by the Montoneros. By the end of 1973 this had been achieved and can be diagrammatically represented as follows:



Peronist Youth (Regions)
Juventud Peronista (Regionales) - JP
For youth and general political work, based in barrios (city districts)

Peronist University Youth
Juventud Universitaria Peronista - JUP
For work among students in association with other university employees

Peronist Working Youth
Juventud Trabajadora Peronista - JTP
For work in the unions

Secondary Students Union
Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios - UES
For work in schools

Evita Group of the Feminine Branch
Agrupación Evita de la Rama Femenina
For work in the Peronists women's section

Peronist Shanty-Town Dwellers Movement
Movimiento de Villeros Peronistas - MVP
For work in the shanty-towns

Peronist Tenants Movement
Movimiento de Inquilinos Peronistas - MIP
For work among the tenants of dilapidated boarding-houses and hoteles

Juventud Peronista was both a generic term applied to all of the

above organisations and also a more specific name designating the mass political front organisation based in the barrios or neighbourhoods, the latter organisation being structured regionally - hence Juventud Peronista (Regionales). "Regionales" was a necessary qualification of the youth organisation's title because in the early 1970's, apart from the above fronts, there were at least a dozen groups, many of them consisting only of a leadership and/or communiqué typists, which claimed to be the youth section of Peronism. Moreover, the regional structure, dividing the pro-Montonero Peronist Youth nationally into 7 and later 8 regions, with its national executive being composed of "delegates" (local leaders) from each region, was imitated by the student, secondary student and young worker collaterals. The fact that the remaining fronts lacked a regional structure reflects their weakness as national forces.

Estimation of the strength of each front organisation cannot be precise for the Tendency lacked a systematic affiliation procedure. Apart from leaders at all levels, it is impossible to distinguish between members, supporters and sympathisers. The Montonero emphasis in 1972-4, when they were trying to convince Perón that they were now the mainstay of his Movement, was more on mobilisation than organisation. A premium was placed upon putting large numbers of vociferous youths onto the streets or into stadia rather than creating a strong cadre organisation. This produced spectacular results in the short run but subsequently rebounded on the Montoneros when the parameters of legal activity contracted. Only the most noticeably capable Peronist youths were selected by the Montonero leadership for specialised military training and political indoctrination to prepare them for incorporation into the Montoneros.

Formal affiliations and membership lists have traditionally been

regarded as alien in the Peronist Movement which has always proudly asserted its status as a revolutionary Movement, with parties viewed at best as electoral instruments and at worst as inevitably reformist bulwarks of liberal-democratic political systems. In the pre-1976 years, the Montoneros shared this disdain for formal party organisation but one can nevertheless arrive at a rough approximation of the proportional strength of the various pro-Montonero fronts (and thus of its social composition) by looking at the attendance at meetings and rallies and from the estimates of activists and journalists. The task is complicated by the existence of dual and even triple affiliations. Many of the activists who worked in the education, union and women's fronts also participated in the more general tasks of the Regionales. Moreover, women who belonged to unions and shanty-town dwellers who worked in industry, to cite two examples, obviously had two potential organisational possibilities.

Nevertheless, the picture which emerges from the sectional analyses of each front is one in which the Peronist Youth Regionales and the university grouping are the most substantial, with the young workers' organisation appearing significantly less numerous than both and with the shanty-town dwellers as possibly the largest of the remaining front organisations. In terms of social composition, all indicators point to a marked petty-bourgeois predominance in the Tendency whose social make-up in the 1973-74 period can be estimated to have been roughly 20-30% working class (this being an absolute maximum), about 50% university student, and around 20-30% coming from other petty-bourgeois sectors and including school students and professional people.

The "hardest" data here pertains to the 31st August 1973 march-past when Perón reviewed his supporters from the CGT HQ. Journalists' stop-watches revealed that while the Peronist Youth Regionales'

contingents as a whole, stretching over 15 blocks, took 162 minutes to pass the review balcony, their trade union columns accounted for just 16 minutes of this whereas the other sectors of the Tendency, marching behind JP banners, took 146 minutes. [1] Working-class affiliation was somewhat greater than these figures suggest, since the pro-Montonero union columns on this occasion largely represented just their two main areas of union support - the State Workers Association and the Buenos Aires section of the State Gas Workers' union. Nevertheless, the pattern of proletarian weakness and petty-bourgeois strength in the mass support base of the Montoneros was evident and remained a permanent obstacle to an organisation positing Socialism as its ultimate goal.

In 1973, the Peronist Youth claimed a total of 500,000 "members" on all its fronts [2] and indeed this was no exaggeration, if one equates "members" with anybody who participated at any level in their activities. On the historic occasion of Perón's 1973 return, they were able to mobilise more than this number and had regular turn-outs of 50-100,000 people at their own rallies and demonstrations during the sixteen month truce period. Were these figures indicative, however, of the real political strength of the Montonero tendency, one could not explain its powerlessness in the face of the rightward drift of the Peronist governments and leadership and the Left's incapacity to go onto the offensive.

The truth is that the impressive numbers mobilised by the Montoneros through their political fronts cannot be equated with numerical support for a revolutionary political project. Mobilisation was not based on a coherent analysis of Argentine problems, a clearly-defined

---

1. See the special supplement to El Descamisado, no. 16 (4th September 1973) and the report in La Razón, 1st September 1973.
2. "La Juventud Peronista y Perón: Contacto Permanante, Sin Intermedios," El Descamisado, no. 10 (24th July 1973), pp. 2-7.

socialist alternative or an independent revolutionary theory to guide the mobilised along the road from the existing to the new society. Rather, the mass of Peronist Youth supporters were mobilised on the basis of slogans, the emotional appeal of Montonero mass rallies and demonstrations, and specific policy stances which were generally unrelated to a project for changing society as a whole. This meant that much of the Montonero political support was totally unsophisticated. Whereas a relatively small minority were cadres, capable of leadership, organisation and political guidance, the vast majority were untrained for these vital political tasks and did little more than contribute bodies and voices at the huge Peronist Youth mobilisations, plus stamina and enthusiasm in the "National Reconstruction" social work projects. Though adhesion to these front organisations expressed a genuine, if extremely vague and inarticulate, desire for revolutionary change, its numerical size tended to give an inflated impression of the real political strength of the Peronist Left.

Responsibility for this state of affairs must to a great extent be attributed to the Montoneros themselves. The influence of orthodox Peronist internal organisational practices combined with the exigencies of guerrilla warfare to endow the Montoneros with a highly authoritarian command structure which the Peronist Youth inherited. Acceptance of the principle of verticalismo meant that the political line and choice of leaders emanated from the top, with rank-and-file participation in decision-making being minimal. Though this was partially remedied around 1974, for most of the period above ground the Montoneros and their collaterals were almost totally contemptuous of internal democracy, while hypocritically demanding it in the broader Peronist Movement so that the weight of their numbers could tell.

Leaders of the various political front organisations were

Montoneros nominated by their own leadership and though lower-level Peronist Youth officers were frequently only potential Montoneros, they were still chosen from above rather than by their branches. Moreover, it was these people who ex officio generally attended JP conferences and cadre schools, branch elections again being a rare phenomenon here. Thus the Peronist Youth organisations were totally subordinate to the Montonero parent organisation and lacked any real powers of initiative in policy-making or of control over their leaders.

The result was twofold. Firstly, it meant that only a small minority of participants were able to develop politically into mature revolutionaries. In this way, a lot of potential talent was wasted. Secondly, it prevented the possibility of real political homogeneity from emerging through a democratic internal interchange of ideas and rank-and-file participation in the elaboration of policy. Since unity was based upon extremely general and vague notions expressed through little more than a series of slogans, it was an incredibly fragile unity. This was seen early in 1974 when Perón put pressure on the Revolutionary Tendency and a "loyalist" wing split off; at the March 11th 1974 Atlanta rally when rank-and-file chants told Firmenich where he could stick not only the existing but any Social Pact with "national" entrepreneurs; [1] and in the general dislocation and loss of support suffered through the abrupt September 1974 decision to declare war on the government of Isabel Perón.

Military thinking was behind the fallacy of believing that a highly centralised and hierarchical, undemocratic command structure could ensure political unity. Both Perón's organisational instructions

---

1. In response to Firmenich's call for a new Social Pact, sections of the crowd chanted, "duro, duro, el pacto social se lo meten en el culo" - De Frente, 2nd period, no. 4 (23rd May 1974), pp. 32-36.

to the Peronist Resistance [1] and the Montoneros' views on politico-military organisation in this period derive from the theory and practice of bourgeois military organisation. When applied to political activity, especially in the period when democratic practices were at their most viable, they had the opposite effect to that desired. Many young Peronists became disaffected due to the authoritarian way in which their organisations were directed from above, while at the same time the vertical structure helped prevent the radicalisation of the Montoneros and their conversion to the politics of class struggle.

Thus, when one analyses the different Peronist Left front organisations, one must be wary of equating political success with numbers. The key question is not so much how the Montoneros achieved tremendous numerical growth in this period but rather how so much potential and energy was wasted. After all, the Montoneros had more sympathisers in 1973 than the Bolsheviks at the start of 1917. [2]

THE 'JUVENTUD PERONISTA (REGIONALES)'

The origins of the most recent Peronist Youth (JP) of Montonero orientation date back to the middle of 1971, when determined efforts were made by Perón to unite the diverse youth groups in order to put more pressure on the military junta. At that time, as in most of the post-1955 years, the youth sector was an anarchic "conglomeration of small, combative and intransigent bastions, united more around personal loyalties than for organisational purposes". [3] Leading personalities

---

1. CPC, op. cit., passim.
2. The Bolsheviks had around 20,000 members by February 1917, See Mary McAuley, Politics and the Soviet Union (Great Britain: Penguin, 1977), p. 42.
3. Juan Carlos Dante Gullo, "El país se pregunta: Qué es la Juventud Peronista?", El Descamisado, no. 8 (10th July 1973), pp. 10-13.

like Gustavo Rearte, Envar El Kadri, Carlos Caride, Dardo Cabo and Jorge Rulli each led small bands of supporters, some of them from jail, but their disunity dissipated energies and they made little impact on the rank-and-file of the Peronist Movement.

It was evident from the popular struggles of the previous three years that there was a large reserve of radical youth available for the creation of a mass youth movement, but its materialisation needed Perón's aid and encouragement. A key decision in this respect was the leader's sacking of Jorge Paladino, his 12th delegate, and his replacement by Héctor Cámpora in October 1971. This represented a tactical decision on the part of Perón, who saw the need to reinforce his conciliatory "Hour of the People" approach, for which he had used Paladino, with one of mass mobilisation to ensure that the military allowed free elections to take place.

Cámpora was chosen for his personal loyalty to Perón and his independence from the conciliatory "participationist" wing of the leadership which was ever ready to negotiate deals with the military regime. He had never belonged to the more radical wing of the Movement and indeed had been considered a confirmed conservative during his spell as President of the Chamber of Deputies under the earlier Peronist government. Though imprisoned in 1955 and then finding a place in resistance history by joining the escape of Cooke and four others to Chile in March 1957, Cámpora played no role in the Resistencia itself. According to Cooke, during his 1955-57 imprisonment, Cámpora:

> "spent his days praying" (and) "made a promise to God that he would never return to political activity"...."At all times, he demonstrated that he was not a man of struggle and as such he can be of no use (to the Resistance)". 1

---

1. Cooke, Letter to Perón of 11.4.57, CPC, 1:72.

To organise the youth sector, Perón accepted Francisco Julián Licastro, a former lieutenant who had left the Army after supporting the Cordobazo, and the Montonero Rodolfo Galimberti as youth representatives on the Superior Council of the National Justicialist Movement. Both had been nominated by one of the youth groups, Puerta de Hierro (named after Perón's Madrid residence) but only Galimberti had genuine youth support, especially among the "special formations" and from his own group, the Argentine Youth for National Emancipation (JAEN) which played a protagonistic role in the reorganisation. Through discussions and joint mobilisations, Galimberti was able to forge a very loose alliance of the youth groups. The political and ideological disunity between them remained and resurfaced with a vengeance in 1973-74, but during 1972 and early in 1973 they were able to work together for Péron's return and the March 1973 elections. Though the product was not a single Peronist Youth, it did lead to the spectacular growth of one tendency which came to dwarf all the others. That tendency was, of course, the pro-Montonero Regionales created in mid-1972, which was able to develop due to Perón's sponsorship of Galimberti and the process of guerrilla mergers which helped to make the Montoneros the largest "special formation".

The first JP unity rally took place in February 1972 and featured Galimberti denouncing the conciliatory line of the trade union bureaucracy: "We're going to step on them like cockroaches".[1] After that, the rallies grew dramatically. On May Day 1972, a rally in Merlo organised by Galimberti attracted 5-10,000 people; on June 9th the 5,000 capacity stadium of the Argentine Boxing Federation proved too small for the 8,000 seeking to attend a JP rally; and 10,000 attended the JP Nueva Chicago rally of July 28th. Some 20,000 Peronists, largely

---

1. Gullo, op. cit.

mobilised by the Youth, attempted to get to Ezeiza to greet Perón on his first return trip in November 1972 but were held back by 40,000 troops. The latter could not, however, prevent around 100,000 Peronists, under the discipline of the JP, from taking over the area around Perón's Vicente López residence during his stay. In 1973, some 20,000 people cheered the Montoneros at a Justicialist Liberation Front (FREJULI) youth rally at the end of February and the 100,000 crowd at Cámpora's last election rally in March was mainly composed of youths. Finally, an estimated 500,000 people, including massive JP contingents, celebrated Cámpora's assumption of the Presidency on May 25th 1973, after which 10,000 JP members marched to Villa Devoto prison to ensure that the government's promise to liberate the political prisoners became immediately effective. [1]

Unity in action was possible due to a concentration on the two basic issues upon which most Peronists could agree - the return of Perón and a Peronist electoral victory - plus the rhetoric about "national" socialism and "generational rejuvenation" which meant all things to all youths. Thus it was possible to put people with different political projects, like Galimberti, the revolutionary Ongaro and the extreme right-wing leader of the Organisational Command (C. de O.), Alberto Brito Lima, on the same platforms. Perón's use of the mobilisations did not imply a new strategy based upon direct action but a militant tactic to bolster his electoral strategy. In December 1972, for example, he threatened Lanusse that if he proscribed Cámpora as presidential candidate, the natural alternative would be Licastro. [2] Two months later, he warned the military that "if the elections do not take place we are

---

1. Ibid., plus estimates drawn from reports in La Nación, La Razón and the Buenos Aires Herald.

2. Perón interviewed by Ricardo Grassi, reproduced in El Descamisado, no. 27 (20th November 1973), pp. 3-5.

prepared for something else". [1]

Cámpora himself attended most of the Youth rallies and gave his young supporters what most of them wanted to hear. At the Boxing Stadium rally of 1972, he replied to mass chants of "FAR and Montoneros are our comrades" with "your comrades are also mine". [2] Apart from being an instrument of Perón's tactic, Cámpora's alignment with the Youth and Peronist Left was a product of his almost total lack of support in the trade union leadership and weak support in the political and women's branches of the Movement. He relied heavily on the Youth for the organisation of his electoral victory and they proved themselves to be the most active and enthusiastic elements, and to possess a superior power of mobilisation to that of the other branches.

In terms of agitation and mobilisation, the JP reigned supreme but it fell down badly on organisational tasks. By March 1973, they could mobilise tens and even hundreds of thousands of people but this apparent power lacked a firm base in a strong cadre organisation inserted in the mass movement. The immediate effect was that they were unable to completely fill the 25% allocation of political posts which Perón had assigned to them. Had they possessed an independent strategy for gaining power, this would have been relatively unimportant, but since their strategy was one of working through the Movement, both in and out of government, this set a serious limitation on their possibilities.

The main trophy awarded to the Peronist Left in March was the University of Buenos Aires where the former Communist Party member and nationalist historian Rodolfo Puiggrós was nominated interventor. Education Minister Jorge Taiana gave some support to the Tendency but

---

1. Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 12th February 1973.
2. "Soy leal, total, incondicional a Perón," El Descamisado, no, 9 (17th July 1973), p. 12.

regularly condemned student occupations of faculties. In addition, members of the Tendency gained 50 posts in provincial governments [1] as well as seats in local legislatures and governments, but were in all places outnumbered by successful candidates nominated by the union and other branches of the Movement. In the National Congress, the JP gained a mere 8 of the 15% of FREJULI seats occupied by the youth organisations as a whole and were immediately isolated, on most issues, due to the collapse of the operational youth unity which had survived until March 1973. Moreover, though the 8 made a number of radical speeches, their effectiveness when it came to voting was nullified by their participation in the FREJULI bloc, whose discipline they accepted.

Under Câmpora, supporters of the Tendency also occupied important national government posts but again lacked the predominance they displayed in the electoral campaign. The Tendency gained a degree of influence for a little more than a month in the Foreign Ministry where both the Chancellor Juan Carlos Puig and Vice-Chancellor Jorge Alberto Vásquez were sympathetic. They were able to facilitate the establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba, North Vietnam and North Korea but this was official policy anyway. Attempts to ally Argentina with Chile, Panama, Peru and Cuba got no further than a June 21st speech by Vásquez at an Organisation of American States meeting in Lima.

Montonero control over the Interior Ministry was far more effective. In his 49 days as Interior Minister, Esteban Righi organised the rapid release of all the political prisoners, pioneered an amnesty bill through Congress, achieved the repeal of repressive legislation and abolished organs of repression such as the political section of the Federal Police (DIPA). On being appointed, he reputedly marched into

---

1. Militancia, no. 38 (28th March 1974), pp. 20-22.

the Federal Police Headquarters, accompanied by leather-jacketed Montonero colleagues, and ordered the police to "stand up for the Montonero combatants" [1] whom they had been persecuting for the past three years. Righi latter delivered an eloquent speech to a gathering of police officers in which he reprimanded them for their more nefarious activities and ordered an end to torture and death squad pastimes. Not surprisingly, he was the main target of right-wing attacks on the Cámpora government. Newspaper headlines such as "The Interior Minister has still not resigned" [2] appeared throughout his spell in office, which ended with the downfall of Cámpora. Soon afterwards he was forced to go into exile in Mexico.

The other area of the State where the Tendency exercised influence was among the provincial Governors, a minority of whom gave vacillating support to the Left or at least tolerated its participation in their administrations. Most sympathetic amongst the Governors were Oscar Bidegain (Buenos Aires), Alberto Martínez Baca (Mendoza), Jorge Cepernic (Santa Cruz) Miguel Ragone (Salta) and Ricardo Obregón Cano, along with his Vice-Governor Atilio López, in Córdoba. There were clear limits, however, to both the sympathy and "leftism" of several of these people. In March 1973, the German paper Die Zeit reported that Bidegain, ousted by Perón in January 1974 on the ridiculous grounds that he was a member of the People's Revolutionary Army, had hung a portrait of Hitler in his office! [3] Some were genuinely "progressive", like the Governors of Santa Cruz and Córdoba, but most turned to the Tendency, as Cámpora had, due to their political isolation. All were heavily under attack from the trade union bureucracy and Peronist Right, received

---

1. Personal interview with a Montonero, Buenos Aires, 16th November 1975.

2. "Righi: El Nuevo Orden Revolucionario," Militancia, no. 5 (12th July 1973), p. 7.

2. Cited in the Buenos Aires Herald, 3rd February 1974.

little or no support from either Perón or Isabel and in the end were gradually ousted by a mixture of federal "interventions" (Mendoza, Salta, Formosa, Santa Cruz), forced resignations (Buenos Aires, Catamarca), a mysterious plane crash (Misiones) and a police coup (Córdoba). Atilio López and Miguel Ragone were later assassinated by right-wing elements.

Support for these Governors, which on political questions was uncritical, reflected the Peronist Youth's lack of an independent political programme. It was constantly looking to the governemnt and provincial Governors for the implementation of its dreams and each time its hopes were frustrated, leaving the Youth feeling betrayed. For example, in the 1973 elections, the Tendency fully backed Carlos Menem for the Governorship of La Rioja, ensuring that he became at 41 the youngest Governor with 62% of the poll. Soon after his election, Menem declared that "The revolution of May 25th has its most profound meaning in the defence which the Youth, the FAR and Montoneros will provide for it". [1] Yet subsequently this product of the Tendency was to develop into an ultra-verticalista, a loyal servant of Isabel Perón and, for the Montoneros "the biggest traitor of all time". [2]

In explaining the links of some Governors with the Peronist Left, it is also important to note that, again like Cámpora, several had sons in the Tendency who worked on their fathers. Most of these Governors were to end up allying more strongly with the Montoneros as Auténticos in 1975 but back in 1973-74 their reputed "leftism" was certainly questionable. All vacillated when under attack, made concessions to the right-wing and refused to mobilise independent power bases to

---

1. "Carlos Menem: Nuestro reaseguro está en la juventud," El Descamisado, no. 4 (12th June 1973), p. 8.
2. Personal interview with Montoneros, Buenos Aires, 23rd November 1975.

sustain their governments. In response to a Macartheyist call from the Movement's Provisional Superior Council for a purge of "Marxists" from their administrations, Martínez Baca sacked two provincial ministers belonging to the JP before he himself lost power in Mendoza. Ragone also sacrificed two key men before Salta was "intervened" in November 1974. Some of these Governors were criticised by the Tendency, not for their political limitations, but just for refusing to mobilise provincial support - e.g. "Martínez Baca, indecisive, irresolute, did no less than precipitate events". [1] Others, like Obregón Cano in Córdoba, were only accused of "vacillating" after they had fallen, the reason being that the JP itself was "vacillating" throughout this period.

These vacillations first came to light in April 1973 when Galimberti was sacked as youth delegate by Perón. The Peronist Youth leader was summoned to Madrid after calling for the creation of a "people's militia" of workers and students to safeguard Justicialist principles. Though initially Galimberti had stated that the question of whether it should be armed or not depended upon developments, by the time he reached Madrid he was claiming to have been misunderstood and said that there was absolutely no question of it being armed! Successive retreats from the original JP plan eventually led the scheme to signify no more than a youth labour corps, but this did not save Galimberti. Not only was he forced to resign but had to suffer the humiliation of the JP leadership, quite hypocritically, publicly supporting Perón's decision and condemning Galimberti for attempting to introduce "extreme left-wing" policies into the Movement. [2]

---

1. "Mendoza. Intervención: El Vandorismo Trabajó Para López Rega," La Causa Peronista, no. 5 (6th August 1974), pp. 22-24.
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 27th April 1973 and 1st May 1973.

A little while later, the Peronist Youth's interpretation of this retreat was that Galimberti had been:

> "made responsible for a series of political errors committed in the JP leadership, basically being in a hurry, infantilism and a certain elitism in their manner of implementing a policy which, in turn, was not questioned". 1

This set the keynote for the movimientista Left's reactions to successive decisions by Perón favouring the right-wing and bourgeois sectors of his Movement. Their criticisms of Perón-supported legislation did not, they maintained, imply political differences with Perón but rather were motivated by fears of how the laws would be implemented by the right-wing agents "infiltrated" in the State apparatus. Their attitude to all the major pieces of unpopular legislation was that the "spirit" and intentions of them were fine, but that in the wrong hands their implementation could distort the aims of Perón in promoting them.

The Tendency was a major pacesetter and reasonably influential during the presidency of Cámpora, whom it christened El Tío, the Uncle. It gained special government recognition through the appointment of JP leader Juan Carlos Dante Gullo, Galimberti's successor, as presidential advisor on youth affairs in May 1973. However, right from the start, because it divorced national and social revolution through the theory of stages, it offered very weak opposition to anti-worker legislation. After initially supporting it, the JP criticized the Social Pact for not giving enough benefits to labour but was silent on its virtual suspension of the right to strike and denial of free collective bargaining. They partially accepted the Redundancy Law, hoping that it would be used against gorilas and not against militants - which of course it was. On the Law of Professional Associations they also held back from total confrontation, selecting only its most authoritarian aspects for

---

1. Gullo, op. cit.

criticism. Finally, on the Penal Code Reforms passed in January 1974, which introduced stiffer penalties for guerrilla activities than existed under the previous military regime, the JP made every effort to compromise by just trying, in the end, to get two clauses altered. Under this piece of legislation, arms possession could lead to a stiffer sentence than murder.

Such behaviour was also partly to be explained by the JP's faith in Perón - their belief that with him at the helm, the legislation would be interpreted according to its "true" (i.e. progressive) spirit. To ensure that this was so, the Tendency relied on mass mobilisations, to show that they were the live force of the Movement, and a series of threats to counter the possibility of Perón succumbing to right-wing pressures. They mistakenly assumed that Perón in power would retain his former desire of the opposition years to keep the Movement united, no matter what the cost, and would therefore make concessions if a significant sector threatened to leave.

The Tendency's power of mobilisation in the 16 months above ground is unquestionable. It mobilised at least half of the 1½-4 million people (estimates vary wildly) people who flocked to Ezeiza for Perón's 2nd and last homecoming on 20th June 1973, only to be met with a right-wing massacre which claimed the lives of up to 100 people. 80,000 JP members marched to Gaspar Campos in the hope of seeing Perón on 21st July, 90,000 attended a 26th July JP rally to commemorate the death of Evita and 60,000 attended the JP Atlanta rally on 22nd August. The Tendency had 50% of the participants in the 31st August CGT marchpast and attracted 80,000 people on 19th September to a JP electoral rally in Plaza Once. They again had a majority of the 100,000 who celebrated Perón's assumption of the presidency on 12th October in Plaza de Mayo and a further 50,000 at their Atlanta rally of 11th March 1974.

Finally, they accounted for at least 60% of the 100,000 people who filled Plaza de Mayo, for a short while, on 1st May 1974. [1]

In the Interior, the Tendency's power of mobilisation was much weaker in absolute terms but relative to the size of cities there and the numbers mobilised by other political forces, it still performed impressively. The JP in August 1973 had 4,000 at a rally in Rosario, 3,000 in Mendoza and several thousand in Bahía Blanca; in September it attracted 5,000 in Chaco, 7,000 in Córdoba and Mendoza; 15,000 attended the JP 17th October "Loyalty Day" rally in Córdoba and on 11th March 1974 10,000 rallied in Tucumán and 6,000 in Santa Fe. The estimates for the national events should be compared with the pitiful numbers mobilised by the right-wing and centre youth groups. Just 1,200 attended the February 1974 Avellaneda rally of the Peronist Youth of the Argentine Republic (JPRA) and while 15,000 were attending the JP 3rd Region's 17th October Córdoba rally, the right-wing could only muster one-tenth that number for a rival event in the same city. [2]

Moreover, the Tendency's powers of mobilisation at least equalled and often exceeded those of the financially-strong trade union leadership. On the 31st August 1973 CGT march, the JP and JTP columns accounted for at least as many people as the "orthodox" union columns. While the Tendency took 162 minutes to pass the review stand, the CGT-mobilised columns took 165 minutes (walking more slowly, the JP claimed) and two non-Tendency youth groups just 11 minutes together. [3] It should be noted that the CGT had been planning their mobilisation for a month, spent 350 million pesos on it and had hundreds of buses laid on at factory gates, whereas the JP only decided to participate on August 28th

---

1. Estimates from the Buenos Aires Herald, La Nación, La Razón and El Descamisado, reports on the respective events.
2. Ibid.
3. Special supplement to El Descamisado, no. 16, op. cit.

and had managed to mobilise their tens of thousands in just 2 days. Though Perón and the union leaders were able to put together 100,000 for Perón's last public appearance on 12th June 1974, they could only do it by Perón threatening to resign and by the unions decreeing a 10-hour strike beginning mid-morning so as to be able to transport workers straight from their work-places to the rally. Neither of the 17th October rallies held under Isabel Perón's government attracted more than 40,000 people, despite massive State resources going into them.

The tragedy for the Tendency was that Perón was no longer impressed by its massiveness. Having used the Youth to force elections on the Junta and then to do most of the March and September 1973 election work, once in power numbers became less important. Perón dismissed the Left's powers of mobilisation in February 1974 when he told the youth groups linked to the bureaucracy that he preferred "an honest leader with ten people behind him to a dishonest one with 10,000". [1] What the Tendency abundantly possessed in numerical power, it lacked in organisational and economic power. The latter was the only thing likely to force real concessions out of the government, as the 1975 General Strike, which cost over 800 million dollars in lost production, was to demonstrate. [2]

Once in power, though he wished to maintain a united mass movement, Perón was not bent upon retaining the adhesion of the radicalised youth <u>at all costs</u>, so long as he could retain the support of, or at least control, the labour movement. Once it became clear that, in spite of their frequent willingness to compromise, the Tendency could not be "domesticated", Perón's interest lay not in making concessions in order

---

1. "Semana Política: entre la definición y la violencia," <u>Militancia</u>, no. 35 (21st February 1974), pp. 4-9.
2. <u>La Opinión</u>, 6th July 1975.

to preserve unity but rather in driving the Left out of his Movement in an attempt to isolate the "virus" of Socialism. The JP's powers of mobilisation only encouraged him to increase the level of repression and to consolidate the insitutional power of the more orthodox sectors. Power for the latter could rest on access to State resources and the sufferance of key sectors of the labour movement, the importance of street mobilisations being much less critical now.

The movimientista strategy in 1973-74 was to challenge the government on the most unpopular aspects of its legislation, mobilise around the issues, threaten sanctions if changes were not made and then, generally, to retreat when they were not, in order to keep in with the government which they felt could still be redirected by pressure from below. This led the JP step-by-step to cede all the ground it had conquered in May 1973. The first real stand was against the Penal Code Reforms - after attempting a compromise by accepting the need for the reform and limiting their criticisms to just "one or two articles", [1] the 8 Congressmen of the Tendency (Croatto, Díaz Ortiz, Glellel, Iturrieta, Kunkel, Muñiz Barreto, Vidaña and Vittar) resigned their seats on 24th January 1974. That this was just a tactical manoeuvre and not a departure from movimientista strategy was seen shortly afterwards when two other members of the Tendency, Bettanín and Zavala Rodríguez, occupied two of the vacant seats by virtue of their being next on the party lists.

A few days later, the Tendency stepped up the pressure on Perón by boycotting a meeting between him and the various youth groups. They objected to the presence at the meeting of right-wing organisations such as the para-police University National Concentration (CNU), which had

---

1. "Semana Política: una maraton hacia atrás sin aviso de retorno," Militancia, no. 33 (31st January 1974), pp. 4-9.

already begun to assassinate their militants. However, again this was not a particularly principled act of defiance for they had sat down with Perón and the right-wing terrorists the previous September. Neither of these postures impressed Perón who on the contrary went on to announce the dissolution of the Youth Branch in June 1974, explaining that he didn't "want to take the apple of discord into the Movement". [1]

The public shows of defiance only served to weaken the Tendency numerically, for minority groups of Leales (Loyalists), including the Region II (Santa Fe & Entre Ríos) JP leader Jorge Obeid, left the Peronist Youth and Peronist University Youth for a more orthodox line, joined by a very small number of Montoneros. In October 1974, it was reported that a dissident Montonero splinter called the "Soldiers of Perón" (Montoneros Soldados de Perón) had blown up their arsenal in Rosario and had accused their parent organisation, since its merger with the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), of having become dominated by "Marxist leader Roberto Quieto and his henchmen". [2] The political content of this charge was so patently absurd that most commentators placed in doubt the purported authorship of the communiqué on which the report was based. All that the Tendency was in fact demanding, in its more principled moments, was that the popular-national electoral programme of March 1973 [3] be

---

1. "Definiciones del General Perón," El Peronista, no. 6 (28th May 1974), p. 8.

2. Buenos Aires Herald, 10th October 1974.

3. The main points of the March 1973 FREJULI programme were as follows: establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba, N. Vietnam & N. Korea; a general wage rise; an amnesty of political prisoners; nationalisation of banking deposits and foreign trade; measures to support local industry; agrarian reform - "the land must be for those who work it and who produce, not (for those who use it) as an investment or for speculation"; and extensive socialisation of the economy through State take-overs of industries whose actitivities "imply monopolistic power and/or strategic decisions" (Ibid., 13th March 1973).

carried out. Their demands (and expectations) of the government were limited to populistic reformism, but even this was a utopian dream given the sorry state of the Argentine economy. [1]

On May Day 1974, the confrontation tactic reached its peak with the mass JP walk-out from Plaza de Mayo, but yet again this event did not signify a political break with Perón. JP criticisms of his failure to live up to their hopes pointed to Perón's "errors", an explanation which greatly underestimated the coherence of their leader's project which was quite consistent with his behaviour in the 1946-55 period. Finally, though members of the Tendency would not delight in being reminded of the fact, the policy of concessions and retreats in an attempt to curry favour with the leadership led the JP to momentarily support Isabel when Perón died. Though they had previously pointed to her lack of mass support in the Movement, early in July 1974 the Regionales expressed their:

> "support for the administration of comrade Isabel, brand new President of the Argentines, reaffirming that this administration can only be successful so long as it respects and makes effective the popular will expressed in the popular elections of 11th May and 23rd September 1973". 2

The volte-face came before the month was out when the Tendency coined the slogan "Isabel is not Perón". [3]

Such vacillation and opportunism provided no consistent opposition or Left alternative to government policies. As the alternativista review Militancia stated, "The lack of a policy cannot be substituted with an imaginative effort each time the enemy makes a move". [4] Lacking an

---

1. See conclusion to chapter.
2. JP press release, reproduced in La Causa Peronista, no. 1 (9th July 1974), p. 41.
3. "Hablan los Montoneros," ibid., no. 4 (30th July 1974), pp. 6-8.
4. "El Movimientismo, Enfermedad Infantil del Peronismo," Militancia, no. 7 (26th July 1973), pp. 7-9.

independent policy for gaining power, the Tendency found itself in a reactive relationship with the government. Moreover, being bound to the orthodox Peronist postulation of the Dependency versus Liberation dichotomy, it cut itself off from those forces outside and even within Peronism which were attempting to develop worker-based socialist organisations. Rather than seek unity with the revolutionary Left, the Regionales allied themselves with the pro-capitalist youth organisations of the parties claiming to be "national" and democratic.

Having signed a joint document with the youth of the Radical Party in 1972, the JP called a Multi-Party Assembly of Youth for Reconstruction and National Liberation in August 1973. Out of this Savoy Hotel meeting, attended by 16 youth organisations including the Radicals and Popular Conservative Youth, a youth front called the Argentine Political Youth (Juventudes Políticas Argentinas - JPA) was created on 17th August. Though the JP led this popular front, such a broad alliance, in which socialist groups were a small minority, only served to strengthen the vague populistic orientation of the organisation. Unity was only viable around the lowest common denominator of a shared desire for "national" and "popular" unity against the oligarchy and imperialism. As such, though it was able to mobilise 120,000 youths to demonstrate against the Chilean coup in September 1973, it was politically impotent. For to seriously struggle against imperialism and the oligarchy, the united youth organisations would have had to have discarded their implicit assumption that imperialism was something lurking in the USA and the oligarchy in the countryside. They would have needed to have examined the depth of the penetration of imperialism within the Argentine economy and the links of the landed oligarchy with other sectors of the bourgeoisie. To do this would have totally undermined their whole conception of the alleged national liberation front in power and would have

been incompatible with their allegiances to their conservative and reformist adult parties.

The other area to which the JP looked for allies was, perhaps surprisingly, the Armed Forces, After Galimberti's fleeting reference to militias, the Peronist Youth made no call for structural change in the Armed Forces or their dismantlement. After the replacement of the former military commanders in 1973, the JP limited itself to calls for the remainder of the "military clique" to be purged, appeals to military officers to resume the national liberation tradition initiated by San Martín and a search for a Peruvian-type sector with whom to ally. When General Torrijos of Panama visited Argentina in January 1974, the JP organised a big march to the Plaza Hotel to enthusiastically greet the great "Peronist General"! [1]

Within the Armed Forces, the main organisational effort of the JP was not directed towards the conscripts but the junior officers and this mirrored their superstructural approach in other areas. They organised small branches in each of the three Forces which made no impact whatsoever. At the same time, the JP attempted to woo the new Army Commander General Carcagno into the national camp, greatly encouraged by his speech at the 10th Conference of American Commanders-in-Chief, in which he said that "The army cannot be the praetorian guard of an unjust social and political order". [2] Another good sign for the Tendency had been his dismissal of the French and US military missions previously functioning in Argentina.

In October 1973, in an attempt to increase their influence in the

---

1. "Torrijos: Un General Peronista," El Descamisado, no. 36 (22nd January 1974), pp. 6-8.

2. Carcagno, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 6th September 1973.

Armed Forces and to try to show Perón that they had friends there, 8,000 JP activists joined forces with 5,000 troops of the 1st Army Corps in the Colonel Manuel Dorrego National Reconstruction Operation. Apart from giving practical aid to the population of flood-affected areas of Buenos Aires Province, the JP, "without holding out much hope for the conversion of those military sectors most linked to the imperialist project", thought that the operation could contribute "to a broadening of the National Liberation Front and the isolation of the main enemy: yankee imperialism". [1]

Operation Dorrego brought the JP to work alongside the future Interior Minister of Videla, Colonel Albano Harguindeguy, whom they referred to early on as an "intelligent liberal" who had recognised that "coexistence" with Peronism was possible! [2] Only when the operation was over did the truth about the role of the Army begin to hit the JP, who now admitted that whereas the JP had gone into the project with idealistic ideas about contributing to "national reconstruction", the Army "seems to have gone to gain political space". After being publicly vilified, stoned and spat upon by the huge crowds around Plaza de Mayo on 25th May 1973, what the Army most dearly wanted and needed was an operation such as this to give it a national and popular image and this is what the JP to some extent gave it. By the end of the operation, the JP's characterisation of Harguindeguy had been transformed from him being an "intelligent liberal" to an "intelligent gorila", [3] so maybe they learned something from the experience. Such evaluation, though, clearly reveals how the JP characterised army officers and politicians

---

1. "La JP y la Reconstrucción Nacional," El Descamisado, no. 20 (2nd October 1973), p. 25.
2. "Operativo Dorrego," ibid., no. 22 (16th October 1973), pp. 28-30.
3. "Balance de Operativo Dorrego: la Juventud Peronista fue a trabajar," ibid., no. 25 (6th November 1973), p. 27.

in terms of conjunctural attitudes and postures, with scant reference to their class interests.

This led the Peronist Youth to give support and encouragement to Carcagno who, it should be remembered, had participated in the suppression of the 1956 Peronist military revolt, of the 1969 Cordobazo and of the Montoneros' 1970 La Calera operation, before commanding the Patagonian military zone in which 16 political prisoners were shot at Trelew in 1972. As in the case of the alliance with the Argentine Political Youth, the JP, lacking a clear revolutionary project, looked for "tactical allies" (i.e. allies during the National Liberation "stage") everywhere, and felt that they might have found them when faced with elements like Carcagno and Harguindeguy who had been forced to don popular masks due to the mood of the country. Here, the JP was easy prey for the biting satire of Militancia's "Tendencio" cartoonist. In one cartoon he portrayed a badly beaten-up JP supporter being asked by his son, "Did you meet your tactical allies again, Dad?". In another, a JP activist appeared bound and blindfolded, ready for execution and asking a military officer, "Are you sure this is Operation Dorrego, Colonel?"! [1]

Operation Dorrego was only the largest of a whole number of JP "National Reconstruction" operations which included street repairs, building schools and health units, removing electoral propaganda from walls and similar tasks. At the October 17th rally in Córdoba, Roberto Quieto claimed that "National Reconstruction is not just to paint schools or clean streets" but was a question of "reconstructing the rights the workers had in 1955". [2] Yet the former was all it amounted

---

1. Both appeared in Militancia towards the end of 1973. Dates of editions not annotated.

2. Roberto Quieto, text of speech in Córdoba on 17th October 1973, El Descamisado, no. 23 (23rd October 1973), pp. 16-20.

to in practice and the latter part of the quotation only reflects how little the JP had to offer the workers, even in words. Though the JP in these operations did a lot of valid social and community work, without control over State resources the impact on Argentina's social problems could be little more than negligible. To devote so much time and energy to these projects may have shown the JP to have been excellent boy scouts but it was at the expense of them developing a cadre organisation rooted in the labour movement.

Organisationally, the JP did not achieve a lot, mainly because they were always waiting for initiatives to come from above. With the fall of Cámpora, they lost their tenure of the presidential youth advisor's post and at the end of July 1973 the extremely unsympathetic right-winger Julio Yessi was placed in charge of the official Youth Branch. The JP then campaigned for the unification of the Youth sectors through the institutionalisation of the Branch and the elaboration of democratic procedures for the resolution of differences. However, quite apart from the impracticality of any youth unity scheme due to the breadth of the political spectrum covered by the Youth groups, the JP themselves had a very strange view of "democratisation". For their proposed unity congress, they suggested that "the nomination of delegates should be agreed upon between the various youth sectors" [1] - in other words, the leaders would get together and try to reach a compromise, ignoring the will of their respective rank-and-files.

Only by January 1974 did the JP begin to democratise itself, attempting to ensure:

> "the protagonistic participation of all comrades in the elaboration of our political line. We are conscious of the fact that

---

1. "La JP Toma la Iniciativa," ibid., no. 19 (26th September 1973) p. 7.

> our organisation is still a long way from being totally democratic".

Though it seems that some moves towards the election of officers and delegates were made in some areas, the Montoneros maintained full control over the organisation. The only qualification of this was the "Loyalists" split, which took place right after the reorganisation was announced, and the emergence of one or two alternativista JP branches. However, it is significant that before the split materialised, while the dispute was going on within the leadership of the Tendency over whether or not to defy Perón, Obeid, the leader of the minority group of "loyalists", referred to the rumoured differences as "inventions of La Opinión and El Mundo" (daily papers, the latter belonging to the ERP)..."they don't exist". [1] Such statements did not inspire confidence in the announced new spirit of openness and democracy in the JP.

Due then to their emphasis on mobilisation, their conception of revolutionary "stages", illusions in Perón and consequent lack of an independent policy, the JP (Regionales), while mobilising greater numbers of youths than any previous Argentine youth organisation, were completely unable to launch a political offensive of their own. Even their apparent advance under Cámpora was somewhat artificial because Cámpora had been chosen by Perón specifically to carry out the programme of liberalisation, hoping that it would persuade the "special formations" to lay down their arms and integrate them into the official Peronist project. To see Cámpora as being to the Left of Perón ignores his "loyalty" (or servility) towards the leader throughout his career.

The whole strategy of the Tendency in the May 1973 to September 1974 period totally depended on Perón and his Movement living up to the

---

1. "Habla Juventud Peronista," ibid., no. 36 (22nd January 1974), pp. 4-5.

illusions which the movimientista Left had in them. Had all their beliefs been well-grounded, then certainly the JP mobilisations would have been important instruments in influencing the course of events. As it was, however, even the JP must have felt a little sick when, the day after his final return to Argentina, Perón immediately came out with his traditional slogan,"From home to work and from work, home". [1] This reaffirmed the passive role ordained by the leader for his mass following, except for the well-orchestrated rallies in Plaza de Mayo. Since Perón's supposed metamorphosis into a revolutionary leader proved to be artificial, the whole movimientista strategy based upon such a characterisation of Perón could achieve absolutely nothing. Far from becoming the hegemonic force which it expected to become once Perón returned, the JP rapidly became one of the main targets and victims of an increasingly unpopular and repressive Peronist government.

THE PERONIST UNIVERSITY YOUTH

> "There can be no National University in a Colonised Country, nor a Colonising University in a Liberated Country"
>
> - JUP slogan, 1973. [2]

Next in importance to the barrio-based Regionales, and with a considerable membership overlap, was the Peronist University Youth (JUP) whose growth rate between 1972-74 was truly remarkable. The JUP possessed two advantages over the remaining functional front organisations, the first being its earlier creation and the second being that its area of operations, the university, was a natural growth area for a predominantly petty-bourgeois tendency. So important was the university element within

---

1. Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 22nd June 1973.
2. "JUP: Bases Para la Reconstrucción Universitaria," Militancia, no. 5 (12th July 1973), pp. 18-19.

the Tendency that in May 1973, in an attempt to placate the Peronist Left, the Cámpora Government presented the University of Buenos Aires to the radicalised wing of the Movement, and it remained the principal institutional bastion of the Montoneros for the next sixteen months.

Between 1955-73, the organised student movement in Argentina had been led mainly by the Communist Party whose position was challenged, seriously but not successfully, by Radical Party students and the revolutionary Left (Maoists, Trotskyists, Guevarists) towards the end of the period. In the 1972 student elections, the Communist Party's "Reformist" student organisation (Movimiento de Orientación Reformista - MOR) won an easy victory in the University of Buenos Aires, gaining 6,100 votes, 55.5% of the poll and nearly all of the student centres (centros) with Franja Morada (Leftish Radicals supporting the Alfonsín line) a distant second, winning 1,592 votes. Such elections, however, were not accurate barometers of the mood of the student movement for in 1972 only 1,300 students voted while four-fifths abstained. [1] The faculty-based student centres were remote from the mass of students, leaving a political vacuum at rank-and-file level which nationalist and Peronist student organisations began to fill in the late 1960's, even though this was not immediately reflected at superstructural level. Adversely affected by Onganía's use of repression on the campus and by long-standing governmental financial neglect of higher education, deprived of secure future careers by Argentina's economic deterioration, and with electoral solutions placed in doubt by the military usurpation of power, thousands of students turned towards Peronism in this period. Most radicalised students saw a need to combine their struggles with those of the workers and it was the Peronist student groups which provided the main channel for liaison with the mass movement.

---

1. Buenos Aires Herald, 6th November 1972; La Nación, 6th December 1973.

Among the Peronist student organisations, the Peronist University Youth (JUP) had become an important force by 1971, though predecessors with the same name had made some progress during the previous decade. The JUP gradually combined with other radicalised expressions of Peronism in the University of Buenos Aires to first become a support base for the movimientista special formations around 1972 and then an organic part of the Tendency in 1973. Its spectacular growth was hidden by the official student election results because the JUP and its allies boycotted these elections prior to 1973, feeling that participation would lend legitimacy to unrepresentative student centres and that a clandestine approach to student organisation was required by the national political situation. To campaign in elections would have exposed student militants linked to the armed organisations and would have made them easy prey for the security forces.

In 1971, the JUP produced a book, Universidad, Instrumento de la Dominación Imperial, which revealed the decisive influence of the ideas of Hernández Arregui on the group. [1] It pointed to the "abstract" nature of former student leftism, whose concern with international theories and experiences tended, to differing extents, to divorce it from the Argentine national question. Moreover, it portrayed the Argentine university as a transmission belt for an alien culture, a means of strengthening national dependency and a servant of foreign monopolies, rather than being a source of graduates and ideas which could contribute to independent national development. There was a lot of truth in the JUP critique. For example, hardly any scientific or technological research was carried out during the 1966-73 years of military rule, since the authorities were content to import technology from the USA and other economically-advanced countries.

---

1. For a review of the book, see the Cultural Supplement to La Opinión, 18th July 1971, p. 3.

This state of affairs changed abruptly with the election of Cámpora. The University of Buenos Aires in particular, and those of the Interior to lesser extents, were handed over through intervenciones to rectors and faculty deans clearly aligned with the Peronist Left. Tendency control was strongest in Buenos Aires where the new Rector, Rodolfo Puiggrós, though not a member of the Tendency at that time, was totally identified with its aims of creating a "popular" and "national" university. His message was clear and rapidly won the support of most Peronist, Communist and Radical students: the University had to cease being an "island" and had to serve the Argentine people by contributing to the tasks of national liberation and reconstruction. Courses and educational methods would have to be changed so as to relate education to the requirements of economic development and to involve all sectors of the University in the development of the new project. The old authoritarian structures were to be broken down and replaced by permanent consultations between the authorities, lecturers, students and non-academic staff in the running of the University. [1]

Unlike many of the radical sections of the Peronist 1973 programme, these promises were largely kept. Under Puiggrós, lecturers who had supported the military regime or who were "agents of companies which deform the national historical process" [2] were sacked and many of those purged under Onganía were reinstated. The police were removed from the campus and full freedom of expression was given to student political tendencies. Academic and non-academic university sectors gained participation in policy-making and free medical attention was provided for students. Some progress was made towards the creation of an adequate

---

1. "La Universidad del Pueblo," El Descamisado, no. 7 (3rd July 1973), pp. 10-11.
2. "Puiggrós y el Avance del Pueblo," Interview, Militancia, no. 5 (12th July 1973), pp. 16-20.

student grants system and research was promoted in areas deemed to be of national and social importance.

Perhaps the most radical innovation was the elimination of entrance requirements which, along with the introduction of evening classes for workers, produced a social expansion of the University clientele. The creation by several faculties of barrio agencies (medical facilities, legal aid centres, etc.) went some way towards integrating the University into the national community. Finally, several courses experienced radical changes. A "History of the Struggles of the Argentine People for their Emancipation" became a basic history course and the study of Latin American Politics and Peronist Doctrine replaced traditional philosophy courses. [1]

Fully in support of these measures, the JUP held its first national conference in the Buenos Aires Law Faculty on 7th September 1973. There, it structured itself into 7 regional units, along similar lines to the Peronist Youth, approved a new national leadership led by José Pablo Ventura and Ramón Puch and placed its main emphasis upon student participation in National Reconstruction work. The new lines of university policy became synthesised in the JUP slogan, "For a University of the People in a Liberated Homeland". [2]

The University "Spring" was, however, soon attacked by a latent frost which set in immediately after Cámpora's removal. Under the interim provisional presidency of Raúl Lastiri, López Rega's son-in-law, and then under Perón himself, Tendency control and influence in the

---

1. For a list of the changes introduced by Puiggrós, see his book, La Universidad del Pueblo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Crisis, 1974), pp. 97-114.

2. "La JUP denuncia una ofensiva reaccionaria que intenta frenar la Liberación Nacional," El Descamisado, no. 20 (2nd October 1973) p. 30.

universities was very carefully and gradually undermined. The main field of battle was in Buenos Aires where, early in October 1973, the right-wing secured the resignation of Puiggrós in such a way as to enable Perón to protest his lack of responsibility. Proceeding cautiously, Perón chose as his replacement Ernesto Villanueva, a sociologist and former Peronist Youth member who endorsed the Puiggrós project but who was less well known and therefore commanded slightly less support in the student movement. He was subsequently replaced by the more conservative Solano Lima in May 1974 until the latter submitted his resignation when Perón died. The final stand of the Left was made by his successor Raúl Laguzzi, appointed by Education Minister Taiana in July and replaced by the decidedly right-wing Alberto Ottalango in September 1974.

In the face of these attacks on its position of control, the JUP responded in exactly the same way as the JP: mobilisation after mobilisation yet retreat after retreat. There were several demonstrations, including one of 20,000 students, to protest against the sacking of Puiggrós. These prevented Lastiri's nominee Dr. Banfí from becoming Rector but when the acceptable Villanueva was appointed, the JUP dropped its calls for the reinstatement of Puiggrós. After the People's Revolutionary Army's attack on the Azul military garrison in January 1974, Villanueva was to anger Revolutionary Peronists by declaring the "solidarity of the National University of Buenos Aires with the Army". [1]

The next retreat was over the new University Law, whose original draft embodied the ideals espoused by Puiggrós but which was drastically amended in the Senate to place a ban on campus political activity, discriminate ideologically against left-wing lecturers and restrict the

---

1. "Semana Política: una maraton....," op. cit.

free operation of student unions. In its final state, the bill also provided for interventors to be replaced by "normalising" rectors, thus facilitating the removal of Tendency sympathisers by obliging them to submit their resignations. Vacillation on this issue was first seen in the behaviour of Zavala Rodríguez and Bettanín, who went along with the decisions of the FREJULI bloc in Congress in the unfounded belief that such "loyalty" would gain them admittance into the bloc. It was then seen in the behaviour of Villanueva who not only resigned but also, along with the rest of the Tendency, lent the bill a measure of support by approving its "spirit" and making the customary distinction "between the content and its implementation", [1] playing down the more unpopular clauses by concentrating on who was to implement them. Finally, the JUP, after organising mass lobbies of Congress, temporised by condemning a call for "no resignations" as "ultra-left". [2]

Distinguishing between the content or spirit of legislation and its implementation was a means of backing away from confrontations. The wait-and-see approach meant that unsympathetic legislation was on the statute books before the movimientistas came out fully against it, but of course by then the right-wing was able to operate with the full force of the law behind it. In the case of the University Law, the JUP was to minimise its criticisms of the bill while it was passing through Congress, concentrating on the issue of resignations and new appointments, then to criticise it more firmly once passed and then finally, after the right-wing takeover of the universities in September 1974, to perform a complete volte-face by calling, unsuccessfully, for the full implementation of the Law.

---

1. "La Universidad al borde de la opción: liberación o continuismo gorila," El Descamisado, no. 43 (12th March 1974), pp. 7-8.
2. "Universidad: o del pueblo o de nadie," ibid., no. 45 (26th March 1974), pp. 22-24.

Data on student elections suggests that the JUP lost ground after 1973. In that year it achieved a sweeping victory in the University of Buenos Aires where, standing for the first time, it won control of 9 out of the 13 centres. The JUP's 23,176 votes gave it 44% of the poll, compared with Franja Morada's 21% and the Communist "Reformists" 18%. Not only had the JUP turned the tables on the non-Peronist reformists but it had won with a far more representative poll. About 50% of the Buenos Aires student population voted in 1973, quadrupling the 1972 turn-out. [1] One does not know how much weaker the JUP was in the interior of the country for it was insufficiently developed and confident to stand in most of the other universities.

In 1974, the JUP's preeminence remained clear but she was already losing ground. While her vote slipped from the 23,176 votes of 1973 to approximately 21,000, there were improvements in the performance of the "Reformists" (9,500 to 11,000) and Franja Morada (10,824 to 15,000). [2] Apart from the JUP's lack of political consistency and firmness, one reason for the decline was that the "Loyalists" split affected the university front most, even though its own ticket only attracted 350 votes in 1974. Not only did this splinter deprive the Tendency of student activists such as Grinstein, Chinchilla, Guido, Ivansich and Fuentes Marini but also of several of the sympathising Buenos Aires faculty deans appointed in March 1973. In September 1974, for instance, the Law School Dean Mario Kestelboim resigned saying that he did not want JUP support now that the Montoneros had gone underground.

The latter decision was also to weaken the JUP, partly because more students were now drafted into the military apparatus of the Tendency and also because it made campus survival more hazardous for those remaining.

---

1. La Nación, 4th & 6th December 1973.
2. Carta Política, no. 20 (1st week of April, 1974).

Moreover, it meant an end to the JUP hope of unifying the student movement into a single federation, for both the Radical and Communist groups roundly condemned what they regarded as the "terrorism" of the Montoneros. Through the National Council of Federations and Centres (CNFC), the JUP tried to attract student tendencies away from the rival Argentine University Federation (FUA) or to merge with the FUA while ensuring its own hegemonic position. However, by 1975 the Argentine student movement was almost as fragmented as at any time during the previous decade.

1975 saw a further decline in JUP fortunes, though proof of this is hard to discover due to the semi-clandestine conditions in which the banned student elections of that year took place. One must bear in mind that comparative voting totals are not always a valid indicator of fortune since the centres contested in 1975 were different to those disputed the previous year, at least in some cases. Nevertheless, the percentage poll figures do provide reliable evidence of further JUP decline. According to the JUP themselves, in a poll in which 50,620 students participated, their Blue and White List won 16,129 votes, 32% of the poll and earned them 20 centres; Franja Morada attracted 11,110 votes, 22% of the poll, signifying 13 centres plus 4 shared centres; and the Reformists won 8,245 votes, 16% of the total, entitling them to 8 centres and one shared centre. Equally interesting is the fact that all the pro-Isabel student groups put together gained a pathetic total of 2,584 votes, just 5% of the poll. [1]

As political repression grew, vocal support for the JUP ceased to be a cost-free option for students and academics. Sympathisers were faced with the prospect of right-wing punishment. In September 1974, a bomb attack on the apartment of University of Buenos Aires Rector Raúl Laguzzi claimed the life of his 4 month old son - designated "the youngest martyr

---

1. JUP paid advertisement, "Ganó el Estudiantado, Ganó el Peronismo Auténtico," La Opinión, 19th December 1975.

of the Peronist resistance" by the Montoneros.[1] Both Laguzzi and Puiggrós were forced to flee to Mexico that month and 3 JUP leaders including Ventura were arrested two months later.

However, the fall-off in JUP support must certainly also be attributed to its vacillating response to government attacks and the way in which the JUP operated. Rival student tendencies persistently accused the JUP of bureaucratic methods and sectarian practices. In 1974, for example, the Left-Wing University Groups Front (FAUDI), student body of the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR), complained that though they had earned second place in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, Buenos Aires, the JUP had denied them minority participation on the faculty council.[2] Naturally, one would not expect the non-Peronist but pro-Isabel FAUDI to have regarded the JUP sympathetically. However, the same criticisms were made from within the Revolutionary Peronist camp.

In November 1973, the Peronist University Rank-and-File tendency of Córdoba, supporters of the alternativista Rank-and-File Peronism (PB), withdrew from the JUP's coordinating committee in protest against the undemocratic character of the JUP. JUP policies, they claimed were imposed on the coordinating committee as "orders without any possibility of appeal", ruling out any meaningful discussion. The JUP was accused of seeking to "replace the political organisation of university sectors with the policies of one organisation", of stifling rank-and-file initiatives through excessive "verticalism" and of mechanically adopting policies decided by the Buenos Aires leadership without regard for the specific situation

---

1. Montonero communiqué, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 9th September 1974.

2. "Por la decisión democrática de los claustros," Nueva Hora, organ of the Partido Comunista Revolucionario, no. 142 (1st fortnight of June 1974), p. 9.

of Córdoban students.[1] Such criticisms were only belatedly taken up by the JUP at its 2nd National Congress in August 1974 when a decision providing for student participation in JUP decision-making implied that it had not previously existed.

The failure of the JUP, for all its mobilisations, to stand firm in the face of the right-wing offensive eventually resulted in a total reversal of the Peronist Left's control of the universities. In August 1974, Taiana was replaced by Dr. Ivan Ivanissevich in the Education Ministry and a month later Albert Ottalango displaced Laguzzi as Rector of the University of Buenos Aires. Both of the new appointees were self-declared fascists promoted by the López Rega circle and lost no time in purging the Left with the religious fervour of crusaders. Fifteen of the sixteen universities were "intervened" and their popular rectors replaced with intellectual mediocrities - often with fascist sympathies. After 4,000 lecturers had been sacked, 1,600 students imprisoned and dozens had fled after receiving death threats, the Argentine University Teachers Confederation in July 1975 had to admit that Ivanissevich had succeeded in establishing "a peace of the graveyards" on the campuses.[2]

Right-wing control meant an end to legal political and student union activity in the universities, the return of entrance requirements and an end to tripartite participation in decision-making, plus the "hiving-off" of research to private enterprise. Course contents suffered dramatic changes and some courses were axed altogether. In 1975, no students were admitted to 1st year courses in psychology, sociology or educational sciences at the University of Buenos Aires, its Faculty of Philosophy and

---

1. Communiqué of the Bases Universitarias Peronistas de Córdoba, reproduced in Militancia, no. 25 (29th November 1973), p. 44.
2. See Joan Monahan, "I agreed to teach but not to be a gaoler," The Times Higher Education Supplement, 11th February 1977, p. 10.

Letters, where the former two subjects were taught, being considered by the new administration to be a breeding ground for Marxists.

One final criticism of the JUP is that, in terms of a revolutionary transformation of the role of the university, its proposals were totally inadequate. The effects of unrestricted entry, pursued without any great expansion in university building plans, only gave ammunition to the right-wingers for use against radical educational ideas in general. Early in 1973 the University of Buenos Aires had 80,000 students. A further 83,000 were programmed to enter in 1974 and by 1975 the total had reached 237,000. Student-teacher ratios reached 300:1, a figure which even the most radical academic might baulk at. [1]

The result was chronic overcrowding, the admittance to the University of students unprepared, intellectually or motivationally, to benefit from higher education and the creation of a serious gap between job vacancies and graduate supply. No political answers were provided by the JUP to the right-wingers who referred to these problems to justify a drastic cut-back in student numbers. One finds hardly any references in JUP literature to the need for facilities to be expanded to match the growth in student numbers. Nor did the JUP campaign for radical extra-university societal changes, vital to the success of their university proposals. This was fatal for it approximated to attempting the construction of "socialism in one university".

In order for the radical reforms pioneered by the JUP to have been viable, it is arguable that they would have had to have been accompanied by a far higher level of State education spending, reform of lower-level education and a general socio-economic elevation of the mass of people

---

1. Ibid.; Jonathan Kendell, "I cannot imagine what would happen if the police left," ibid., 7th January 1977; and "Universidad: o del pueblo o de nadie," op. cit.

in order that (a) there would be sufficient facilities to cater for the increased numbers wanting to study and (b) a general raising of pre-university educational levels so that the enlarged full- and part-time student population could really benefit from access to higher education. Such a programme was far removed from that of any of the 1973-76 Peronist governments and was not raised by the JUP because, bound by the "stages" approach of the Tendency, it refused to countenance socialist steps in the period of "National Reconstruction and National Liberation".

Here too, the JUP displayed a characteristic common to all of the functional fronts of the Tendency. The Tendency's programme was compartmentalised [1] so that each front campaigned on aspects directly relevant to their specific area of operations. This meant that the JUP campaigned almost solely on university issues, the Working Youth section on union issues, etc., ignoring the macro-level structural changes which were vital prerequisites for the demanded micro-level reforms. Moreover, the JUP lacked a system of intermediate or transitional demands designed to relate immediate demands to a general programme of radical social transformations. It would be a mistake to put this down to political inexperience. The gulf separating JUP demands from its distant goal of social revolution was inherent in their stages approach. Macro-level changes had socialist implications and were therefore not on the immediate agenda of the *movimientista* Left. Thus for the JUP, as for the JP, their whole strategy of mobilisations was orientated around and depended on the viability of a stage of national liberation and the commitment of the Peronist leadership and

---

1. The main exception to this was "Un documento para la liberación: Reencauzar el movimiento peronista como eje de la liberación, Reconstruir el frente bajo la hegemonía de los trabajadores, Recuperar el gobierno para el pueblo y el General Peron," which appeared with *El Peronista*, no. 1 (19th April 1974). The contents of this rare example of a programme of the Tendency as a whole are summarised in the title and were similar to Firmenich's speech at Atlanta on 11th March 1974.

government to it. That their hopes were ill-founded was shown only too clearly by the fascist takeover of the universities in September 1974.

THE PERONIST WORKING YOUTH

Within the JP-Montonero Revolutionary Tendency the proportional social weight of workers was far less significant than that of the students. Indeed, some observers have estimated that the shanty-town dwellers organisation (MVP) gained more support than the labour front despite the former's smaller potential recruitment base. Though having some important labour contacts prior to 1973, the Tendency did not create its own labour front, the Peronist Working Youth (JTP), until May of that year. This was in part a reflection of the predominantly petty-bourgeois Tendency's principal orientation being towards "the people", with this overriding a socialist orientation towards the working class. At the same time, it reflected the tremendous difficulties which any organisation practising urban guerrilla warfare has in attaining organised support among industrial workers who, in the main, see such a method as alien to their own union and political forms of struggle.

The JTP was not launched until the Montoneros had come above ground, did not have its first national congress until April 1974 and then in September saw its opportunities for legal activity drastically reduced by the Montonero resumption of warfare. In 1975 it was absorbed into the Trade Union Bloc of Authentic Peronism (Bloque Sindical del Peronismo Auténtico), the labour branch of the Auténtico movement, which unlike the JTP no longer viewed participation in the official Peronist 62 Organisations as viable. Whether or not in its two years of existence the JTP outgrew the shanty-town movement, special examination of it is vital since it was working-class support which the Tendency needed if it was

to seriously challenge the Peronist leadership and be able to pose a genuine socialist alternative.

Although the slogan "JTP is the new CGT" became a favourite at Youth rallies, the official objective was not to create a parallel CGT but to work within it in an attempt to oust its bureaucratic leadership, institute democratic trade union procedures and win control of the labour confederation. The JTP hoped to work as a tendency within the 62 Organisations and also to gain hegemony there but this wish was frustrated by the refusal of the 62 not only to permit its participation but even to recognise its existence. Instead the 62 recognised as its youth section the much smaller Peronist Trade Union Youth (Juventud Sindical Peronista - JSP) - an organisation created by the leadership and lacking an independent line or a life of its own.

During its two year lifespan, JTP development was hampered by its youth image, despite the fact that it opened its ranks to workers of all ages. Such slogans as "Trade Union Rejuvenation for 'National' Socialism" tended to drive an artificial wedge between young workers and the over 30's. Moreover, they implied that the political problem of bureaucratic control of the unions, enhanced by control of the Labour Ministry, was a generational one requiring a generational solution - the replacement of old leaders by young militants. In this sense, the JTP did not appear to the working class as an organisation for all workers and thus its campaign against the bureaucracy did not realise the full potential of an anti-bureaucratic movement.

Before evaluating the success of the JTP in the unions, it is important to note that JTP documents were often more clasista in both tone and vocabulary than those of the other fronts which tended to subsume class in references to the pueblo and national liberation movements. For

example, while the analyses of the other fronts revolved around the people-oligarchy/imperialism antinomy, a document produced by the JTP after its first national meeting in August 1973 spoke of the working class having been betrayed by the union bureaucracy which "has handed hegemony over the process to the bourgeoisie". As enemies, it pointed not only to the oligarchy, imperialism and the bureaucracy but also to "the industrial, commercial, financial and managerial bourgeoisie in the service of imperialism". [1] A month later, the Mussi-Retamar grouping (agrupación) of the JTP declared that: "There will only be justice when the capitalist system, which benefits the few through the suffering of the majority, is destroyed" and defined 'national' socialism as being "when the working class really has political power, when it has the means to produce wealth in its hands..." [2]

Though the JTP was to share the vacillating behaviour which characterised the Tendency as a whole, the demands of many of its sections stressed the more radical aspects of the Tendency's programme. For example, the Evita Montonero JTP metalworkers' grouping of Córdoba called in July 1973 for the nationalisation of the banks and all key sectors of the economy, for the expropriation of all large landholdings without compensation and for workers' control over production. Among the non-worker sectors of the Tendency, such demands gained less emphasis, some being considered too radical for the present "stage" of the process and likely to produce unnecessary clashes with Perón, at least over time scales.

When one examines the fortunes of the JTP as it attempted to win

---

1. "JTP: Propuestas para el trabajo sindical," El Descamisado, no. 16 (4th September 1973), pp. 30-31.

2. JTP Agrupación Mussi-Retamar communiqué, Militancia, no. 14 (13th September 1973), pp. 32-35.

control of the unions, the most striking feature of its performance to emerge is that of white-collar success contrasting with blue-collar weakness. Its achievements came in the unions grouping state employees and in the smaller unions - the big industrial unions remained firmly in the hands of the bureaucrats, and these were the ones which really counted if a mass worker base was to be won. What the JTP achieved in just 16 months was highly impressive quantitatively but since its success was limited to the least economically-powerful groups, its qualitative performance was less dazzling.

Geographically, the JTP became strongest in the Federal Capital and Greater Buenos Aires, with Rosario and Córdoba second and third in importance and with Tucumán also being the scene of a number of successes. In terms of unions, the main success stories were the State Workers Association (ATE), the Transport Union (UTA) and the State Gas Workers Union (Gas del Estado). ATE was controlled by the JTP in Córdoba and Rosario, where Reginaldo Ramallo and Mario Aguirre held the respective general secretaryships, and was heavily influenced in Misiones where general secretary Juan Figueredo was a JTP militant. Influence among the colectivo (bus) drivers of UTA was strongest in Buenos Aires, where the JTP led a successful strike in August 1973, and the Capital was also the main area of gas workers' support, JTP national leader Guillermo Greco being the union's general secretary there.

Of lesser importance was the October 1973 JTP victory in the Villa Adelina branch of the Ceramic Workers Federation, this being the main section of that union. At the same time, in Tucumán it won control of two branches of municipal workers, including the San Miguel provincial capital branch, and three of the sugar mill unions. The former victories paved the way for a take-over of the Federation of Municipal Workers

of Tucumán in March 1974, promptly nullified however by national "intervention". There were also JTP groupings in the unions where the organisation lacked positions of control, the strongest of these being in the Bank Employees Association (AB) of Buenos Aires, the Health Workers Union (ATSA) in Córdoba and among the dockyard workers of Buenos Aires Province.

By late 1974, the JTP had organised groupings in most of the important unions but apart from the Bahía Blanca section of the Construction Workers Union (UOCRA) they were unable to win positions of authority in the blue-collar unions. The JTP's influence in the labour movement was roughly reflected on the 31st August 1973 CGT march when the JTP's State Workers and Gas Workers columns took 10 and 6 minutes respectively to pass the CGT HQ, whereas the blue-collar unions controlled by "the bureaucracy" took much longer: the Metal Workers Union (UOM) 40 minutes, the Car Workers (SMATA) 33 minutes and the Power Workers (Luz y Fuerza) and Railway Workers (Unión Ferroviaria) 20 minutes each. [1]

In the blue-collar unions, the JTP attempted to contest bureaucratic control where it was at its strongest. Strong-arm and proscriptive methods were frequently used by leaderships to prevent JTP lists from participating in union elections. The Construction Workers Union leaders pre-empted a JTP challenge in its October 1973 elections by drawing up new regulations under which it became necessary to have been a "delegate" for at least two years before occupying a leading position, while at the same time enabling the leadership to refuse recognition to delegates elected by ordinary union members. In that union, the JTP's election list was annulled by the bureaucracy while in the Vegetable Oil Workers Union elections, held at the same time, the JTP attributed

---

1. Special supplement to El Descamisado, no. 16, op. cit.

their defeat by 231 votes in the Federal Capital to the fact that the ballot count was exclusively in the hands of the leadership. [1]

JTP participation in the 1974 elections of the Bank Employees Association was prevented through the use of thugs to deny the leader of the JTP's Blue and White List access to the union headquarters to register the list. Faced with only a single list of candidates at national level, the JTP launched a highly successful abstention campaign. Only 20,000 of the 54,000 bank employees in the Buenos Aires region voted and at Banco Nación union electoral supervisors were thrown out by 3,000 employees who abstained to a man. [2] This, however, still left the union in the hands of the old leadership.

To effectively challenge the power of the union bureaucracy, the JTP badly needed success in the Metal Workers Union which was the most influential union in the CGT and also controlled the Labour Ministry through Minister Ricardo Otero. Participation in the March 1974 elections, though, was all too easy for the bureaucracy to deny. At the end of November 1973, a National Congress of Delegates, all nominated by the bureaucracy, met and changed the union statutes so as to effectively prevent opposition lists from being presented in elections. Otero condoned the manoeuvre, accusing the JTP metalworkers' group activists of being "bolshies and trots", [3] before the police executed the coup de grâce by raiding the JTP headquarters and seizing group lists which theoretically entitled the JTP to participate in the elections. Such methods were by no means untypical and were accompanied by police and right-wing attacks

---

1. "Organizar, movilizar, controlar, custodiar, apoyar...," ibid., no. 22 (16th October 1973), p. 8.
2. "Las urnas 'revantaron'....de aire," ibid., no. 36 (22nd January 1974), p. 25.
3. JTP Agrupación Metalúrgica 17 de Octubre communiqué, ibid., no. 43 (12th March 1974), p. 15.

on JTP militants and offices, a bazooka being used in one such attack.

This all raises the question of whether the JTP was not mistaken in attempting to work through union elections rather than trying to develop an "independent alternative of the working class" as called for by the alternativistas. It is true that the electoral battles were decidedly unfair in most cases and that any triumphs which the JTP momentarily achieved were easy to negate by bureaucratic fiat. Mario Aguirre, leader of the State Workers in Rosario, for example, was simply expelled by the national leadership of his union for participating in a JTP rally in 1974. However, in several cases the elections did provide opportunities for building anti-bureaucratic support and occasionally the Left was able to inflict defeats on the official bureaucracy-approved election lists. Despite fierce opposition from the Buenos Aires bureaucracy, René Salamanca was re-elected as general secretary of the Córdoban section of the Car Workers Union in May 1974, with JTP support. Victories such as this demonstrated that where the Left had strong rank-and-file backing, it could force the national leadership into allowing its participation in elections and ratifying its success. This was only partially understood by the JTP which, when defrauded or proscribed in elections, denounced the bureaucracy but failed to examine why it had been able to get away with its fraudulent tactics.

As in the case of the other fronts, the work of the JTP was mainly concerned with agitation and mobilisation, organisational work being limited to union election campaigns. Only in March 1974 did the Tendency begin to recognise its organisational weakness. At the March 11th Atlanta rally, Firmenich, directing his remarks at the JP, said "we must ask ourselves if it has really done much organisational work" and called on the JTP to work "to raise the organisational level of the working class". [1]

---

1. "Palabras de Firmenich," Militancia, no. 37 (14th March 1974), pp. 37-42.

For at least the first year of its existence, the JTP ignored consistent rank-and-file organisational work because it felt that the rank-and-file was already revolutionary and only needed a push from itself to oust the "infiltrated" bureaucracy. This myth was clearly evident in the JTP statement that one of its main roles was "to get the bureaucracy out of the unions they have taken by assault" [1] (my emphasis - RG). This reflected, in the minds of young inexperienced trade unionists and in the minds of those with no union experience at all, a belief that the methods being used by the bureaucracy to retain control of the unions were the same as those used originally to rise to their leading positions. As seen above, this was a fallacy. Many of the bureaucrats had risen through relatively fair elections as combative candidates and though Mafia methods became common practice once in office, some of these characters still retained a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of significant sectors of workers. For in order to maintain and increase their bureaucratic power through time, leaders were sporadically obliged to take up the economic demands of their members.

In turn, the JTP's attractiveness for the working class was limited by the Tendency's equivocation over the Social Pact which led it in the early months to merely campaign for a return to 1955 living standards. Such a demand failed to satisfy the most militant workers to whom defences of Social Pacts with employers were tantamount to "class collaboration". The level of JTP economic demands, though restrained, was geared towards the mass of workers but it is arguable that in order to build a mass revolutionary movement, one needs first to win the militants and develop them as cadres. JTP moderation on the wages front during its first year alienated many militants. The combative Brown List of

---

1. "Hacia la toma de la batuta, "El Descamisado, no. 17 (11th September 1973), p. 11.

candidates for the Telephone Workers Union (FOETRA) elections, for example, refused to join forces with the JTP in September 1973, referring to the JTP as petty-bourgeois. [1] In other cases, the JTP revealed a sectarian attitude towards the non-Peronist Left. In the 1974 Bank Employees Union elections, for instance, despite the single official list at national level, the Socialist Workers Party (PST) managed to get its list authorised in Buenos Aires, yet the proscribed JTP group refused it support. The JTP dismissed a PST promise to hold open elections if successful as "opportunist", [2] yet the JTP made similar promises in a number of other union sections where proscriptions prevented fair elections from taking place.

Apart from the Social Pact, the JTP only partially opposed the Law of Professional Associations and offered no opposition at all to the Redundancy Law. The former's aim was to perpetuate the power of the union bureaucracy by giving legal powers to the national CGT to "intervene" its regions and to federations to "intervene" local unions. JTP opposition to it was limited to those clauses preventing the exercise of trade union democracy but since their influence was so weak in Congress and non-existent in the government, they really had no chance of securing amendments. Failure to provide all-out opposition to the bill divorced the JTP from the more militant union sectors, even though its campaign mobilised more workers than the bureaucracy could rally in support of it. Some 20,000 people attended the JTP's Luna Park rally of 2nd November 1973 compared with just 3,000 [3] at a rally organised by the JSP which, opportunistically, originally announced that the rally would be against

---

1. "Telefónicos: Combativos o Vandoristas?", ibid., no. 16 (4th September 1973), p. 27.
2. "Las urnas...," op. cit.
3. Estimates from the Buenos Aires Herald, 1st November 1973 and El Descamisado, no. 25 (6th November 1973).

the Redundancy Law and then, after it had started, stated that it was in support of the Law of Professional Associations!

The Redundancy Law was supported by the JTP in the hope that it would be used against "reactionaries" blocking the work of national reconstruction and liberation. Accepting assurances from Perón at their face value, the JTP declared that they would "control the effective application of the spirit in which the law was thought up". [1] Similarly, the "spirit" of the Law of Professional Associations was not questioned. Moreover, the JTP's criticism of the powers of "intervention" contained in the latter piece of legislation was not a principled one, for the Tendency had demonstrated with regard to the universities that it was not opposed to "intervention" from above so long as it was the beneficiary. In practice, the Law of Professional Associations bolstered the power of the bureaucracy while the Redundancy Law was used against militants, including JTP members and the editors of the alternativista review Militancia, Ortega Peña and Duhalde, who lost their University of Buenos Aires law lectureships through the application of the real "spirit" of the law.

On a few occasions the JTP was able to use its power of mobilisation to momentarily curb right-wing attacks. When JTP militant and transport union delegate Oscar Arca was kidnapped, allegedly by Rucci's bodyguards, in October 1973, a strike by colectivo drivers and the parking of 200 buses in Plaza de Mayo to cause traffic chaos effectively saved the victim's life. Mobilisations also persuaded Labour Minister Otero to validate the ceramic workers' elections of December 1973 in which the JTP defeated the Federation's leadership, after the Minister had at first rejected the results and "advised" a restoration of the

---

1. "Organizar, movilizar...," El Descamisado, no. 24 (30th October 1973), p. 14.

old authorities. [1]

Clearly the JTP was able to consistently out-mobilise the trade union leadership and at least equal their performance at the major national events. Metalworkers' leader Lorenzo Miguel could only amass 2,500 people when he organised a Luna Park rally in January 1974 designed to win the support of Isabel Perón. [2] However, mobilisation was not an effective substitute for strong rank-and-file organisation. When the unholy triple alliance of government, employers and union bureaucracy began to act against the JTP, starting late in 1973 with a medley of "interventions", unsympathetic Labour Ministry rulings, sackings and transfers of state employees away from their areas of militancy, the JTP was able to organise protests but not long-term resistance. By the end of 1974 it had lost most of its positions of authority because of this weakness.

If defensive struggles were limited by the JTP's organisational weakness, offensives were even more limited both for this reason and because of the Tendency's early belief that the limitations of the government were largely justifiable "limitations" of the "stage" of national liberation. Though the JTP began in March 1973 with an offensive, promoting work-place occupations and price control vigilante groups, these were suspended as soon as Perón wagged his finger. Interior Minister Righi originally supported the occupations as a "healthy and natural reaction" against the oppressive constraints of previous years, [3] yet he along with all sections of the Tendency accepted the command to end them

---

1. See the election report in ibid., no. 36 (22nd January 1974), pp. 30-31.
2. "Atentar Contra la Organización del Pueblo," ibid., no. 34 (8th January 1974), pp. 2-3.
3. Righi, quoted in Clarín (Buenos Aires), 11th June 1973.

in mid-June, claiming that they might be taken advantage of by anti-government reactionaries.

This about-turn started a process of vacillation, not only over government legislation but also in union disputes. When the left-wing daily El Mundo was banned by the government in March 1974, the Peronist Press Bloc of the JTP condemned the measure but rather than campaign for its reversal, limited its call to the provision of alternative employment for the redundant workers. Moreover, during the struggle of the Córdoban car workers in the middle of 1974, the JTP opposed the use of strike action in furtherance of a wage claim exceeding the Social Pact ceiling and condemned the "incendiary speeches" made by Salamanca and others. [1] When the strike became a reality and the union was threatened with national "intervention", the JTP proposed that the wage claim be "disguised" with demands for other improvements in order "to avoid a level of confrontation which (the union) was not in condition to face up to due to the great isolation of the struggle". [2] While a tactical retreat may or may not have been advisable due to the isolation of the strikers, such a position was unlikely to win the support of militants among the highly class-conscious workers of Córdoba.

In the end, the Tendency attempted to make up for its trade union weakness and vacillations with the superficially militant return to arms. When Firmenich gained his only opportunity of addressing a workers' assembly, during the car workers' dispute in Córdoba, he announced that "if our enemies advance with arms, we're going to stop them with arms". [3]

---

1. "Córdoba: el porqué del conflicto de Smata," La Causa Peronista, no. 4 (30th June 1974), pp. 30-31.
2. "Córdoba: Si es necesario aquí pondremos sangre montonera," ibid., no. 6 (13th August 1974), pp. 26-31.
3. Ibid.

The materialisation of this promise in September 1974 was not, however, a response to the appeals of workers but rather an attempt to use military methods to make up for the Tendency's political and trade union failures.

The return to a full-scale guerrilla campaign inevitably led to a fall-off in Montonero participation in union struggles and made the previously neglected organisational tasks much harder and more hazardous. Apart from a victory in the Greater Buenos Aires Northern Zone Ceramic Workers Federation elections of October 1975, the period following the resumption of warfare was one of reverses in union elections. In September 1975, the transport union (UTA) was "won" by the bureaucracy at a congress in San Juan after their thugs had violently attacked the JTP delegations arriving from the Federal Capital and Greater Buenos Aires.

Without doubt, as a result of their sixteen months of mass activity, the Montoneros counted with far more working-class support when they resumed guerrilla action in September 1974 than when they publicly initiated it in May 1970. What is not known is how many of their working-class militants were wasted through incorporation into the military apparatus after the declaration of war on the government of Isabel. A few years later the Montoneros were to admit, and describe as a "political error", the fact that, after the March 1976 coup at least, "comrades who had the possibility of operating legally instead invited those who were in their union to pass into clandestinity".[1] This was not, however, an isolated "error" but stemmed from an erroneous conception of revolution which stressed military methods to the detriment of revolutionary theory and organisation. By resorting to arms without having won the mass of workers over politically, the Montoneros only maintained and probably

---

1. "Argentina: Un País En Guerra," Revolución, op. cit.

increased the divide separating themselves from the majority of workers. Their creation of paper organisations like CGT in the Resistance (CGTR) in 1976 only demonstrated the gulf which exists between wishful thinking and reality.

THE OTHER FRONTS

Among the remaining fronts of the Tendency, the largest was undoubtedly the Peronist Shanty-Town Dwellers Movement (MVP). It has been estimated that the MVP had some 4-5,000 activists nationally while being able to mobilise significantly more than that number for specific projects and events. [1] Created immediately after the Cámpora government took office, it rallied 4,000 to a Popular Assembly of Shanty-Town Dwellers in the Boxing Stadium of Buenos Aires on 25th August 1973, had 2,500 at its 1st National Congress in Santa Fe on 20th-21st October, 800 at its 2nd Congress (a delegate conference) in Córdoba on 19-20th January 1974 and 1,000 at a protest rally on 7th April. [2]

Counting originally with the support of Carlos Mugica, the shanty-town dwellers campaign for self-improvement immediately clashed with the policies of López Rega's Social Welfare Ministry team. While the Ministry set in motion a programme of demolition and building which ignored the opinions of the inhabitants of the villas miserias, the MVP campaigned for an emergency programme in which the shanty-town dwellers themselves, with the material, financial and technical aid of the Ministry, would build their own housing and thus reduce the level of unemployment

---

1. Interview with a former Peronist Youth member, Buenos Aires, 16th February 1976.
2. Estimated attendances from El Descamisado, nos. 16 (4th September 1973), 24 (30th October 1973) & 37 (29th January 1974); and El Peronista, no. 4 (14th May 1974).

in their sector. The MVP project, emphasising self-help rather than dependence on the government, envisaged the promotion of popular cooperatives which would confront the immediate housing and employment problems of the shanty-town dwellers, and participation in the "popular government" through joint control of the shanty-towns and influence over land, housing, health and educational policy.

Most of the work of the MVP, which by March 1974 had the support of 450 villas miserias nationally, [1] consisted of making improvements in the shanty-towns as a contribution to "National Reconstruction". Its greatest strength was in Buenos Aires where Vidal Giménez was the leader until breaking with the Tendency in February 1974, probably as a "Loyalist". Organisation of the shanty-town dwellers was not an easy task, as Firmenich recognised in his March 1974 Atlanta speech. Shanty-town dwellers, like "lumpenproletarians" in most countries, have not shown a unified propensity to support the Left and have, on the contrary, in part supplied the clientele of fascist organisations. It is noteworthy that although the Peronist Right in general had a far weaker social base than the Left in this period, in the shanty-towns there was significant popular support for the right-wing Organizational Command under the highly personalistic leadership of Alberto Brito Lima.

The MVP made no impact on the direction of government policy, the Social Welfare Ministry having been a bulwark of the extreme Peronist Right since May 1973. López Rega showed his lack of sympathy by ordering federal policemen to open fire on a peaceful demonstration of shanty-town dwellers in Plaza de Mayo in March 1974, killing MVP activist Alberto Chejolán. The journalism of the Montonero's El Descamisado was seen at its best in covering this shooting - it carried a large photograph of

---

1. "Las Villas Triunfarán," El Descamisado, no. 43 (12th March 1974), pp. 12-14.

the event with the policeman responsible for Chejolán's death clearly identified and ringed.[1]

Associated with the MVP but far smaller was the Peronist Tenants Movement (MIP), which organised tenants who rented rooms or parts of rooms in hoteles (slum boarding houses) and conventillos (single-room tenement blocks) - not the tenants of family flats. The small size of the MIP reflected its relatively small potential social base and the difficulty of organising an unconcentrated and extremely insecure sector. Created in 1973, it appears never to have held a national congress though about 500 people attended its 2nd Metropolitan Congress in April 1974.[2] Like the shanty-town dwellers' organisation, the MIP's campaigns focussed on solutions to the housing problem but also for the immediate future attempted to gain stability and protection for poor tenants. Largely unsuccessful attempts were made to develop tenants' committees at local level but a couple of demonstrations against intimidation by police and hotel managers, for an end to evictions and for the full application of a new Rent Law guaranteeing security of tenure, were fairly large. MIP mobilisations may have contributed to the achievement of the anti-eviction law but it was unable to ensure the implementation of the legislation due to governmental disinterest at the plight of these tenants and to police-hotel manager collaboration.

Apart from the MVP, the only sizable front amongst the remaining organisations was the Secondary Students Union (UES), which had existed under the early Peronist governments before being banned in 1955 and having its property confiscated. Its recreation was announced by

---

1. "El asesinato del compañero Chejolán: El Pueblo Ya Marcó al Culpable," ibid., no. 46 (2nd April 1974), pp. 16-21.

2. See the report, "Movimiento de Inquilinos Peronistas, 2° Congreso Capital," El Peronista, no. 1 (19th March 1974), pp. 55-57.

Galimberti in April 1973 after 7 secondary student groupings including the Evita Montonera Secondary Student Group of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires came together. The integrant groups had campaigned against "Democratic Education" and "Civic Instruction" cources prior to 1973, grew rapidly through pre-March electoral activity and brought together some 300 delegates for the 1st UES Conference in April 1973.

Among the demands of the UES were calls for the return of its property, course changes in schools and general educational reforms along the same lines as those pioneered by Puiggrós andthe university sister organisation. When Cámpora took office, the UES participated in 14 school occupations where headmasters were accused of being "agents of the military dictatorship" [1] but after that most of their activities were orientated towards National Reconstruction tasks. Early in 1974, by which time the UES had structured itself with 8 Regionales, the secondary students provided 500 youngsters to work on Operativo Güemes, aimed at helping and organising the inhabitants of valleys in the south of Salta Province. At the same time, the UES helped to rebuild a number of schools around Buenos Aires but they had little success in ousting "Mr. Gradgrinds" from school headmasterships. Moreover, they recieved no support or recognition from the Education Ministry, even under Taiana.

As in the case of the other pro-Montonero organisations, the UES was contemptuous of democratic internal practices. According to a former leading activist at the Colegio Nacional de Bueno Aires, the UES there was dominated by a handful of leaders who denied their rank-and file participation in decision-making. The practical effect of this was a low level of political sophistication among UES members, many of whom were

---

1. "La UES está presente, mi general," El Descamisado, no. 18 (18th September 1973), pp. 26-27.

ignorant of Tendency policy on key issues.[1]

The youthfulness of the UES did not exampt its activists from right-wing violence. UES member Eduardo Beckerman was assassinated in August 1974 and its leader Claudio Slemenson was kidnapped by the Army in October of the following year, provoking major UES and Auténtico campaigns for his release. In 1975, the UES became part of the Youth Branch of the Authentic Peronist Movement and promoted coordinating committees to unify the struggles of secondary students for the resignation of Education Minister Arrighi and an end to repression in schools. It proved insufficiently strong, however, to gain recognition from the educational authorities and to put an end to the reprisals suffered by activists. The Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, a hot-bed of secondary-student militancy, whose "old boys" included Firmenich, Abal Medina, Ramus, Olmedo, Cesaris and Slemenson, was particularly affected by the expulsion of activists. After the March 1976 coup, a measure of "discipline" was restored by placing a policeman in each and every classroom during lessons.

One of the major organisational failures of the Tendency was on the agrarian front where it lacked a sympathising organisation. Though the Tendency gained some influence in the Agrarian Leagues of Northern Argentina, it was viewed by most agrarian workers, with some justification, as being mainly concerned with the interests of urban workers and students. Most of the agrarian contacts were developed through rural National Reconstruction projects in which youths mobilised by the Tendency went out to work among agrarian workers in a way reminiscent of the Russian Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) of the second half of the 19th century.

---

1. Interview with a former leading secondary student activist at the Colegio Nacional, Buenos Aires, 4th August 1976.

Another failure lay in the scant success of the Tendency's Evita Group (Agrupación Evita de la Rama Femenina), created during the presidential election campaign of September 1973. Female supporters of the Tendency considered it necessary to form an organisation to specifically stress women's issues because they felt that they did not "have the same level of consciousness and political activity as the men". [1] The Group's programme called for adequate health facilities for children, equal pay for equal work, legal protection for maternity and infancy and the building of nurseries and public gardens. It attempted to get more women involved in political life on the assumption that if the Feminine Branch of the Justicialist Movement became a mass organisation, it would inevitably adopt the political line of the Tendency.

However, though the Feminine Branch of the official Movement was small, the Evita Group was unable to take it over. Indeed, there were no mechanisms through which the Feminine Branch could be captured. The authorities of the Branch were ultimately decided by Perón and it was a mere article of faith for the Evita Group to believe that, if it grew, Perón would facilitate the democratisation of the Branch. Once again, the strategy of this front depended on Perón and his Movement being "progressive" and democratic, but as in the case of the other Branches Perón lent his support to the right-wing and centre groups when the Provisional Superior Council of the Movement was created at the end of July 1973. Silvana Rota became leader of the Feminine Branch representatives on the Council and was not noted for left-wing sympathies. She rejected the Evita Group's call for nursery facilities for working women as "sectarian" ("they must not only be for the working class but also for rich women") and opposed Nilda Garré's bill providing for maternity

---

1. "La Mujer Presente," El Descamisado, no. 19 (26th September 1973), p. 25.

leave as being too expensive for employers.[1] To safeguard her authority over the Feminine Branch, Rota got the Council to simply close down feminine party branches and to refuse recognition to the Evita Group as part of the Movement.

Attempts by the Evita Group to organise holiday camps for the children of the poor were frustrated by the replacement of Bidegain by Calabró as Governor of Buenos Aires Province, the latter banning such activities in February 1974. The failure of the Group to take on flesh must, however, be primarily attributed to its over-concentration on a single issue whose symbolic value in no way made up for its irrelevance to the socio-economic problems faced by working-class women. That issue was described by Firmenich as "the greatest demand of the Argentine woman, which is the greatest demand of the Argentine working class: the repatriation of our standard-bearer Evita".[2] "Evita obrera, hermosa y montonera"[3] was not only of symbolic and mythological importance to the Evita Group but also, in 1974, its main campaign issue. Though the Peronist Left's image of Evita had the magnetism to attract 10,000 of the faithful to a Luna Park homage in November 1973,[4] it was not something to galvanise working-class women into political activity. They were far more concerned with wages and prices than with being able to gaze on Evita's mortal remains.

Finally, the Tendency created a large number of small organisations to supposedly represent diverse sectors ranging from professional

---

1. "La Agrupación Evita de la Rama Femenina del Movimiento Peronista organizó un acto en homenaje a la madre peronista," ibid., no. 25 (6th November 1973), pp. 28-31.
2. "Palabras de Firmenich," op. cit.
3. Translation: Evita the worker, the beautiful Montonero.
4. Estimated attendance from "Las Mujeres de Evita Dijeron Presente," Militancia, no. 22 (8th November 1973), pp. 10-11.

people, like doctors and lawyers, to cripples. The latter, often exploited as cheap labour by private charities, began to organise politically, aided by the Tendency, and recieved the same governmental response as their colleagues. When they blocked Avenida Libertador in July 1973 to protest against their low remuneration, López Rega demonstrated his consistency by ordering police officers and firemen to violently repress the demonstration.

The sixteen months of mass activity therefore saw the Tendency not only as a great mobilising force but also creating numerous organisations. It must be stressed, however, that many of these "organisations", presented as mass organisations, were really a question of groups of activists conducting consistent agitational work with the mass membership only fully participating in the mobilisations. In this period of frenzied development of structures, the Tendency was intent upon presenting itself to Perón as a national mass movement, a viable alternative power base to the bourgeois and bureaucratic sectors of Peronism, but the end product was in fact organisationally weak. It lacked substance at rank-and-file level due to the bureaucratic and militaristic way in which such organisations were structured.

Attempts to democratise the front organisations were too partial and came too late to rectify this weakness, for by September 1974 revolutionary warfare had again become the central axis of Montonero strategy. Many of the front activists now became combatants or auxiliaries in the military structure, leaving the mass organisations whose lack of depth and solidity now became only too clear. Though repression took its toll in the years which followed, the decline in the active mass base of the Montoneros, as reflected in the fall-off in the activity of all their front organisations, has to be fundamentally attributed to the kinds of

fronts developed during those sixteen months. Rather than being designed to develop cadres and a strong rank-and-file movement with greater possibilities of long-term significance, the Montonero fronts were organised from above with the aim of propagating Montonero slogans and mobilising around them.

The characteristics of the front organisations were neither intrinsically good nor bad, for the inability of the Montoneros to derive greater benefits from the period above ground was mainly a political one. Their front organisations' inadequacy in the given political situation was a by-product of an inadequate political conception which viewed a stage of national liberation, without the overthrow of capitalism, as viable and Perón and his Movement as capable of directing it. These premises, resting on rotten foundations, were responsible for the view that Perón could pursue a popular line within the parameters of capitalist society and that he could be influenced by putting large numbers of people onto the streets.

When Perón confounded his faithful, the fronts desperately tried to lengthen and strengthen their rank-and-file roots through independent organisational work, but it was too late. By publicly resuming warfare in September 1974, surface and mass activity was greatly hampered both by the increased repression which the decision provoked and by the way in which the military front became the priority area around which most Tendency activity revolved. As the military might of the Montoneros increased, the political strength of their fronts declined, divorcing the Tendency from the masses it was trying to represent. The return to arms was a response to the political weakness of the Tendency - an infirmity which the "cure" only exacerbated.

THE 'AUTENTICOS'

In 1975 the Montoneros made an attempt to reassert themselves as a mass political force and to prepare for the eventuality of an electoral solution to the crisis in which the Isabel Perón government was floundering. Provincial elections were due in April of that year in Misiones and the Tendency, or rather one wing of it, saw them as an opportunity to show its political muscle and to prepare for a future general election. For this purpose, the idea of a Descamisado Party was floated at the start of the year but by March 11th, when the party was formally launched in Nino's Restaurant, its name had become the Authentic Peronist Party (Partido Peronista Auténtico - PPA), the courts having ruled sympathetically on a Justicialist Party claim that the word descamisado (shirtless one) was its own private property.

The PPA was essentially an alliance between the Montonero Tendency, most of the ousted provincial governors (Bidegain, Martínez Baca, Cepernic and Obregón Cano) and some trade union veterans of the Peronist struggles of the 18 years of opposition. It did not represent a new political alignment for the governors had previously been close to the Tendency and the veterans too had publicly associated with it since early in 1974. Then, the veterans had created the "Permanent Commission of Homage to the 11th of March", to defend the electoral programme on which Cámpora had been elected and to campaign for internal democracy in the Peronist Movement. Big names from the Resistance years like Borro, Framini, Fernández, Viel, Lizaso and Armando Cabo appeared at the Tendency's 11th March 1974 Atlanta rally and shortly afterwards created the Authentic Peronist Group (Agrupación del Peronismo Auténtico - APA).

APA had shared the political line and vacillations of the Tendency back in 1974. In June of that year it issued a public letter "To General Perón from his Old Friends and Loyal Peronist Soldiers", which complained

that "loyalists" were being treated as if they were "traitors" and vice versa.[1] Moreover, its leader Andrés Framini, the former CGT leader elected as Governor of Buenos Aires in 1962, shared the Tendency's attitude of initially supporting the government of Isabel after Perón died, still hoping for some concession. In July 1974 Framini declared that the "enemy" would try to take advantage of Perón's death and must "find us united, defending Isabel and the government".[2] Upon rapidly discovering that Isabel was "the enemy", or one of them, the APA further strengthened its ties with the Tendency before merging with it in 1975.

By this time the Tendency had abandoned all hope of "recovering" the official Justicialist Party from within and presented its Authentic Peronist Party, structured along traditional Peronist lines as part of a Movement with political, union, feminine and youth sections, as the legitimate heir to the party of Perón. It did not excel in its first and last electoral test in the northern province of Misiones. Allied with the local Left Peronist party, 3rd Position, the Auténticos with 15% of the poll came a distant third to the FREJULI alliance with 46% and the Radicals (UCR) 38%. Whereas 3rd Position, standing alone, had gained 29,000 (compared with FREJULI's 51,000) votes in March 1973, now, allied with the PPA, the vote for the Peronist Left fell to 15,000.[3]

It should be emphasised that Misiones is no microcosm of the nation and that the PPA would have been expected to have done better nationally. The province is economically backward, possessing little in the way of

---

1. "Al General Perón de Sus Viejos Amigos y Leales Soldados Peronistas," El Peronista, no. 4 (14th May 1974), pp. 10-11.

2. "Habla Andrés Framini: Hacia La Unidad Que Nos Marcaba Perón," La Causa Peronista, no. 1 (9th July 1974), p. 46.

3. La Nación, 13-15th April 1975.

industry and hence of a working class. Only 40% of the population live in urban areas while the rest inhabit small closed communities. It has a higher proportion of foreigners, especially Paraguayans, than most provinces, and experience has shown that in the more backward provinces support for the government party is often stronger for employment reasons. Moreover, it is no secret that the Ministry of Social Welfare spent a huge amount of money to ensure the FREJULI victory. In March 1975, the Ministry announced the creation of 30 cooperatives to provide jobs, and during the campaign distributed refrigerators, sewing machines and envelopes stuffed with bank notes as the best form of political propaganda it could offer.

Bearing these considerations in mind, the PPA showing, while not impressive, was respectable. It had still not demonstrated itself to be a viable electoral alternative to official Peronism or Radicalism but had shown that it was the main left-wing force. To strengthen their credibility, the Auténticos sent envoys to Mexico in an attempt to persuade Cámpora to become their national figurehead, but to no avail. Though Cámpora returned to Argentina at the end of 1975, his message was essentially the same as in 1973 - "I want to govern for everybody, without exceptions", [1] which meant, among other things, attempting to reconcile the warring factions of the old Peronist Movement rather than opting for Right or Left. This was in spite of the fact that the Justicialist Party had expelled him for "treason and disloyalty", [2] presuming him to be a PPA supporter.

After the mid-1975 General Strike, with pressures on Isabel to resign and call early general elections increasing, the PPA developed a

---

1. Cámpora, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 9th April 1973.
2. La Opinión, 23rd April 1975.

national structure covering an area inhabited by 95% of the electorate. [1] By the end of October, it had around 40,000 registered members, [2] mainly the members of the former Tendency fronts. The Auténticos clearly regarded themselves as an expression of working-class hostility to the government. They announced in the first edition of their fortnightly El Auténtico that "The workers have initiated a new resistance, organising themselves to recover the government", which had allegedly been in their hands in the early Peronist era when, according to Framini, "the workers' movement was really the government"! [3] When, however, the Authentic Peronist Movement was formally constituted in the distinctly unproletarian Savoy Hotel on 21st September 1975, only 6 of the 16 people chosen for its Superior Council had trade union credentials. [4]

Although the founding document approved at the meeting maintained that "we cannot repeat old errors", the political line was no different to that propounded by the Montoneros in 1974. Liberation or Dependency remained the fundamental dichotomy in Auténtico eyes, this being the bed-rock of a project envisaging the creation of a "National Liberation Front of all sectors objectively opposed to imperialism" [5] (- including, presumably, all sectors subjectively in favour of imperialism!). Criticism of Perón was limited to his decision to close the Youth Branch and a sharp demarcation line was drawn between the governments of Perón and Isabel. El Auténtico published lists of prices under and after Perón with the caption, "Under Perón, things were

---

1. Ibid., 28th December 1975.
2. "Congreso Nacional del PPA," El Auténtico, no. 4 (29th October 1975), p. 6.
3. Ibid., no. 1 (17th September 1975), pp. 1 & 4.
4. "La conducción del MPA: Hombres y mujeres con trajectoria de lucha en defensa de los intereses populares," ibid., no. 2 (1st October 1975), p. 4.
5. "El documento completo del Consejo Superior: 'Emprendemos la histórica transformación del Movimiento'," ibid., p. 5.

different" [1] and a few weeks later trade union supporter Mario Aguirre declared that "This government betrayed the people and Perón". [2] The only significant departure from previous practices was that the new organisation was democratically structured, at least formally, with conference delegates being elected by local branches and leaders being elected at conferences, the latter always by unanimous votes.

The organisational activity reached a climax with the holding of the 1st "Perón-Evita" National Congress of the PPA on 16th November, using a hall supplied by the Czech Cultural Association after the intended venue had been blown up on the morning of the event by the paramilitary Liberators of America Command (Comando Libertadores de América). Delegates voted to change the party name to Partido Auténtico after further Justicialist Party litigation had led to an injunction against using the name "Peronist", but continuity with the past was preserved through the slogan "Peronism Returns with the Authentic Party". [3]

As mentioned above, the new party lacked the wholehearted support of a substantial sector of the Montonero military apparatus which had serious doubts as to the viability of an electoral solution and which, moreover, was greatly concerned at the security risks involved in displaying a public face. These fears were well-founded - several Auténtico canvassers were arrested during the Misiones election campaign and later on, as the party prepared itself for a general election, the names of at least 40,000 members and supporters of the Tendency were presented, on a plate, to the authorities in order to fulfil party registration requirements.

---

1. "Con Perón era otra cosa," ibid., no. 1, p. 6.
2. Mario Aguirre, "Este gobierno traicionó al pueblo y a Perón," ibid., no. 5 (12th November 1975), p. 6.
2. El Auténtico Suplemento Especial, ibid., no. 6 (26th November 1975).

Leaders of the Auténticos unconvincingly protested their independence from the Montoneros. Francisco Lombardich, former Social Welfare Minister in Córdoba, declared, "We have nothing to do with what happened in Formosa", [1] in an attempt to use an action mounted by the more militaristic Montonero wing in order to deny links with the Montoneros as a whole. There can be no doubt, however, as to the Auténtico's Montonero parentage. When the Buenos Aires section of the party was founded on 21st September, the Montoneros sent a message of support and received enthusiastic "vivas" from the assembled delegates. The Montoneros provided the party with its political line, finance and most of its leaders and this was obvious to all - not least to the government which proscribed the party on Christmas Eve 1975.

Though the ban was formally based on Auténtico-Montonero ties, it appears to have come about at that time because attempts to construct a Centre-Left electoral front were having some success. On 21st October, Bidegain for the PPA had come together on a public platform with Oscar Alende of the Intransigent Party (PI) and Héctor Sandler of the Argentine Revolutionary Current during an Avenida Theatre mass meeting to discuss the situation in the universities. Negotiations were also held with the Revolutionary Christian Party (PRC) and other small parties in an attempt to forge an alliance similar to Chile's Popular Unity, to be headed by Alende if Cámpora could not be persuaded to fill its candidature.

The proscription was aimed at preventing the materialisation of such an alliance, but in fact hopes and fears of the creation of a kind of popular front were, as Alende stated in November, "premature". [2]

---

1. Lombardich, quoted in La Opinión, 16th November 1975.
2. Alende, quoted in ibid., 4th November 1975.

For such an alliance to be electorally viable, it needed both the Auténticos and Alende's Intransigents as mainstays, but the latter had already developed links with the Communist Party. A tremendous gap separated the call of the Communist Party for a "broad democratic coalition civilian-military cabinet" [1] from that of the Auténticos, for the former was intended to strengthen the existing government through the incorporation of civilian and military critics whereas the latter posed a radical alternative, though one fraught with all the dangers encountered by the Chilean prototype of 1970-73. Alende's reluctance to transform his unitary declarations into deeds would appear to have been based both on the Communist Party's refusal to have anything to do with the Montoneros and on the liklihood of Auténtico proscription.

What the Auténtico experience showed were the probably insuperable difficulties involved in conducting an urban guerrilla campaign while at the same time attempting to organise a legal mass political movement. It was totally unrealistic to expect the increasingly influential Armed Forces to tolerate Auténtico legality while it served as a front for their guerrilla opponents. There was the possibility that the party's legality would serve to split the Montoneros in half but the military were not prepared to take a chance on this. To them, the Montoneros and Auténticos were attempting an Argentine dramatisation of Jekyll and Hyde whose plot was only too obvious - and only too easy to bring the curtain down on after just an eight month run.

During that period, important tactical changes were made on the trade union front. While losing ground at superstructural level, the Montonero Tendency began to do more work at rank-and-file level and labour

---

1. Communist Party communiqué, "El Partido Comunista apoya la decisión de la CGT y reclama la formación de un gabinete cívico-militar de amplia coalición democrática," ibid., 6th July 1975.

struggles featured more prominently than previously in its publications. The Montoneros encouraged the creation of a Coordinating Council of Unions, Shop Stewards Committees and Bodies of Delegates in Struggle of the Capital and Greater Buenos Aires, and former JTP leader Gonzalo Chávez (whose father and sister had been assassinated by the Triple A) became its leader. By December 1975 the coordinator claimed the support of 130 rank-and-file organisations in the Federal Capital and Greater Buenos Aires, [1] but by no means all were pro-Montonero. The strength of the Trade Union Bloc of the Auténticos, mainly organised around Buenos Aires and La Plata, is difficult to estimate but it is significant that most of the trade unionists present at the first Auténtico National Congress were there in an individual capacity rather than as representatives of union organisations.

With the illegalisation of the party in December, the Montoneros lost their last legal publication, El Auténtico. In three of its eight editions the paper had presented the public with a penetrating exposé of Triple A activities, had provided the names of those allegedly behind it and had thus given the government further reason for stifling the publication. Subsequently, the political development of the Montoneros was greatly hampered not only by their increasingly militaristic line but also simply because people were unable to learn what their policy was on key issues. The dominance of the military wing of the Montoneros was consolidated by the ban on the PPA, even though a Montonero Peronist Movement (MPM), structured along the same lines as the Auténticos but clandestine, was created after the Videla coup of March 1976.

---

1. "Coordinadora de Gremios en Lucha: 'La guerrilla industrial, un nuevo cuento para perseguir a los trabajadores'," El Auténtico, no. 8 (23rd December 1975), p. 6.

CONCLUSIONS

There can be no better illustration of the inadequacy of movimientismo than the way in which the Tendency was gradually pushed out of the official Peronist Movement in the 1973-74 period. Significantly, the advance of the Left within Peronism had mainly occurred among the youth, the only section of the Movement lacking the status of an institutional Rama or Branch, unlike the political, trade union and feminine sections. Through their contribution to the Peronist restoration and their undeniable power of mobilisation, the predominantly left-wing Peronist youths had gained Perón's recognition as being part of the Novement between 1971-74, but the failure of all attempts to politically unify and institutionalise their organisations again undermined the movimientista contention that the Movement as a whole was revolutionary, even in terms of the tasks of the so-called national liberation stage.

The strategy failed because the Peronist leadership was incapable of promoting the national tasks which the theory of stages had assigned to it. Movimientismo was based on an analysis of the 1946-55 Peronist experience (and not a particularly penetrating or accurate one) but by 1973 the economic state of Argentina differed enormously from the prosperous conditions which had earlier made a multi-class alliance including the national bourgeoisie and working class feasible. The 1973 Peronist government only inherited an economic crisis which prevented substantial income redistribution, further undermined the unity of the Movement and prevented the leadership from appearing to be "above classes", thus obliging it to define its social loyalties clearly. Faced with the imperative of opting between the social classes of the Movement, the leadership tended to align itself with the most powerful sectors of national capital which, represented by Economy Minister Gelbard, wanted a larger share of the market but were not particularly

anti-imperialist. That the trade unions were to remain the most consistent supporters of the 1973-76 governments may at first appear paradoxical, but not when one draws the necessary distinction between the union bureaucracy and the working class which the former only represented sporadically when its control and legitimacy were threatened by rank-and-file revolt.

Here, Argentina's economic decline and the Peronist inability to halt it can only be briefly analysed.[1] The fact that Peronism in its 34 months in office resorted to six different Economy Ministers - José Ber Gelbard, Alfredo Gómez Morales, Celestino Rodrigo, Pedro Bonanni, Antonio Cafiero and Emilio Mondelli - and more if one includes interim ministers, is a measure of the Peronist failure, as is the fact that not a single government minister lasted the course. Having announced that they would build an Argentina Potente, a mighty Argentina, the Peronist administrations of 1973-76 left office leaving an Argentina Impotente, whose March 1965 inflation rate of 38% per month ranked alongside Weimar Germany, Amin's Uganda and wartime South Vietnam as one of the highest in world history.

To be fair to the Peronists, the economy was not in good shape when they returned to power in March 1973. They inherited a sizable budget deficit and an inflation rate of 6.5% per month over the previous five months. Moreover, Argentina soon suffered from the July 1974 EEC decision to close its doors to Argentine meat, which affected 70% of the country's meat export trade and thus the trade balance; and from the leap in world oil prices which she suffered from directly, as an

---

1. All data on the 1973-76 state of the economy is drawn from Kandel and Monteverde, op. cit., passim; Carlos Avalo, "De Gelbard a Cafiero," Tercer Mundo (Buenos Aires), no. 7, October 1975, pp. 93-96; and "30 Meses de Camino Descendente," Confirmado (Buenos Aires), no. 400, 3rd-9th December 1975, pp. 52-54.

oil importer, and indirectly, through the effect which the rise had on the price of her industrial imports. López Rega's mission to Libya to ngeotiate a new oil deal resulted in one of the major scandals of the period. He agreed to pay prices for Libyan oil which were well above the international average, whereas the Argentine industrial exports to Libya which were to be the other side of the deal failed to materialise. It would appear that the only Argentine to benefit from the agreement was López Rega, though precise details of his "cut" are not known.

Under these conditions, the Peronist economic project and indeed the Peronist alliance itself rapidly disintegrated. The economic plan of Gelbard, Economy Minister from March 1973 to October 1974, proved to be as overambitious for the General Economic Confederation (CGE) which he represented, as it was inadequate for the more powerful and militant sectors of the labour movement. It rested on a Social Pact between national monopolistic entrepreneurs, the CGT and the State, under which labour was promised an increased share in national income from 35% (May 1973) to 48% (the 1955 level) and price controls in return for a 2-year suspension of free wage-bargaining rights. This was to be financed through expansion based on a growth in demand rather than the direct promotion of investment, for there was a substantial excess productive capacity available for utilisation. Internationally, Gelbard relied upon rises in the world prices of Argentine exports and an expansion of trade with the so-called socialist countries in order to achieve a large commercial surplus. This would, it was hoped, enable the subsidisation of industrial exports and thus provide incentives for productive expansion.

Initially, things went well and there was even talk of an "Argentine Miracle". In the long run, however, the demands of no economic sector were satisfied. GNP, which had grown by less than 4% in

1971 and 1972, grew by 4.8% in 1973 and by 7% in 1974; investment in the third quarter of 1974 was higher than in the corresponding 1973 period; foreign exchange reserves rose from 950m. dollars in May 1973 to 1,693m. by October 1974; and the cost of living rose by 30% over the same period, a low figure for Argentina which enabled Gelbard to claim zero inflation. The success, however, was more apparent than real.

Inflation had in fact been suppressed rather than eliminated and was not long in reasserting itself. This was inevitable given the incredible rise in the quantity of money in circulation and a major increase in the number of non-productive public employees, especially after GNP began to fall. Prior to May 1973, the quantity of money had risen from 0 to 1 billion, 795,000 million pesos (moneda nacional) since monetary registers were first kept a century earlier. In the first 16 months of Peronist government, it grew from 1 billion, 795,000 million to 4 billion, 132,000 million pesos. In other words, in just 1½ years, the printing of money exceeded the quantity printed in the past hundred years by 2½ times! This pleased the CGE which sought cheap credit and expansion, but also fuelled the fires of inflation.

Another cause of the mounting inflation was the rise in the number of public employees. This rose dramatically during the first two years of Peronist government (by 100,000 between January 1974 and July 1975), in an effort to reduce unemployment. The latter was cut from 6.1% in May 1973 to 2.1% by the end of 1974, but rose again to 6.3% by the end of 1975. Moreover, productivity was adversely affected by a new Law of Labour Contracts, which, by providing job security, contributed to a rise in absenteeism to 20%.

The outcome of all this by 1975 was "stagflation". Higher employment and a small initial rise in real wages under Gelbard led to a fall

in the rate of profit for entrepreneurs, something which was at first tolerated by employers in return for the promise of social peace which the Social Pact offered. However, new investment soon fell and 1975 saw the biggest fall for ten years. Industrialists, forced to meet higher costs for labour and imports, pressed Gelbard for a relaxation of price controls while seeking to circumnavigate their effect through hoarding and speculation. A black market flourished and came to represent between 25-50% of legal transactions.

Nor did Gelbard's policy satisfy the CGT, which campaigned for stricter enforcement of price controls. By early 1974, it was seen that CGE pressures had been more successful - as Perón used to say, while wages ascended by the staircase, prices went up in the lift. After securing a modest wage rise in March 1974, the CGT became increasingly assertive, not just as a pressure group but also as a force seeking greater control over the Peronist Government and Movement. Union leaders made great play of the fact that Gelbard was not a Peronist and made great efforts to "peronize" the economic team, especially after the death of Perón. Here, they allied themselves tactically with the López Rega cabal to secure the resignation of Gelbard "for health reasons" in October 1973, but a new battle soon emerged between the victorious factions - between the López Rega group proposing a combination of extreme right-wing politics and liberal economic measures and a union movement seeking greater power, especially in the case of Lorenzo Miguel's Metal Workers Union bureaucracy, and nationalist economic measures similar to those of the 1940's.

Gelbard's attempts to reconcile the interests of capital and labour through a "National Reconstruction" plan thus crumbled when both parties to the Pact demanded changes. Moreover, he was unable to count on the support of the rural producers and foreign capital. In response to the

price controls and attempts to boost agrarian exports through a tax on the potential normal income of land, the agrarian bourgeoisie cut production in an attempt to force their prices up and successfully managed to abort a projected agrarian reform. On the other hand, foreign interests were reluctant to invest in Argentina due to the regulations controlling foreign investment, established in 1973, and the continuing social unrest and political violence. This would not have been a problem had Argentina successfully managed to diversify her trading relations and economic ties, but though trade deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars were agreed with the Soviet Union, Cuba and other countries, many remained paper agreements. A major reason for this was the artificially high pegging of the peso against other currencies, which led to a rise in imports and contraband and a decline in exports.

Gelbard's successors, though the policies of each cannot be fully analysed here, in general adopted more liberal economic measures in an attempt to deal with the problems of inflation, stagnation and export failure. All of the remaining Economy Ministers, with the exception of the CGT-favoured Cafiero, attempted to resolve the crisis at the expense of the labour movement, by stimulating the rate of profit and increasing unemployment. None, however, were successful despite real attacks on workers' living standards.

Gómez Morales, President of the Central Bank from 1973-74, attempted a "softly softly" approach aimed at curbing inflation while avoiding a recession. He tried to free prices without greatly affecting the cost of living, but the latter rose 26% between November 1974 and February 1975 under him and by 23% between March and May 1975. Rodrigo, López Rega's nominee, on the other hand, considered that major surgery was necessary and tried his hand at shock treatment. While trying to hold wages down, he increased the price of the dollar by 100%, petrol

by 175%, electricity by 75%, etc. Though his initiative had the full backing of Isabel Perón, it was destroyed by the General Strike of the first week of July 1975. Apart from the resignations of Rodrigo and López Rega, the strike brought labour wage rises of up to 150%, but did not put a halt to the general tendency towards a decline in the purchasing power of wages. Moreover, this strike and those which resisted a later attempt by Mondelli at Rodrigo-type measures, signalled the beginning of the end for Peronism - to national and foreign capital and to the military, it had become evident that Peronism could no longer control the labour movement.

The CGT, under pressure from its members, became increasingly assertive from mid-1974 onwards and proved strong enough to thwart the plans of anti-worker Economy Ministers but not to impose an alternative successfully. Even with Cafiero in the Economy Ministry, its power was more apparent than real. The purchasing power of wages continued to decline for Rodrigo's measures, though momentarily counteracted by the large July wage rises, were never rescinded. Furthermore, even Cafiero, the minister most sympathetic to the CGT's timid economic nationalism, felt obliged to seek the aid of foreign capital and signed secret letters of intent with regard to exchange rates and tax reform in an attempt to obtain IMF credits.

It should also be remembered that the ability of the CGT leadership to bargain and manoeuvre was restricted by rank-and-file pressures. While the bureaucracy attempted to negotiate a compromise with Rodrigo, major sectors of the labour movement started the General Strike some 10-14 days before the CGT made it official. When the strike was finally "declared", the joke went round that "The CGT has joined the General Strike"!

The non-viability of the 1973-76 Peronist alliance was reflected in the fact that these years saw both the first ever general strike against a Peronist government and the first ever employers' strike in Argentine history (February 1976). Under this government, the monopolistic national bourgeoisie showed itself unable to successfully hegemonise an independent process of capitalist development, while the small and medium-order national entrepreneurs, hit by price controls and rising costs, suffered a spate of bankrupcies. By 1976, the CGE, which attempted to group all these national sectors under the leadership of the most monopolistic, was in a state of disintegration. Increasingly, entrepreneurs had abandoned it for the Permanent Assembly of Entrepreneurial Entities (APEGE) which organised the February 1976 lock-out and then supported the March military coup.

In three years, the nationalism of recent Peronism had been restricted to the renationalisation of a handful of banks privatised by the previous military regime, limited diversification of foreign trade, especially with the Soviet Union, and the annulment of telephone contracts with ITT and Siemens. All of these measures, plus the 1973 foreign investment law, antagonised foreign capital but fell short of positive nationalism. There was neither a programme of extensive State expropriations of foreign companies nor a national private sector-led development of the economy. Entrepreneurs in general showed themselves to be more concerned about the rate of profit than the "nationality" of capital.

Peronism's bankrupcy was seen in its political and social polarisation and economic failure. GNP actually fell by 2.5% in 1975 and the Argentine peso became confetti money. Most damning of all, as far as the workers were concerned, by March 1976 real wages were 25% below the May 1973 level. Peronism had attempted to promote a national development

policy based on cooperation between capital and labour but, lacking the favourable national and international economic conditions of the late 1940's and with foreign capital now far more dominant, only succeeded in alienating its major component groups and classes and exacerbating general economic conditions.[1]

The movimientista Left accepted the "need" for wage restraint for a year, in the interests of capital accumulation, but after that the pressures on them from growing labour conflicts became too strong and they were forced into a partial confrontation with Perón. It was only then, after having thought up all sorts of weird and wonderful theories to explain Perón's "odd" behaviour, that the Tendency began to feel that their faith in Perón had been too strong. They moved from a position of critical support to one of loyal opposition, asserting a degree of independence, but Perón's death soon cut short the educative process. After Perón's death, the myth once again loomed larger than the man, to be preserved by the "late arrivers" of the Tendency to whom that symbol of Peronist orthodoxy, legitimacy and authenticity was so important. Even in defeat, the movimientistas clung to the symbols of the Movement which had failed to meet their demands. The Montonero retreat was dignified with militant-sounding rhetoric intended to evoke the example of Evita: "We renounce all the honours, all the government posts, all the posts in the Movement, but what we do not renounce nor are going to is the struggle".[2] It ended behind a militaristic smokescreen but one which failed to obscure the inadequacy of movimientismo.

Political work was greatly disrupted by the September 1974

---

1. Ibid.
2. "Renunciamos a los Honores, no a la Lucha," Report on Tendency press conference, El Descamisado, no. 38 (5th February 1974), pp. 4-8.

resumption of warfare. There was an attempt in 1975 to overcome the youthful image of the Tendency and to appeal to all age groups through the Auténticos. However, what was gained here in broadening their generational image was more than lost in the level of mass activity. Whereas the JP fronts had performed multifarious tasks, the main role of the Auténticos was an extremely short-lived electoral one. Naturally, governmental repression and fascist terrorism had adverse consequences for pro-Montonero mass activity but the decline in the latter cannot be solely attributed to external factors. For one thing, guerrilla blows served as a pretext for punitive and restrictive government measures and, for another, the Montonero resumption of full-scale combat led to a renewed priority commitment of combatants, supporters and resources to the military front. As far as one can tell, the Auténticos were less numerous than the previous combined youth organisations of the Tendency.

Some commentators have suggested that the debate between movimientismo and alternativismo became a purely academic one after the death of Perón, due to the Montoneros' estrangement from the official Movement. The assertion is that the Montoneros were forced by events into adopting an alternativista posture but in fact nothing could be further from the truth. Though the Montoneros declared war on the Peronist Right and benefited from realignments which weakened the alternativista tendency, movimientismo remained the central strategic orientation of the Montonero Tendency. Abandonment of the official Movement involved a change in its specific form but not in the underlying conception of the revolutionary process.

The Auténticos were completely independent of the Justicialist Party but their organisational ideas still revolved around a multiclass Movement, considered revolutionary nationalist, with the PPA

being its electoral instrument. Behind this, the strategic thinking was still based on the old idea of the feasibility and desirability of a national front against imperialism. Its immediate political objectives were no more radical than the March 1973 electoral programme and several of its leaders even harked back to traditional Peronist formulae - for example, Cepernic's declaration in 1975 that the PPA would "combat capitalism and communism alike".[1]

Montonero alliance plans still had as their point of reference a rather abstract nation-imperialism dichotomy, and envisaged the unification of all anti-imperialist forces, including small and middle-order capitalists in a front led by a national Movement. In 1973 the Peronist Youth had sincerely stated that it wanted "the whole of Argentine youth"[2] to participate in the national liberation struggle and managed to group together all but the radical Right and revolutionary Left. However, this loose unity based on the lowest common denominator, expressed in the slogan of Liberation versus Dependency, only led the JP to push the socialist stage further and further into the future. The Auténtico's retention of this postulation led to a search for alliances with bourgeois reformist parties, which contrasted markedly with their refusal to ally with the Left - for example in the Misiones elections.

Thus the Montonero alienation from official Justicialism produced no alteration in their loyalty to basic movimientista ideas. The fact that movimientismo had failed to produce goods expected by the Montoneros in 1973 was attributed to treason, infiltration and errors. Yet they themselves, in an attempt to stay inside the Movement, had initially gone along with many of the "errors" of the government and had therefore

---

1. Cepernic, quoted in La Opinión, 8th October 1975.
2. "Habla Juventud Peronista," op. cit.

failed to present a coherent Left alternative. Moreover, to attempt the construction of an Allende-style popular front in 1975, without clarifying how it was to avoid the ultimate fate of the Chilean prototype, again failed to offer a realistic left-wing option.

It has been said that history tends to repeat itself, the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce. [1] With the launching of the PPA, the Montoneros showed that they had learnt little or nothing from their reverses of 1973-74. This was a tragedy, considering the numbers of youths who lost their lives during the process, a tragedy in part explicable by the fact that the Montoneros ultimately saw arms as the solution to their problems. By 1978, movimientismo was again being asserted, in a different guise, this time as farce. In June 1978, due to the political weakness and military decline of the Montoneros, Firmenich issued a call for the reunification of the Peronist Movement against the Videla regime. [2] The proposal not only envisaged Montonero unity with the Centre groups of the Movement but also with the right-wing, including Isabel Perón herself. Reunification was seriously suggested, merely because all Peronist sectors were suffering from the policies of the military regime, with this supposedly providing strong enough cement to bring together the factions which had engaged in a virtual civil war before and after the 1974 split. The call for an alliance with Isabel, who while President had publicly expressed a desire to "take a whip to" guerrillas, [3] only indicated the failure of the Montonero's Auténtico project of rallying the Peronist rank-and-file behind their own banners and was the clearest possible statement of ideological bankrupcy.

---

1. Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), p. 10, recalling a remark by Hegel.
2. Mario Eduardo Firmenich, Acerca de la Unidad del Peronismo, mimeo, 20th June 1978.
3. Isabel Perón, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 2nd May 1975.

CHAPTER VI

'ALTERNATIVISMO' AND 'ALTERNATIVISTAS'

> "The difference between those who isolate themselves from the road of the masses and those who try to reflect (the mass movement) is what determines that which is condemned to disappear and that which will inevitably develop. To know how to coincide with the development of these (mass) trends in order to impel them towards superior levels of struggle is to participate in the making of history; to ignore them or try to replace them with abstract formulae drawn from our own heads is to expose oneself to being bypassed by history"
>
> Gustavo Rearte [1]

Alternativismo, expressing the desire to construct an "independent alternative of the working class", did not always appear in its theoretically purest form within the alternativista organisations. It was frequently contaminated with one of the principal movimientista weaknesses: belief in the sincerity of Perón's fraudulent "left-turn" of the 1960's. This prevented many alternativistas from understanding his political project until he was actually back in the Casa Rosada (Government House). On the other hand, many alternativistas who avoided this movimientista pitfall fell into the ultra-left trap of "strategism", a term which refers to an imbalanced usage of strategy and tactics, emphasising the former; the articulation of a strategy, which may be entirely appropriate, without supplying the tactical mechanisms through which this can be related to the present needs and demands of workers; and a stress on "principal" (i.e. antagonistic) contradictions, with insufficient regard for "secondary" (i.e. non-antagonistic) contradictions within the enemy camp.

The alternativista organisations can be analytically subdivided into military and political formations though, as in the case of the movimientistas, the former styled themselves "politico-military

---

1. Rearte, quoted in En Lucha, no. 17 (July 1974), p. 1.

organisations" and the latter endorsed their strategic line of armed revolutionary warfare. Data on the social backgrounds of the alternativista guerrilla is more sparse than that on its movimientista counterparts, but one can discern differences between the social complexions of the military and political wings. Certainly in its origins at least, the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) was predominantly petty bourgeois whereas the main political expression of alternativismo, Rank-and-File Peronism (PB), was essentially and almost exclusively an expression of working-class radicalism, at least until 1974 when disillusioned student movimientistas moved over to alternativismo and undermined its proletarian purity.

A second important difference between the military and political wings was the far greater propensity of the military wing to incorporate elements of movimientismo into its outlook. Indeed, in its early years there was little to mark the FAP out as an alternativista force, this orientation only being acquired through practical experience of struggle and the influence of experienced revolutionary Peronists like the former Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement militant, Jorge Caffati. Moreover, alternativismo was only a passing phase for a significant sector of the FAP which shifted to (or back to) movimientismo in 1972-3 before fusing with the Montoneros in 1974.

It must be emphasised that alternativismo never seriously rivalled the numerical strength of movimientismo. The disparity between them was reflected in the circulation figures of the main periodicals of the two tendencies: the movimientista weekly, El Descamisado, organ of the Peronist Youth-Montoneros, had a regular circulation of 100,000 copies [1] (and might have boosted this were it not for paper restrictions) while the leading alternativista organ, Militancia Peronista para la Liberación

---

1. González Janzen, op. cit., p. 219.

(generally referred to simply as Militancia), only reached the 40,000 mark and was constantly struggling for survival in a battle against rising publication costs. [1]

Alternativismo occupied an intermediate position between the movimientismo of the Montoneros and the clasismo of the non-Peronist revolutionary Left. In its purest form, it attempted to develop a revolutionary organisation based on Peronist workers but independent of the official structures and leadership of the Movement, an organisation which would work alongside the clasista non-Peronist Left with a view to unity once the inadequacy of the Peronist Movement as a revolutionary instrument became apparent to workers. Due to its intermediate position, in a politically volatile period, there were several important shifts in support to and away from this tendency: transfusions of militants from alternativismo to movimientismo and vice versa; and to and from non-Peronist clasismo. Not all of these shifts, which varied greatly in numerical significance, will be traced below. Analysis of the small groups which split from Guevarism, from the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), in an attempt to work amongst the Peronist masses, adds little to an understanding of the Peronist Left for they were really marginal to it.

Instead, the focus of analysis will be primarily on the FAP and PB, the organisational axes of the alternativista tendency. Superficially, the argument presented in the last two chapters about the inability of urban guerrillas to establish an organised working-class support base would appear to be contradicted by the alternativista experience. In fact, however, the working-class Rank-and-File Peronism was created after and independently of the guerrilla Peronist Armed Forces, and

---

1. "Militancia entre el ahogo y la clausura," Militancia, no. 38 (28th March 1974), p. 3.

their practical relationship was only loose. There was certainly PB sympathy for the FAP guerrillas and programmatic support for armed struggle but in practice the activities of the two wings of alternativismo were not integrated and the FAP, due to its class composition and military methods, was not exempt from the isolation experienced by other guerrillas.

Before each wing is examined, the contradictions within the alternativista camp will be highlighted. Neither the FAP nor PB possessed an organ of its own but the formally independent Militancia, co-edited by Ortega Peña and Duhalde, came extremely close to providing one, as did its short-lived replacement, the second De Frente. Since these reviews reflected the contradictions within this tendency and its ideological development, analysis of their content is of more than journalistic interest, for they reveal exactly how important sectors of the Peronist Left evolved further and further towards the Left in 1973-74. When first issued in June 1973, Militancia shared many of the attitudes of movimientista organs and contained almost as much Peronist Youth-Montonero material as alternativista coverage; by 1974, it (and then its De Frente successor) was outlining a clearly differentiated alternativista position and was providing regular coverage of the activities of the People's Revolutionary Army.

CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE ALTERNATIVISTA CAMP

The early editions of Militancia contained a strange mishmash of movimientista and alternativista ideas. It declared that its "permanent model" would be:

> "the example of John William Cooke who through the pages of the weekly De Frente until the bloody counterrevolution made the thought of Eva his: 'Peronism will be revolutionary or nothing', teaching us that there is no greater verticalidad and loyalty to

> our leader than the permanent demand for an extension of the Peronist Revolution in progress". 1

In June 1973 the review, supposedly respecting the mandate of Cooke, greeted the returning Perón with a movimientista salute:

> "The revolutionary presence of General Perón, through direct Leader-People dialogue, will put a definitive end to complicit bureaucracies, to the marketers of spilt blood, to the traitors in the Movement, to all those who seek to put a brake on or distort the Peronist Revolution..." 2

Perón and Peronism were deemed revolutionary.

When Perón failed to live up to Militancia's expectations, the review took a long time in voicing criticism of him. Claiming that "only a fool or lunatic" could think that Perón, after leading a resistance struggle for 18 years, would serve the bureaucrats, [3] Militancia used the childish idea of Perón's "encirclement" by reactionaries and traitors to explain his initially silent complicity in what was happening. The first shift in the apologia came in the middle of July when the review declared that "it is infantile to expect everything from Perón". [4] Three weeks later, following Perón's first open attack on the Revolutionary Tendency at a meeting with provincial governors, the apologia was further refined when Militancia sustained that Perón was not betraying his supporters. He was "not a Socialist but a Peronist", a "popular, national, anti-imperialist leader" and a "pragmatist" whose behaviour only reflected the contradictions of his Movement. All that

---

1. Editorial, ibid., no. 1 (14th June 1973), p. 3.
2. Editorial, ibid., no. 2 (21st June 1973), p. 3.
3. "El apoyo al gobierno para llegar al poder," ibid., no. 4 (5th July 1973), p. 4.
4. "Perón o la guerra," ibid., no. 6 (19th July 1973), pp. 4-6.

one could expect from Perón was a "synthesis" of the bureaucratic and combative lines within Peronism and this "necessarily implied renunciation of a pure revolutionary policy". [1] However, Perón's power to nominate people for positions from above was declared "an elemental right of the leader of the Peronist Movement", [2] for Militancia at this stage believed that Perón would try to maintain the unity of his Movement and in doing so would make some concessions to the Left as well as to the Right.

Alongside these instances of movimientismo, Militancia from the outset carried an embryonic alternativista analysis. It was full of praise for Evita, feeling that she would have been a guerrilla of the "hard line" of the resistance movement had she lived, [3] but did stop short of Evitismo - identifying everything revolutionary with Evita and claiming that everything became "bourgeois" after her death. More importantly, even in its earliest editions, Militancia rejected the developmentalist economic policies of the Gelbard team, provided detailed evidence of how the previous military regime had seduced Peronist Economy Minister Gelbard through handing him control of Argentine aluminium production in the early 1970's (the "Aluar Scandal") and insisted that the national bourgeoisie had become a junior partner of imperialism and was therefore no longer a progressive force.

The Militancia critique of the Social Pact provided evidence to support the latter assertion. Over the past two decades, the economic strength of the national bourgeoisie had been greatly weakened, as

---

1. "Discusión: Aportes para una autocrítica de la Tendencia," ibid., no. 9 (9th August 1973), pp. 12-14.
2. "Perón, la juventud y la guerrilla peronista," ibid., no. 9, pp. 4-7.
3. "Eva revolucionaria," ibid., no. 7 (26th July 1973), pp. 35-48.

recognised in Economy Minister Aldo Ferrer's 1971 statement: "Of the ten main companies in the country, eight are subsidiaries of international corporations and two are state enterprises, there is no company of private national capital...".[1] Moreover, Militancia pointed to important developments within the national industrial sector. Here, a process of capitalist concentration had led to a concentration of power into the hands of owners of a few large national monopolies. The General Economic Confederation (CGE), in the past representative of national entrepreneurs, had in the 1960's become dominated by these national magnates. It was now led by Julio Broner, owner of the large Wobron car components firm which also had a plant in Chile, enabling products to be sold there if car sales fell off in Argentina. Gelbard himself was a major shareholder in Fate and Aluar, the latter being the supplier of aluminium to the Air Force.

These firms, Militancia argued, were national monopolies whose interests were more akin to those of the foreign-owned monopolies than those of the small national producers who constituted the mass membership of the CGE. The participation of these monopolies in the signing of the Social Pact had therefore not resulted in an alliance between the working class and a "progressive" national bourgeoisie but rather in "an agreement between two bureaucracies" - between a CGE bureaucracy representing national monopoly capital and a CGT bureaucracy, alien to the class it claimed to represent - an agreement to hold down wages in the interests of capitalist reconstruction.[2]

---

1. Ferrer, quoted in "11° Informe Gelbard," ibid., no. 8 (2nd August 1973), pp. 41-48.
2. "El pacto social, los planes de la burocracia y otras intoxicaciones," ibid., no. 6 (19th July 1973), pp. 26-32.

This was fine as a starting point for an analysis but left unrefined it remained highly schematic and partially distorted reality. The material differences between the CGE leaders and their mass membership were evident, but Militancia went on from there to equate the Peronist economic project pioneered by Gelbard with that of Onganía's Economy Minister, Krieger Vasena, who had wholeheartedly encouraged the inflow of foreign monopoly capital. In asserting that "Gelbard is Krieger Vasena",[1] the review ignored significant secondary contradictions between national and foreign monopoly capital which expressed rivalry over what proportional strength each was to have in the domestic market. Perhaps it did so in order to strengthen the case for seeing the "principal contradiction" as one between imperialism and the working class, yet this overstressing of antagonistic contradictions at the expense of secondary contradictions was not an essential means of arriving at such a conclusion.

The same analytical weakness was present in Militancia's view of the trade union bureaucracy. It was one thing for the review, quite realistically, to dismiss the possibility of political unity with the bureaucracy but another to see the revolutionary and working-class sectors of Peronism, mistakenly, as being in antagonistic contradiction with a bureaucracy which had sold its services to imperialism. In viewing the relationship between the working class and the union bureaucracy as "antagonistic",[2] Militancia failed to recognise that the bureaucracy, rather than being imposed on the labour movement from the outside, was ultimately an expression of the working class, springing from it, deriving its power from control of it and, for the most part, being tolerated

---

1. "El caso Gelbard," ibid., no. 2 (21st June 1973), pp. 14-15.
2. Editorial, ibid., no. 3 (28th June 1973), p. 3.

by it. Obviously, its institutional consolidation had counted with considerable external (i.e. State and entrepreneurial) assistance, but this had only been feasible due to its genuine roots in the reformism and economism of vast sectors of the labour movement. It certainly did not represent the most militant workers but equally certainly did rest on the sufferance of the less class-conscious majority. The trade union bureaucracy, essentially, represented all the weaknesses and the immaturity of the Argentine labour movement, as judged from a revolutionary standpoint, but represent them it did.

Militancia's failure to analyse the origins and nature of the bureaucracy in depth left it prone to regarding the working class as a whole as revolutionary and thus to render its propaganda inappropriate to the subjective needs of many workers. The result was that the ideas propagated by Militancia only gained an audience among revolutionary workers and did little to attract the rest away from their illusions in Perón. At the same time though, it must be said that, while the review's vision of social, economic and political antagonisms often glossed over some secondary contradictions and exaggerated others, its appraisal of objective class conflicts was generally to the point. Apart from its early hope that Perón could operate "above classes", it evinced a clear commitment to working-class struggle and firmly criticised the Montonero tendency for its tacit acceptance of bourgeois leadership in the Peronist Movement, an acceptance not always voiced in words but seen in most movimientista behaviour.

Ortega Peña's and Duhalde's review condemned the Montoneros' attempt to work alongside the rest of the Movement, its "verticalist immobility" [1] arising from acceptance of all Perón's decisions and its

---

1. "El pueblo ya lo dice, Cámpora es el vice," ibid., no 6 (19th July 1973), pp. 8-9.

vacillations over policy. Those vacillations were to be explained by the fact that the Montoneros and Peronist Youth defended the synthesis of the bureaucratic and combative lines attempted by Perón. Rather than develop its revolutionary wing and revolutionary theory, the Tendency, according to the Militancia critique, was trying to win impossible acceptance and support from all sectors of the Movement and the inevitable outcome was the series of policy zigzags. Movimientismo had ignored the fact that events like the Ezeiza massacre were an "absolute necessity" for the bureaucracy if it was to consolidate its dominance. It had not expected "traitors" to be treacherous and had raised "the white flag in the face of the enemy which hoists its war colours... as such the result is inevitable". [1]

The conciliatory attitudes of the Peronist Youth towards the Armed Forces were attacked by Militancia, as were the attempts to appease the bureaucracy, seen as a product of the Tendency's interpretation of conflict as being:

> "a moral problem between loyalists and traitors and not, as it really is, a non-negotiatable contradiction between those who serve the exploiters and those who fight alongside the exploited". 2

Moreover, both the theory of stages and their tendency to "mask the class struggle" [3] revealed the movimientistas' weak grasp of economics. Though they partially recognised the decline of the national bourgeoisie as a force for independent development, many movimientista ideas were premised upon the fiction of imperialism being merely an external force,

---

1. "El movimientismo, enfermedad infantil del peronismo," ibid., no. 7 (26th July 1973), pp. 7-9.
2. "Perón presidente," ibid., no. 19 (18th October 1973), pp. 4-7.
3. Rubén R. Dri, "La alternativa y la lucha de clases," ibid., no. 33 (31st January 1974), pp. 20-22.

Militancia noted. The early difficulties faced by Perón's 1973-4 government were deemed by the Montoneros to be due to an imperialist blockade, a theory which led them to protest against the reluctance of foreign monopolies to invest in Argentina![1] Unlike the Montoneros' El Descamisado, Militancia carried fairly sophisticated analysis of economic trends which appreciated the extent of the imperialist presence within Argentina and led to a conclusion that:

> "given the existing conditions of international trade, monopolistic penetration and the internal situation of the economy, it is totally impossible to confront imperialism successfully without destroying capitalist relations of production". 2

Militancia's questioning of Perón increased in January 1974 when its alternativismo became unequivocal. Perón's political project was now defined as one of "moderated capitalism" with which "the authentic revolutionaries have nothing to do".[3] Increasingly, Militancia now looked to the formation of a "Trewlew Front", an alliance of the Peronist and non-Peronist revolutionary Left, promoted through the anti-bureaucratic labour currents and the Socialist Anti-Imperialist Front (FAS). By June 1974, De Frente was reporting People's Revolutionary Army actions without critical comment. Though retaining a formal Peronist identity, due to continuing working-class support for Peronism, this now remained the only feature differentiating the review from other clasista sectors. Shortly before its suppression in July 1974, De Frente reached the conclusion that "Bourgeois Peronism in government did not represent, and

---

1. "Argentina impotente: nos cerca el imperialismo?", ibid., no. 34 (7th February 1974), pp. 14-19.

2. "Liberación o dependencia," ibid., no. 14 (13th September 1973), pp. 19-23.

3. "Semana política: una maraton hacia atrás sin aviso de retorno," ibid., no. 33 (31st January 1974), pp. 4-9.

never represented, an antagonistic alternative to the GAN", to Lanusse's Great National Agreement plan - "It was and is a new version of the same thing." [1]

The alternativista reviews therefore only expressed a pure alternativismo for a short period of time. Whereas the movimientistas had expected Perón to pursue a revolutionary policy, the alternativistas had predicted that he would follow a line of compromises which would permit the existence of the "independent alternative" without him endorsing it. In posing Perón as a non-socialist anti-imperialist, the alternativistas divorced their characterisation of him from that of the potential of the various social classes. For a long time, the alternativistas did not clearly see that, in conditions of economic malaise, Perón could not possibly "balance" between classes and sectors but was obliged to clearly define his sectional loyalties. They had realised that Perón would ultimately defend bourgeois interests but had not realised that his definition would come so quickly.

Perón's option for a Centre-Right alliance, as seen in his May Day attack on the Left, involved persecution rather than toleration of any "independent alternatives". Militancia was suppressed in April 1974 by decree 1.101, signed by Perón and Taiana, which accused the review of "psychological action of incitement to subversion and social chaos". [2] Prior to closure, its editorial offices had been blown up twice and kiosk owners who sold it had been intimidated by right-wing elements and policemen. Ortega Peña and Duhalde had been the subject of a dozen legal actions and had lost their posts in the University of Buenos Aires

---

1. "El modelo argentino," De Frente, no. 7 (20th June 1974), pp. 12-17.

2. Ibid., no. 1 (2nd May 1974), p. 13.

after the Montonero-supported deans Kestelboim and O'Farrell had succumbed to government pressures to get rid of them. De Frente was suppressed three months later, as soon as Isabel Perón assumed the presidency.

ALTERNATIVISTA MILITARY ORGANISATIONS

THE FAP

"CAIGA QUIEN CAIGA Y CUESTE LO QUE CUESTE, VENCEREMOS!" [1]

What distinguished the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP) from the other guerrilla organisations created in the late 1960's was that its political background was not one of anti-Peronism. It was the first Peronist "special formation" to be created under the Onganía regime and drew its recruits mainly from Peronist Youth organisations. Two leading members, Envar El Kadri, a student and mercantile employee of Arab descent, and Carlos Caride had played major roles in the creation of the first Peronist Youth some ten years earlier and had already participated in occasional armed actions. In the early 1960's, Caride had been involved in the coup attempts organised by the Centre of Resistance Operations (Centro de Operaciones de la Resistencia - COR) led by General Iñíguez.

Other members gained experience through previous guerrilla organisations. José Luis Rojas (nicknamed "El Supay", Quechua for the Devil) had been a comandante of the Uturunco guerrilla which had briefly operated in Tucumán almost a decade earlier. Amanda Beatriz Peralta de Diéguez, a teacher and literature student, had been linked to the Guevarist-inspired proto-urban guerrilla group which developed out of

---

1. FAP slogan: "FALL WHO MAY FALL, COST WHAT IT MAY, WE WILL TRIUMPH!"

the Trotskyist Palabra Obrera (Workers' Word) in the early 1960's. That initiative had been cut short in 1964 when the group's arsenal blew up in a Posadas Street apartment, killing 5 key members, including the 37-year old leader and friend of Cooke and Guevara, Angel Bengochea, and injuring Diéguez. Finally, mercantile insurance employee Néstor Raúl Verdinelli, who commanded the FAP's first and only rural detachment, had been in contact with Roberto "Inti" Peredo, one of Che's lieutenants. [1]

There was also a radical Catholic presence in the form of the Spaniard, Arturo Ferré Gadea, and Gerardo Ferrari. The former was a Doctor of Philosophy and ex-member of the Company of Jesus (Compañía de Jesus) who had been trained by the Jesuits for the priesthood but who abandoned his seminary in 1966 to work in a Tigre boatyard, attempting to submerge himself among the masses. Ferrari's background was almost identical. He had entered the San Carlos Borromeo Seminary of Rosario in 1953 at the age of 10 but had been forced to leave in 1965 when ecclesiastical superiors expressed distaste for his shanty-town work. Like Ferré Gadea, his next step was to become a worker, participate in shanty-town cooperative schemes and join the FAP, before being killed by the police in June 1969. [2] Radical Catholic influence on the FAP was also present in the latter's late 1970 letter to the 3rd World Priests, in which they justified guerrilla activity in terms of the need to confront "the brutal violence of egoism with the violence of love" and appealed to radical priests to join their flock. [3]

---

1. Biographical details about FAP combatants and information about the Taco Ralo venture come mainly from La Razón, 20-29th September 1968. See also Appendix A.
2. "Los nuestros," homages to Ferrari and Jáuregui, Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 18 (July 1969), pp. 10-16.
3. "Carta de las FAP a los Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo," ibid., no. 26 (November-December 1970), pp. 15-20.

The young Peronists who created the FAP in April 1968 saw themselves as "the armed wing of the (Peronist) Movement",[1] yet in reality they lacked organised political and trade union support. Though there was considerable sympathy among fellow Peronists, seen in the solidarity expressed by the CGT of the Argentines after the FAP's "17th October" rural detachment was captured, the initial guerrilla venture was an example of pure foquismo. Greatly influenced by the Cuban model and the writings of Guevara, Debray and Marighela, the FAP posed the initiation of armed struggle ahead of the task of winning political support from the masses - and paid a heavy price for doing so.

In their early months, the FAP responded to the problem of finance with an ambush of a busload of US tourists travelling from Ezeiza Airport to the Capital and a number of bank raids in which bank clerks and policemen were killed. A couple of FAL rifles were obtained through a raid on a guardpost of the Campo de Mayo military base but most of the weaponry came through individual purchases and included relics from the First World War. In September 1968, the Peronist youths set up a training camp at La Cañada, near Taco Ralo, Tucumán Province, with the aim of preparing for rural guerrilla operations in the Aconquija mountains, home of the Uturuncos in 1959-60. Just 13 days later, however, on 19th September, all 13 trainees were captured after returning from a long march. Ironically, the ex-seminarist Ferré Gadea was the only member of the surprised "17th October" Detachment to attempt resistance - but his machine-gun jammed.

Amateurism undoubtedly characterised this first FAP initiative. Though it is probably that its protagonists had inherited highly specialised topographical and meteorological studies of Northern and

---

1. "Escribe Carlos Caride," La Causa Peronista, no. 1 (9th July 1974), pp. 42-43.

Central Argentina from Bengochea's group, had excellent intelligence reports on the Army command structure in Tucumán and possessed a copy of Army plans for counter-insurgency operations in the province, the Taco Ralo guerrillas put the information to poor use. Following the Bolivian example of Inti Peredo's purchase of the farm at Ñancahuazú for training, Verdinelli (Comandante Sabino) bought a piece of land about 150 miles from the provincial capital of San Miguel. The area was totally unsuitable for a camp, being a desolate, flat area of low mountain where adequate security was impossible and water scarce. Moreover, the guerrillas received no support at all from the local population and so gained no warning from locals of the approach of their hundred police captors who had received reports of "smugglers" being in the area.

Furthermore, the temptation to keep a diary, as Che himself had done, written by 2nd-in-command El Kadri, led to a further 40 militants being arrested in Córdoba and Río Gallegos, including the future Peronist Left-supported Governor of Santa Cruz, Jorge Cepernic. That extremely incomplete diary, if police versions of it are to be believed, revealed that Fidel Castro had been consulted about the Taco Ralo scheme and had strongly discouraged it. [1] Whether true or not, the outcome was the imprisonment of the 13, composed of several students and employees, a doctor and two blue-collar workers. [2] After waiting three years for a trial, they were sentenced to 4-14 year prison stretches in November 1971 but got out in May 1973 as a result of the general amnesty of political prisoners. Amanda Beatriz Peralta de Diéguez did not wait that long, being

---

1. La Razón, 26th September 1968.

2. Both of the blue-collar workers, Ferrari and Ferré Gadea, were ex-seminarists who had chosen to join the working class.

"sprung" with three other inmates (including two members of the Armed Forces of Liberation) from the Buenos Aires Women's Prison in June 1971, an operation marred by the death of FAP militant Bruno Cambareri during the escape.

Fraternal criticism of the Taco Ralo group was offered by the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT) which, while maintaining that the strategy of popular revolutionary warfare was correct, reprimanded the prisoners for a series of tactical errors: the location of their camp in an unsuitable zone where they lacked popular support; the lack of armed resistance to their police captors; and a "militaristic conception of popular war" which put armed actions before the winning of political support and creation of a revolutionary party. [1] These "errors" were in part acknowledged by the imprisoned "detachment" who, in a communiqué which related the tortures to which they were subjected, admitted a "lack of the necessary security measures". However, the presence of 30 US Rangers in Argentina was referred to as being sufficient evidence that "our small tactical defeat does not invalidate the method" of armed struggle. [2]

The FAP post-mortem and self-criticism which followed the Taco Ralo _débâcle_ was therefore exceedingly superficial, noting technical defects without questioning _foquismo_. Yet the technical blunders were very much rooted in _foquista_ conceptions. Had the FAP possessed genuine and organised political support, if only in Tucumán, they would not have

---

1. "Taco Ralo: errores tácticos en una estrategia correcta," _El Combatiente_, no. 18 (17th October 1968), p. 4.

2. "Nuestros errores pueden servir de lección y ejemplo, pero no de negación de la única salida del pueblo ante la violencia gorila," _Con Todo_ (Buenos Aires), no date (late 1968), p.4.

been caught unawares by just one hundred policemen but would have been alerted and to some extent protected by the local population. The only lesson drawn from this costly experience by the FAP was a geographical one. They now turned to urban warfare, recognising that 70-80% of the Argentine people live in urban areas, while not rejecting the possibility of a subordinate rural front in the future. Rural guerrilla warfare now faded from the Argentine scene until the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) Tucumán campaign of 1974-76, apart from the adventures of small, isolated bands - like the six bearded men in combat dress, arrested in a Jujuy cave in February 1969, who claimed to be hunting wild turkeys.... with machine-guns! [1]

Had the FAP not possessed a rudimentary urban apparatus and counted with a fair degree of sympathy in the Peronist Movement, its role in Argentine political history would have been just as ephemeral as the ill-fated Guevarist foco of Masetti's People's Guerrilla Army (EGP) of 1963-64. The urban structure, whose existence appears to have been initially unknown to the police, managed to survive despite a couple of important set-backs in 1969. In April, Carlos Caride and FAP defence lawyer Miguel Domingo Zavala Rodríguez were arrested in a Buenos Aires apartment after a gun-battle in which a policeman was killed. Two months later, Gerardo Ferrari was gunned down. Caride, who had spent 1963-67 in prison as a result of his past militancy, was tortured to the point of death [2] before eventually receiving a 14-year sentence in November

---

1. Buenos Aires Herald, 13th & 16th February 1969. The police claimed that the six were linked to the Taco Ralo group and that one of them was a former Uturunco.

2. See the appendix to Andrew Graham-Yooll, Tiempo de violencia, cronología del "Gran Acuerdo Nacional" (Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973), pp. 123-160, for details of State repression in the 1966-72 period. Caride had a heart attack when his head was banged against a wall after he had been subjected to the picana for four consecutive hours.

1971. Zavala Rodríguez, who got off with a suspended sentence, was to move over to the Montoneros around 1973, to become a Peronist Youth deputy in 1974 and editor of El Auténtico in 1975.

The early years of the FAP as an urban guerrilla force were its most significant, it originally benefiting from being the first "special formation" to be created in the Onganía period. Urban action was publicly initiated in October 1969 with the takeover of two police stations in Tortuguitas, Buenos Aires Province, and continued at a steady rate until the end of 1972 when the FAP turned to political activity in the Peronist election campaign. [1] During these three years, the FAP concerned itself mainly with expropriations and armed propaganda, at best tangentially related to working-class struggles. Through the former, it was able to develop a solid military structure but its original guerrilla pre-eminence was soon lost, first to the People's Revolutionary Army and then to the Montoneros.

Finance was obtained through a number of bank raids, threats to the social clubs of the wealthy and, on one or two occasions, through kidnappings. Other expropriations were of medical resources, office equipment and of course weaponry and explosives. Guns and uniforms were acquired through a February 1970 raid on the Sargento Cabral housing quarters of Campo de Mayo NCO's, from an April 1970 assault on the main guard-post of the Tigre Coast Guards and from attacks on police stations. Experienced FAP bombers were supplied through the May 1970 seizure of 602 cases of dynamite in Buenos Aires, a March 1971 raid on an arsenal near Mendoza (though some of the 5,100 kg. of dynamite was lost when 8

---

1. Data on FAP operations is drawn from the Buenos Aires Herald, 1968-74; chronologies contained in Cristianismo y Revolución between 1969-71; and from Kohl and Litt, op. cit., pp. 339-364.

FAP members were arrested six days later) and the seizure of 20 cases of explosives, fuse and percussion caps from a Mar del Plata quarry in April 1973.

The explosives were used by the FAP to "single out its enemies with bombs", [1] especially in September 1970 when the 1955 coup was marked by the deployment of 35 bombs against government officials, businessmen and military officers. Bomb targets were almost invariably symbols of oligarchic privilege and opulence. Several luxurious clubs were destroyed by FAP bombs, including a military riding club where both Onganía and the Duke of Edinburgh had played polo. In March 1971, a costly chalet being built for Navy C-in-C Admiral Pedro Gnavi and another high-ranking officer was dynamited.

Material rather than physical destruction was the objective of the FAP's discriminate use of violence. In November 1970, when the homes of three US military mission men were raided, and in February 1972, when the FAP's 'Blajakis-Salazar Commando' "disarmed the guard of the representative of Yankee imperialism in our country" (i.e. a policeman outside the US Embassy residence), the FAP was able to demonstrate the vulnerability of its enemy without allowing the latter to present the guerrillas as violent delinquents. Indeed, several FAP operations, like the January 1970 expropriation of toys, distributed in a shanty-town, and the January 1972 kidnapping of a Brazilian student in an attempt to get the Santa Fe Rotary Club to pay the wages of ten nurses for a year, helped to give the FAP something of a Robin Hood image during its early years.

---

1. FAP communiqué, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 17th September 1970.

2. FAP communiqué, quoted in ibid., 13th February 1972.

However, the FAP's popular image was not totally unsullied. During the course of its bank expropriations, several ordinary policemen were killed attempting resistance. Whereas guerrilla reputations were not stained by the blood of renowned police torturers like General Sanmartino, assassinated by the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) with Montonero and FAP assistance in July 1971, the killings of "workers in uniform" who did not necessarily support the military regime was qualitatively different. It is doubtful whether the Buenos Aires Provincial Police were entirely convinced by the late 1970 FAP letter to them, claiming "We have nothing against any one of you as individuals" and sent after the shooting of two corporals. It was an eloquent enough letter in which the FAP invited the police to ask themselves "for whom you fight, whom you defend, why and for whom do you risk your life every day, whom do you serve as cannon fodder?" and "Did any of them come to the funeral of your comrades?". The police were reminded that the FAP only went into action when possessing "superior firepower" and that if policemen resisted, "it is either you or us".[1] However, the righteousness of shooting policemen, who were only doing what they were paid to do and faced disciplinary measures if they did not, could not be intellectually sold to policemen nor to broad sectors of the public, for the FAP placed themselves in situations in which there was bound to be a death toll, such as the three policemen killed resisting a Banco de Galicia hold-up in January 1971. Unlike the Montoneros and People's Revolutionary Army, the FAP was very slow in learning that kidnapping is a far more efficient means of fund-raising than bank raids. If intelligently planned and the victim well chosen, kidnapping proved more likely to secure larger sums, involve fewer security risks, have a more overtly political dimension and minimise unnecessary fatal violence.

---

1. FAP letter to the police of Buenos Aires Province, Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970), p. 54.

The FAP's failure to develop onto a higher plane of operations in the early 1970's and its being outgrown by the Montoneros and People's Revolutionary Army can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, though several of their operations had political connotations, practically all of the efforts of FAP activists were orientated towards the military front and there was no serious engagement in political activity, let alone trade union work, prior to the November 1972 decision to participate in the electoral campaign. Secondly, it must be remembered that the FAP's principal founders, leaders and most experienced cadres, notably El Kadri, Caride and Verdinelli, were in prison throughout this period, most of them as a result of the ill-judged Taco Ralo project. These losses seriously hampered FAP development, as did the deaths of their martyrs. During the course of 1971, the FAP lost Dani Balbuena in a January car crash; Diego Frondizi (nephew of ex-President Arturo Frondizi), Rubén Greco and Manuel Belloni in March; Bruno Cambareri in June; Haedo Miguel Bianchini and Néstor Mocoroa in October; and Juan Carlos Peressini in the "Battle of Ferreyra" in November. The lives of Frondizi, Greco and Belloni, like those of Bianchini and Mocoroa, were lost as a result of nothing more momentous than car "expropriation" attempts.

Both weaknesses - excessive concentration on military actions and the decapitation of the organisation through detentions - were consequences of the FAP's strategic foquismo. By shifting its zone of operations to the cities and mainly to Buenos Aires, the FAP had not broken radically with the early teachings of Debray and his school. According to one former FAP militant, Debray spent a few days with them during their early phase, arrogantly claimed that they could teach him nothing about revolutionary warfare, and then went on to plunder some of their ideas for publication, without acknowledging his intellectual

debt! [1]

Lacking a periodical of their own, it is exceedingly difficult to trace the ideological development of the FAP and its conversion to alternativismo after 1970. In their armed propaganda operations of these years, the only political demand raised was the general one for Perón's return, Perón being referred to in an October 1969 communiqué as the FAP's "Political Chief, our leader in this National Liberation process....Perón is today more than ever the interpreter of his people".[2] However, two interviews conceded by the FAP at the end of 1970 and early in 1971 provide some indication of their early political outlook.

In the first, replying to twelve questions posed by a Cristianismo y Revolución journalist, the FAP acknowledged that there had been a foquista element in their Taco Ralo failure, they having "relied excessively on the spontaneous organisation of the people". However, this did not lead them to question the viability of either urban or rural gurrilla warfare. The FAP had learnt that the specific foquista format proposed by Debray was inadequate but had not actually questioned the underlying conception of foquismo. Rejecting insurrectional alternatives, the FAP clung to a modified foquista strategy which sought to "incorporate methods similar to those of revolutionary warfare to industrial struggles",[3] but as has been seen from the brief account of their main types of operations, there is no evidence that this proved feasible.

FAP political characterisation of the Peronist Movement showed little sign of alternativismo at this time. Peronism was portrayed as

---

1. Personal interview with a former FAP member who became a trade union bureaucrat after 1973, Buenos Aires, 12th August 1975.
2. FAP communiqué of 17th October 1970, Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970), p. 55.
3. "Reportaje a las FAP," ibid., no. 25 (September 1970), pp. 17-20.

a movement led by the national bourgeoisie prior to 1955 but which had shed its old leadership in the following years to arrive at a contemporary situation in which "The Peronist Movement is essentially made up of the working class". The alleged leadership of the Movement by bourgeois and bureaucratic sectors was deemed "more apparent than real", the idea of social darwinization of the Movement being implicit. Indeed, there was little to politically differentiate the FAP from the other Peronist armed organisations in this period, with the exception of one important postulate: the indivisibility of national and social revolution. Alternativismo was present in embryonic form in the argument, inspired chiefly by the Cuban Revolution, that "it is only possible to achieve the objectives of national liberation through the liquidation of capitalist structures". [1]

This stance was reinforced in the second interview, given to the Cuban Granma Weekly in January 1971, in which the FAP stated that they were "well aware of the fact that the national bourgeoisie cannot produce a process of national liberation and carry it to its ultimate consequences". However, intransigence on this issue was partially undermined by the view that Peronist support for Frondizi in 1958 had been a "correct tactical decision", aimed at isolating the main enemy. Radicalism was present in the FAP's demand that Peronism revise its methods of struggle and "go beyond" what had been achieved in 1946-55, but the articulation of an "independent alternative" was still overshadowed by their evaluation of Perón. [2]

Perón was not presented as a social revolutionary, his limitations

---

1. Ibid.
2. "Con las armas en la mano," interview with FAP spokesmen, ibid., no. 28 (April 1971), pp. 77-80. An English version of this interview appears in Kohl and Litt, op. cit., pp. 365-373.

on that score being implied by the statement that FAP confidence in the leader was not based on his "subjective level". Rather, it was based on "his past and his commitment to the people". This led the FAP to believe that Perón could not become "part of the system" and that even if he had a subjective desire for this, his pragmatism would restrain him, for "he would be politically dead if he were to do so". Events were to belie the prediction, though there were growing indications in 1974 that Perón's political suicide might have become a reality had his physical demise not intervened so opportunely.

The return of Perón to Argentina became the only specific demand raised by the FAP and thus its propaganda was more likely to increase general political support for Perón than win support for the FAP, lacking as it did a fully-articulated alternative programme. It was all well and good to talk about "contributing cadres with a politico-military mentality to the process of mass struggle and trying to extend the methodology of the armed organisation to all levels of the masses' confrontation with the regime", [1] but without a distinct programme, embracing the various needs of the workers, the FAP could not possibly present itself as a viable political alternative to orthodox Peronism.

Crisis hit the FAP towards the end of 1972 and it never really recovered from the disintegrative process then unleashed. Whereas one faction, mindful of the FAP's isolation from the masses, took support for Perón's return to its logical conclusion and turned to political activity aimed at the election of Perón's candidate, Héctor Cámpora, the National Command (Comando Nacional) developed its alternativismo by refusing to campaign for a Peronist victory, and in December 1972 called for a protest "blank vote" for the March 1973 elections. There is some

---

1. Ibid.

indication of a tendency for imprisoned FAP members to have adopted the former line whereas those outside supported the latter. [1] Differences between the former group, which later became known as FAP 17th October (FAP17), and the Montoneros were gradually eroded, culminating in fusion, while those strengthening their "independent alternative" line were for the most part to end up joining with the Guevarist People's Revolutionary Army in October 1974. Apart from a very small sector of the FAP and a number of other weak tendencies, pure alternativismo can organisationally be seen as essentially a phenomenon of 1972-74, though as will be seen from analysis of Rank-and-File Peronism, its roots went back to the examples set by Cooke, Rearte, Olmos, Di Pasquale and Ongaro.

Estimates of the relative strengths of FAP 17 and the National Command vary, possibly because they changed in the politically fluid years of 1973-74, but the balance of opinion would appear to favour the latter tendency. [2] In June 1973, the National Command faction publicly rejected Cámpora's plea for an end to guerrilla struggle and announced that it would organise the working class from below, "independently of bureaucrats and traitors", and continue military operations against the oligarchy, torturers and the Armed Forces. [3] A few days later came a communiqué rejecting the reformist road of the government and pledging that the struggle would continue for:

> "the elimination of all types of exploitation, the destruction of capitalist society, the building of the Just, Free and Sovereign Fatherland: the Socialist Fatherland, through the working class and the people taking power".

---

1. This is implied in "Escribe Carlos Caride," op. cit.
2. Both Jantzen, op. cit., p. 132, and Hodges, Argentina, 1943-1976..., op. cit., p. 103, seem to agree with this judgement. Hodge's work must, however, be treated with caution. Among numerous factual errors, he maintains that FAP 17 joined the ERP while FAP National went over to the Montoneros - the reverse is true.
   FAP National refers to those who supported the political line of the FAP's National Command and not merely to the National Command itself.
3. FAP press conference, referred to in Kohl and Litt, op. cit., p. 364.

While stating that they would support all government measures favouring the workers, the National Command stressed that "the real power, that of the factories, land, money and arms, remains in the hands of the exploiters" and maintained that "the liberation of the workers will be by the workers themselves". [1]

Though it is difficult to follow the precise political evolution of this tendency, due to both factions issuing statements signed "FAP", it is clear that the National Command went in for some self-criticism and temporarily revised its position in July 1973. Influenced by the fact that almost six million Peronists had rejected their call for a "blank vote" in March, the National Command now called for "Perón to Power!" through the September election, while adding important riders such as "With the Workers and not the Traitors!" and "to carry forward the revolutionary aspirations of the Peronist people and working class".[2] While firmly criticising movimientismo, in August there was an evaluation of their own recent performance by the National Command, who recognised that they had isolated themselves from the political process through sectarianism, "strategism" and a "classism" without the working class. They pleaded guilty to the charge of "ideologism", the mistake of imputing ideal levels of consciousness to the working class which corresponded with its objective position in society but failed to take into account the actual subjective orientations of the workers, which for the most part were neither revolutionary nor socialist. Now the key task was to "relate the aspirations of the working class to our proposals". [3]

This line was supported by the FAP regional units of Buenos Aires,

---

1. FAP: "A la clase obrera y al pueblo peronista," Militancia, no, 4 (5th July 1973), pp. 12-14.
2. Communiqué: "FAP al pueblo," ibid., no. 6 (19th July 1973), p. 12.
3. FAP Regional Buenos Aires, "Aportes para el análisis de la situación actual," ibid., no. 10 (16th August 1973), pp. 19-21.

Córdoba, Corrientes, Chaco, La Plata, Mar del Plata, Mendoza and Tucumán, [1] It was not maintained for long - nor could it be when support for Perón had been made conditional on such measures as "land to those who work it" and "for we workers to control what we produce in the factories". [2] There was still a strong element of "ideologism" present in the FAP's contention that these conditions were not only posed by themselves but by the working class as a whole. Once Perón had been given a chance to radicalise the course of his government, National Command criticism sharpened rapidly. They claimed that Perón, through attempting an impossible class-conciliation project, was clearly facilitating bourgeois domination of the government and pursuing a political line which necessitated the rising level of repression.

In January 1974, the FAP National Command withdrew its support from the government and publicly declared its solidarity with the People's Revolutionary Army's provocative attack on the Azul military garrison. [3] Moving closer to the Guevarists, it accused the Montonero tendency, with much justification, of trying to:

> "replace the real organisation of the Peronist workers with supposed vanguards which end up making concessions in order to maintain political space, and which exhaust themselves through fighting the system on the terrain and with the weapons of the enemy". 4

Perón's death and the escalation of repression under the Isabel Perón-López Rega government accelerated the process which culminated in an October 1974 declaration of "Marxist-Leninist" identity, a merger with the People's Revolutionary Army and subordination to the latter's

---

1. FAP communiqué: "Perón al gobierno," ibid., no. 13 (6th September 1973), p. 29.
2. FAP communiqué, ibid., no. 22 (8th November 1973), pp. 44-45.
3. Estrella Roja (Buenos Aires), 11th February 1974.
4. Communiqué of FAP Regional La Plata, Berisso, Ensenada, 5th January 1974, Militancia, no. 31 (17th January 1974), pp. 44-45.

political leadership, the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT). Individuals and small groups had passed from Peronism to Guevarism in the past, especially Cooke and a sector of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (MRP), but this was the first organisational conversion, though not an entirely surprising one if one records, in the words of the FAP, that "Taco Ralo was an experience directly influenced by the example of the Cuban Revolution.[1]

Only a small minority of the Peronist working class followed the National Command and like-minded groups into a position of socialist opposition to the Peronist government, even though industrial conflict gathered pace rapidly. Apart from the contrast between the slowness of changes in working-class consciousness and the rapid tactical shifts of the alternativistas, the former based on experience and the latter on impatience, the failure of the National Command to carry major labour sectors with it has to be attributed to the means of struggle adopted in 1973-4. Equating revolutionary struggle with armed struggle, especially in a period when mass political work was possible, created a huge gulf between FAP guerrillas and most industrial workers. In a year in which nearly 6 million people voted for Cámpora and getting on for 7½ million voted for Perón,[2] the National Command's methods of struggle made few concessions to the alteration in political circumstance. It had drawn on Guevara's military theses and experience but ignored one of his fundamental political conditions for successful guerrilla warfare:

> "Where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak

---

1. "Con las armas...," op. cit.
2. In the March 1973 elections, the Cámpora-Solano Lima ticket received 5,907,464 votes (49.59% of the poll); in the October election, the Perón-Perón ticket gained 7,359,139 votes (61.85% of the poll) - Graham-Yooll, Tiempo de violencia, op. cit., pp. 59 & 110.

> cannot be promoted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted". 1

Surely this maxim is valid for the continuation as well as outbreaks of guerrilla warfare.

The FAP National Command's guerrilla campaign of 1973-74 was one of the most politically ill-advised and unproductive examples of foquismo to appear in the 1970's. The punishment of "traitors", other vengeance attacks and the intimidation of foreign businessmen were the hallmarks of this performance which began on 22nd May 1973, three days before Cámpora was sworn in, with the assassination of Dirk Henry Kloosterman in La Plata. Kloosterman, General Secretary of the Car Workers Union (SMATA) since 1968 and a close aide of CGT General Secretary José Rucci, was "executed" by the Gerardo María Ferrari and Bruno Cambareri Detachments as a traitor to the working class, a charge which could be persuasively documented. In 1969, he had done a deal with Onganía, promising SMATA's non-participation in the October 29-30th General Strike in return for the release of Elpidio Torres, the Córdoban SMATA leader who had been sentenced by a Council of War to 4 years 8 months in jail for his role in the Cordobazo. Three years later, Kloosterman had been denounced by the "combative" wing of Peronism for collaboration with the management of Peugeot-Safrar. [2] When the company sacked 30 shop stewards, including Peronists, the SMATA leader deprived them of their stewardships, suspended their union membership and proposed that the next SMATA Congress expel them. A reputed CIA agent, Daniel Benedict of the North American Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), was present

---

1. Che Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare (England: Pelican, 1969), p. 14.

2. On the 1969 deal, see the Buenos Aires Herald, 28th October 1969; on the Peugeot-Safrar dispute, see "La santa alianza de Kloosterman y Peugeot," El Combativo, no. 1 (November 1972), p. 4.

at his burial. [1]

Another bureaucrat to feel the fire-power of FAP National Command executioners was the General-Secretary of the Mar del Plata CGT Region, Marcelino Mansilla, killed by the Belloni-Frondizi Detachment on 27th August 1973, 3 years to the day after the assassination of José Alonso by pre-Montoneros. Mansilla was a right-wing Peronist who had unsuccessfully tried to organise a regional general strike in support of the "coup" which toppled Cámpora on 13th July 1973. For a decade he had enriched himself as leader of the Construction Workers Union (UOCRA) in La Plata, worked hand-in-hand with employers and even acquired his own business interests. A local protest strike, organised by his CGT colleagues, was only partially successful despite the use of armed bands to terrorise workers and shopkeepers into participation.

Both actions were attempts to relate armed struggle to workers' struggles but in fact carried neither struggle forward. The most succinct and apposite criticism of such assassinations had, paradoxically, been provided by the FAP themselves when in 1970 they criticised the execution of Alonso in the following terms: "If the workers' movement is not strong enough to get rid of its own parasites, it won't be strong enough to make a revolution". [2] Sixty years earlier, Trotsky had made a similar point in accusing terrorists of belittling the role of the masses:

> "If it is enough to arm oneself with a pistol in order to achieve one's goal, why the efforts of the class struggle? If a thimbleful of gunpowder and a little chunk of lead is enough to shoot the enemy through the neck, what need is there for class organisation?". 3

---

1. "Un agente de la CIA y el entierro de Kloosterman," Militancia, no. 9 (9th August 1973), p. 34.
2. "Con las armas...," op. cit.
3. Trotsky, Why Marxists Oppose..., op. cit., p. 3.

Elitist acts of vengeance, for the workers rather than by them, in no way contributed to the National Command's objective of constructing an independent and democratic workers' organisation, because they demanded nothing of the working class except applause. There was no role for the masses to play in the August 1973 attack on the home of "the traitor Quiñoñero", accused of spying for the union bureaucracy on Fiat workers in Córdoba; no role for the agrarian workers in the disposal of landowner Julio Romero, assassinated by the FAP's Yhaja Ñañorayro Detachment on 12th October 1973 for forgetting his March 1973 electoral promises about agrarian reform; and no role for the Tucumán municipal workers in the Comando Hilda Guerrero de Molina's January 1974 attack on the home of Julio Cesár Saracho, mayor of Famaillá, who had attacked their union and promoted right-wing terrorism in the province. [1]

Accompanying these acts of vengeance came bellicose statements such as: "There will be no white flag. The blood of those killed and the resistance struggle of our people will not be negotiated". [2] These reflected a faith in the efficacy of guns, whether wielded by the working class or not. Everything was done in the name of that class yet was so alien to it; for the year following the Peronist restoration, once the initial factory occupations had ceased, was for most workers a period of restraint, not struggle, a year in which workers were prepared to give the government a chance and see whether it could produce the promised goods. It was only a very small sector of the working class, mainly that grouped in Rank-and-File Peronism (PB), which supported this armed campaign and even there, where the FAP was so influential prior to 1973, a minority sector called Rank-and-File Peronism 17th October (PB 17) was in

---

1. FAP National operations reported in Militancia, nos. 13 (6th September 1973), 21 (1st November 1973) and 34 (7th February 1974) respectively.
2. FAP National communiqué of 27th August 1973, ibid., no. 13 (6th September 1973), pp. 28-29.

disagreement.

The other major feature of the National Command's campaign was an attempt to make life in Argentina unbearable for foreign car company executives. On the eve of Cámpora's inauguration, its commandos machine-gunned the home of Fiat Concord's security chief in Córdoba, "as a warning", [1] and called for the rehiring of workers sacked for political and trade union militancy. Ford, however, was selected as the prime target. In November 1973, John Swint, general manager of Transax (a subsidiary of Ford Argentina) was killed along with his chauffeur and bodyguard when they resisted a kidnapping attempt by the "Peressini-Olmedo-Baffí-Villagra" FAP Detachments. The following August came a bomb attack on the Permanent S.A. company in Buenos Aires (an affiliate of IKA-Renault) and the "execution" of Ricardo Luis Goya, IKA-Renault labour relations manager, during a car workers' dispute in Córdoba.

This campaign was only partially designed to link up with workers' struggles, for there had been no industrial conflict at Transax. It was essentially an attempt to persuade Ford, "one of the huge multinational companies responsible for the pillaging of our country from 1922 onwards, by superexploitation of the workers", [2] into pulling out of Argentina. In this the National Command had a degree of temporary success - a week after Swint's death, 22 Ford executives fled the country. However, the Swint killing also rebounded on its perpetrators, causing revulsion among some sectors which the National Command hoped to win. Though the Detachments involved had the intention of kidnapping Swint in order to "expropriate part of the profits which Ford makes through exploiting the workers

---

1. FAP National communiqué, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 28th May 1973.
2. FAP National communiqué, quoted in ibid., 30th November 1973.

and carries off to the United States", [1] as in the case of the earlier bank and police station raids they had put themselves in a position in which killing might well be necessary for self-preservation, while not likely to meet with popular approval. Due to the Swint killing, guerrillas who tried to take a hijacked milk truck into a shanty-town were turned away by its inhabitants. [2]

The campaign ended with the FAP National Command still trying, unsuccessfully, to respond "in the same manner to each comrade assassinated by the fascist bands, to each demand postponed (by the government), to each persecution of activists....". [3] After the massacre of 16 ERP combatants who had surrendered in Catamarca in August 1974, the National Command expressed its solidarity with the ERP's campaign of reprisals against senior army officers [4] by seriously wounding Lt.Col. René Mas in an assassination attempt on October 24th. The following day it merged with the ERP, leaving only a handful of recalcitrants clutching FAP banners. With their organisation torn apart by internal splits and hit by political repression, the remnants, now led by the three Villaflor brothers, were forced to adopt a much lower profile. Perhaps influenced too, to some extent, by the ineffectiveness of the military campaign, they now abandoned major armed actions and attempted to submerge themselves in labour struggles. The name "FAP" now faded into history, as far as the general public was concerned, though in September 1975 survivors of that apparently extinct species were sighted when a FAP cell was discovered in La Plata and four militants arrested.

---

1. FAP National communiqué, Militancia, no. 26 (6th December 1973), p. 46.
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 9th December 1973.
3. FAP National communiqué, Militancia, no. 26, op. cit.
4. Nine officers were killed and several others wounded in assassination attempts during the September-December 1974 ERP reprisal campaign. It was suspended prematurely in December after the young daughter of Captain Humberto Viola was killed in the cross-fire during her father's assassination.

FAP 17th October, the other FAP faction led by Envar El Kadri, avoided the "strategism" and "ideologism" of the National Command, only to acquire many of the movimientista vices mentioned in the last two chapters. Differences between the two FAP factions had emerged late in 1972 as a result of the announcement of elections and subsequent FAP electioneering alongside the movimientista Left. However, they only really came out into the open when the FAP political leadership was released from prison in May 1973. When interviewed after his release, El Kadri, though claiming to be an alternativista, showed himself to be a de facto movimientista. He suggested that alternativismo had been distorted in recent years so as to become "unconnected" with the Peronist Movement. Moreover, he was full of illusions in a revolutionary Perón, asserting that when Perón referred to socialism, he meant "expropriation of the means of production from the hands of the oligarchy, from the hands of capitalist sectors, from the hands of the bourgeoisie", and also "the working class taking total political power". [1]

Like the rest of the future FAP 17, El Kadri had reached a position very close to the Montoneros by early 1973 and indeed predicted a FAP-FAR-Montonero merger. Feeling that "in reality, all the Movement is revolutionary", supporting the government's alleged "national liberation" programme and calling for organisational activity aimed at achieving "the hegemony of the (working) class within the Movement", [2] El Kadri and his tendency seemed to have undergone a dramatic metamorphosis. However, the change was not so fundamental in reality. The military wing of alternativismo had always displayed some movimientista features, as was clearly indicated in a letter which El Kadri, in the name of the imprisoned Taco

---

1. El Kadri interview, Liberación (Buenos Aires), no. 5, undated (1973), pp. 3-5.
2. Ibid.

Ralo Detachment, sent to Juan José Hernández Arregui in January 1970. After praising this movimientista mentor for being "one of the few intellectuals capable of spreading ideas for which it is worth dying or living, fighting for their implementation", El Kadri acknowledged a great FAP intellectual debt to the author. They had, he wrote, initially joined the Peronist Movement for emotional rather than rational reasons - "It was our love for Perón and Evita, the expression of our love for the people" - but later provided this commitment with "more firm and solid bases" through absorbing the ideas of Hernández Arregui and others. [1]

It must also be remembered that prior to 1972, the FAP's alternativismo had envisaged an "independent" working-class alternative led by Perón, something which even Cooke had hoped for until shortly before his death. FAP 17 did not occupy many government or Movement posts, partly out of a quasi-alternativista resistance to integration, partly because of the imprisonment of key cadres until May 1973 and partly because they were even less prepared for the job share-out than were the Montoneros. They did, however, fully participate in all the mass events organised or attended by the Peronist Youth-Montoneros and sent El Kadri as delegate to Perón's September 1973 meeting with the Youth, an occasion used by the FAP 17 leader to express support for Perón's National Reconstruction scheme and solidarity with the soon to be united Montoneros and Revolutionary Armed Forces. While Bidegain lasted as Governor of Buenos Aires Province, both El Kadri and 2nd-in-Command Carlos Caride worked for the provincial government, the latter on the Civil Defence Council and later in Tourism.

The name FAP 17 was adopted at the end of August 1973 because of the by now total incompatibility between the two FAP factions. While still paying lip-service to the idea of building an "independent alternative",

---

1. Letter from El Kadri to Hernández Arregui of 15th January 1970, in Hernández Arregui, La Formación...., op. cit., pp. 547-9.

FAP 17 deprived the notion of content by presenting Perón as the "representative of the working class in the government" and by agreeing with the Montoneros on the need to "consolidate and broaden the existing National Front" - i.e. FREJULI. Like the Montoneros, FAP 17 was extremely opportunistic in its acceptance of any "allies" who wanted to take advantage of their support: "no determinism can lead us today to reject certain tactical allies because yesterday, or possibly tomorrow, they were enemies of the working class and the people". With "allies" like these, FAP 17 did not need enemies. The formal structuring of El Kadri's FAP 17 tendency involved a major step back from clasista politics, despite the retention of some of the old rhetoric which only led the group into absurd postures. For instance, the National Command's policy of bringing bureaucrats to justice was criticised in the same communiqué for both failing to develop the "independent alternative of the working class" due to its "foquista methods isolated from the process of the masses", and for being prejudicial to the broadening of the so-called National Liberation Front! [1] The Peronist Movement was deemed to combine "polyclassist breadth" with a "classist essence". [2]

Despite FAP 17's assertions of the "historical social revolutionary essence" of the Peronist Movement, its critique of foquismo, based on personal experience, was authoritatively trenchant. Foquismo was no longer equated with the technical "mistakes" made by the Taco Ralo group but was rather:

> "an erroneous political conception (which) was isolating us from political militancy and mass struggle....One cannot replace or impede the structuring of the integral organisation of the working class with isolated actions". 3

---

1. FAP 17 communiqué, El Descamisado, no. 16 (4th September 1973), p. 29.
2. FAP 17 de Octubre: "A la clase obrera y al pueblo peronista," Militancia, no. 17 (4th October 1973), pp. 46-48.
3. Ibid.

The critique, however, was still partial, for within a year FAP 17, by now part of the Montoneros, was participating in the September 1974 resumption of armed struggle. To explain this paradox, one can only assume that FAP 17 felt that movimientista participation in the Peronist Movement had been successful enough to ensure that the masses would follow the guerrillas into a clandestine revolutionary war - a forlorn hope.

The laying down of arms in 1973-74 did not exempt FAP 17 militants from the attentions of repressive agencies. Like Firmenich, Quieto and Jaime, Carlos Caride was temporarily arrested on trumped-up charges invented by the security services whereas El Kadri was sought on an arms charge. Caride was picked up in February 1974, allegedly in possession of a pistol and powerful grenade, on the route to be followed by a motorcade transporting Perón, Isabel and President Bordaberry of Uruguay. His release from prison two months later, after a campaign by his supporters, represented tacit governmental admission of the fact that the bag which he had been carrying had actually contained nothing more lethal than potatoes!

Since the only difference separating FAP 17 from the Montoneros was their origins and the former's empty alternativista rhetoric, their fusion was only a matter of time, discussions and shared experiences. On 26th June 1974, Caride announced the dissolution of Rank-and-File Peronism 17th October, sister organisation of FAP 17, and soon afterwards informed the public of his decision to join the Montoneros. Most, if not all, of FAP 17 followed suit. Subsequently, they were to participate in the spectacular guerrilla actions and political failures of the Montoneros but both former FAP 17 leaders fell victim to the security forces in 1976. Caride was gunned down in Buenos Aires during a minor attack on a policeman in July; El Kadri managed to get to Spain, only to find the Spanish authorities enthusiastically prepared to return him to Argentina.

Other 'Alternativista' Guerrillas

Brief mention must be made of two Montonero columns which began to embrace alternativismo towards the end of 1972. Their alternativismo was just as transient as that of the FAP and they made little impact on political developments. Both the "Cooke-Pujadas Recovery Column" and the "José Sabino Navarro Column" do, however, merit some attention for they provided critiques of the Montoneros "from the inside". While declaring their independence of the national Montonero leadership, these columns considered themselves to still be part of their parent organisation and devoted their energies to polemical work in an effort to convert other Montoneros to their own viewpoints.

The smaller of the two columns, that bearing the names of John William Cooke and Mariano Pujadas, [1] criticised the national leadership for its movimientista vacillations and opportunism, seen as products of the predominantly petty-bourgeois social composition of the Montoneros. Of particular interest was the insight which this column provided into Montonero bureaucratism, revealing "a lack of internal democracy and political discussion and the pushing out of dissident comrades who are, by way of an insult, accused of being alternativistas". The Cooke-Pujadas Recovery Column was itself alternativista, stressing working-class organisational tasks, but differentiated itself from the "abstract" and "emaciated" alternativismo (presumably) of the FAP National Command. [2]

Quantitatively, however, the José Sabino Navarro Column, named

---

1. Mariano Pujadas was the Montonero Trelew Massacre victim who shortly before his death called for the unity of all the guerrilla organisations at a press conference in the briefly occupied Trelew Airport. For the full text of his speech, see Urondo, op. cit., pp. 127-136. In August 1975, five members of his family were killed by a right-wing death squad in Córdoba.

2. "Material de discusión: Montoneros, Columna de Recuperación Cooke-Pujadas," Militancia, no. 38 (28th March 1974), pp. 20-22.

after the second Montonero commander-in-chief (who, significantly, had been a worker), was the only important group to leave the Montoneros and its strength was mainly restricted to Córdoba.[1] Its prime contribution was a theoretical one, developed through a series of "Notes for Militants" which appeared in Militancia.[2] In these, the Sabino Navarro Column provided a class analysis of post-war Argentine developments which owed much to the study made by Mónica Peralta Ramos,[3] and led to the conclusion that the "principal contradiction" in Argentine society was neither imperialism versus the nation (the Montonero view) nor bourgeoisie versus proletariat (the view of some sectors of the non-Peronist Left) but rather national and international monopoly capital versus the industrial working class. It pointed to the "weakening of the native bourgeoisie which leaves anti-imperialist banners almost exclusively in the hands of the workers and Peronist people" and took as its keynote a slogan which appeared in a document accompanying the Programme of Huerta Grande: "There can be no National Liberation within the confines of the Capitalist System".[4]

Like many alternativistas, the Column's attitude towards Perón was somewhat ambiguous. Its members alleged that he did "what the people want" and voted for him in September 1973, but on the basis of their own radical programme which "goes beyond our leader". Their critique of the Montoneros was an alternativista rejection of the theory of stages and movimientismo but they retained the name Montoneros, pointing to the definition of Montoneros made by Abal Medina and Sabino Navarro as being

---

1. According to statements made by Mario Firmenich at a Montonero press conference, reported in the Buenos Aires Herald, 7th June 1974.
2. At least five "Notes for Militants" appeared, of which four were published in Militancia, nos. 20, 26, 30 & 35.
3. Peralta Ramos, Etapas de acumulación..., op. cit.. I do not of course wish to imply that the author had any political connections with this Column.
4. Montoneros José Sabino Navarro: "Cartilla para militantes no. 3, "Militancia, no. 26 (6th December 1973), pp. 32-34.

"all those who fight without quarter against the regime". [1] At the same time, the Sabino Navarro Column isolated the central weakness of other alternativista groups: they had begun with an analysis of the Argentine mode and relations of production and then mechanically and unrealistically translated soico-economic contradictions into socio-political contradictions. Moreover, their ideology had remained at a level of abstraction, unrelated to specific political situations, leaving these alternativistas incapable of providing a political response to each turn of events. They had a firm commitment to socialism but lacked the political line and tactical equipment for attaining it. [2]

The Column did not itself provide a viable political alternative for Argentine workers. It admitted that "we all fell into a kind of triumphalist drunkenness" [3] after Cámpora's victory and, moreover, did not solely look to the building of an "independent alternative of the working class" but also to "developing the politico-military organisations and finally building the People's Army". [4] Despite a general commitment to an armed strategy, however, the Sabino Navarro Column provided a penetrating critique of their previous Montonero foquismo in their 4th "Note for Militants". [5] Here, foquismo was characterised as "in general, a 'spontaneist' response of the radicalised petty bourgeoisie to the general problems of the country". As such it represented "a proposal from above the rank-and-file" which envisaged the incorporation of the masses but which in fact

---

1. Montoneros José Sabino Navarro: "Cartilla para militantes no. 1," ibid., no. 20 (25th October 1973), pp. 43-44.
2. Montoneros José Sabino Navarro: "Cartilla para militantes no. 5," ibid., no. 35 (21st February 1974), pp. 30-33.
3. Montoneros José Sabino Navarro: "Ante la confusión," ibid., no. 32 (24th January 1974), pp. 32-37.
4. Montoneros José Sabino Navarro communiqué of 24th July 1973, ibid., no. 8 (2nd August 1973), pp. 22-23.
5. Montoneros José Sabino Navarro: "Cartilla para militantes no. 4," ibid., no. 30 (3rd January 1974), pp. 20-22.

had no real influence upon them. Recognition of the latter fact had led the guerrillas to attempt to overcome their isolation through political initiatives, full of "populist and opportunist deviations", but even there "the political struggle, political practice, (was) in the service of the military structure and dependent on the armed element". Being a "proposal from above", the Montonero foco had posed as a representative of the working class but had in fact immersed the latter in that all-embracing category of "the People".

Another characteristic of foquismo had been "the subordination of the political to the military (aspect)" - it had transcended its original methodological character, "acquiring an ideological characteristic" which had come to determine all attitudes, as "was seen in the acquisition of a heroic mystique, a super-valuation of the fighter and a militarisation of all aspects of life." Based on their own experiences and mistakes, the Column now saw foquismo as "an expression of armed voluntarism which involves a contempt for theory (as tendencial)", the "absorption of political cadres into the military structure" and the "conviction that armed practice is the only criterion of truth". Fundamentally, the weakness of foquismo had been that it "acts in the name of the masses and for the masses, but not with the masses."

This foquismo was also seen as partly responsible for the movimientista vacillations of 1973-74, the Column considering that the Montonero suspension of publicised armed actions had represented "a mere translation of the foquista conception and structure to the political camp". Montonero acceptance of the theory of stages and their failure to recognise antagonistic projects within Peronism were ascribed to the fact that they had taken to the Peronist Movement "from above", had not integrated themselves into its rank-and-file and, moreover, had sealed off their organisation from rank-and-file influence by retaining a militaristic form of organisation. The Sabino Navarro Column did not

reject foquismo out of hand though - it maintained that the guerrilla campaign up to 1973, while flawed by the above defects, had helped undermine the military regime. [1] However, this set of criticisms was so damning that the logical conclusion would have been to reject foquismo as a method, without qualifications. The main weaknesses of the Sabino Navarro Column's critique were that it saw its criticisms as only valid for one form of foquismo and failed to elaborate an alternative formula which might bridge the fatal gap between armed struggle and the working class. Like most alternativistas, it spoke of building an independent working-class organisation but also stressed the need to develop politico-military organisations and retained the latter type of structure itself. José Sabino Navarro's disciples [2] can thus be credited with isolating some of the critical weaknesses of foquismo but not with resolving these problems nor pointing the way towards the Patria Socialista.

ALTERNATIVISTA POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

Rank-and-File Peronism

> "CONFORMES/CONFORMES/CONFORMES GENERAL/
> CONFORMES LOS BURGUESES/ NOSOTROS A LUCHAR" [3]

Rank-and-File Peronism (PB), unlike its guerrilla counterpart, was a direct product of the experiences and struggles of the most class-conscious Peronist workers of the late 1960's and early 1970's. Created

---

1. Ibid.
2. It should be noted that there were in fact two Montoneros José Sabino Navarro Columns. The original one was a right-wing Montonero faction which appeared in 1973 and drew its support mainly from within the Peronist University Youth (JUP) and to a lesser extent from Buenos Aires sections of the Peronist Youth (JP) and the Montonero military apparatus. Early in 1974, this predominantly student group formed the basis of the Lealtad (Loyalists') splinters from the Montonero tendency.
3. A 1974 PB chant, directed at Perón, to the effect that the bourgeoisie was in agreement with government policy but that they, the rank-and-file, were going to continue the struggle for their objectives.

after the Cordobazo and formalised at a first congress in 1970, PB was the most radical proletarian organisation to develop within the Peronist Movement. Its leading activists were men of long and proven trade union militancy whose analysis of Argentine society owed more to Marxism than Peronism yet who retained the latter identity, recognising that most of the working class was still going through its Peronist experience.

Cooke's class analysis of Peronism, his call for the elaboration of revolutionary theory, option for politico-military organisational forms and insistence upon the indivisibility of national and social revolution all found a resounding echo in PB. However, Cooke's influence on the labour movement had always been limited, among other things, by the fact that he was not a worker or union leader. The emergence of Rank-and-File Peronism owed a great theoretical debt to Cooke but also to the example of three union militants, Amado Olmos, Jorge Di Pasquale and Raimundo Ongaro, as well as to the organisational experience of the CGT of the Argentines (CGTA) of 1968-70. All struggled against not only the traditional enemies of Peronism but also, to differing extents, against the bourgeoisie in general and the trade union bureaucracy. Their radicalism did not reflect a radicalisation of the labour movement as a whole but rather of its most combative wing, and that fact, ultimately was to be responsible for the partial nature of their successes.

Amado Olmos [1] had started life as a trade unionist back in 1945 and had briefly been a Peronist deputy a decade later prior to the September 1955 military coup. As General Secretary of the 35,000-strong Health Workers Federation, he had risen to become a leader of the Peronist 62

---

1. Biographical data on Amado Olmos is drawn from "El pensamiento de Amado Olmos, a cinco años de su muerte," Militancia, no. 33 (31st January 1974), pp. 26-30, republication of an article by Bernardo Alberte which first appeared in Primera Plana, no. 250 (19th December 1967).

Organisations after the 1959 General Strike. Olmos presided over the 62's 1962 national conference at Huerta Grande, Córdoba, which approved a radical programme calling for State control of major economic sectors, the expropriation of the landed oligarchy and workers' control over exportation. [1] After failing to become a deputy in 1962, due to the annulment of the Peronist election successes, Olmos developed a genuine friendship with Cooke, though not one devoid of personality clashes and disagreements - "we often differed over tactics", Cooke admitted in a letter of condolence to Adela Olmos after her husbands's premature death early in 1968. [2]

It was Olmos who presented Cooke's letter to Perón, urging him to move to Cuba, to a January 1965 plenary of the CGT. When the latter decided to leave the letter "on the table", refusing endorsement, Olmos commented that "The residency of Perón in Spain is the grave of the national revolution..." [3] In the months leading up to the 1966 Onganía coup, Olmos helped former CGT General Secretary José Alonso build the 62 on Foot (62 de Pie junto a Perón), the Perón-sponsored trade union grouping created in response to the threat posed by Vandor, and tried to give it a more left-wing character than Alonso was willing to countenance. After the coup, Olmos briefly became a leading labour opponent of the new regime, attacked the "participationism" of other union leaders including Alonso and won the support of one of Perón's most radical "delegates", Bernardo Alberte, before dying at the age of 50.

Interviewed by Primera Plana shortly before his death, Olmos put

---

1. See Appendix B.
2. "Las manos limpias," letter from Cooke to Adela Olmos, Montevideo 15th February 1968, Militancia, no. 33, op. cit., p. 31.
3. "La definición que no llega...," ibid., no. 34 (7th February 1974), pp. 26-30.

forward a political position similar to that of Cooke - pre-alternativista yet featuring a firm commitment to workers' interests. He sharply criticised the "participationist" union leaders for going on "homages to the Labour Minister San Sebastian" and for looking to the government for solutions to labour problems, for "the government cannot provide solutions for the people under these structures (of liberal capitalism) because it is a dependent government, a dependent country...". At the same time, he reiterated the attitude, first expressed by him in 1959, that the workers had to establish their hegemony in the Peronist Movement rather than try to create an independent party. In 1959, he had looked to the trade union leaders to exercise that hegemony but by 1967 he saw that "it is the leaders who are preventing this workers' hegemony". Olmos thus looked to workers "emerging from below and who are not compromised (with the regime)" to take over the leadership of the Movement but, as for Cooke, this was not to involve an exclusion of "the other forces, since this would be to totally negate the essence of Peronism". Acceptance of Peronist 'polyclassism' and support for the principle of verticalismo separated Olmos from the alternativismo which reached fruition after his death but which nonetheless owed much to him.

The heritage of Amado Olmos was an emphasis on working-class leadership and an embryonic critique of the trade union bureaucracy, the latter also being elaborated by Cooke. Olmos recognised that the trade union leaders of the mid-1960's were representative "as union officials, in the sense that they are elected" but were not the political representatives of the masses and were incapable of real leadership. Pointing to the bureaucratisation of the higher echelons in the unions, Olmos criticised the:

> "leaders who have acquired the lifestyles, cars, houses, investments and tastes of the oligarchy which they claim to be fighting. Of course, with such attitudes, they cannot lead the

working class". [1]

Moreover, in 1967 he differentiated between two kinds of trade unionism:

> "The worker does not want solutions from above because he's suffered from them for twelve years and they're no good. The worker wants an integral trade unionism which projects itself towards the control of power and which ensures the wellbeing of all the people. The other type is imperialist 'yellow' trade unionism which seeks to restrict our role to wage bargaining and holiday camps". 2

Both of these quotations were later enshrined in the 1968 May Day Programme of the CFT of the Argentines which recognised Olmos as its principal mentor.

Jorge Di Pasquale [3] also had a creditable record of Peronist militancy and, like Olmos, had paid for it with several spells in prison. While still in his 20's during the early Resistance years, Di Pasquale had participated in the Peronist struggles to recover the trade union movement, before being elected General Secretary of the Association of Pharmacy Workers in 1958. In the early 1960's, he occupied several key posts before the rise of Vandorism produced a removal of militants from strategic positions. He led the Confederation of Orthodox Peronist Associations (CAOP), was Press Secretary of the 62 Organisations (1960-62), Secretary of the Coordinating and Supervisory Council of Peronism (1962) and Perón's personal delegate to the socialist countries in 1963, as well as being elected a national deputy in the frustrated elections of 1962. As the militants lost ground in the national trade union movement, Di Pasquale and others were forced to look to the creation of rank-and-file organisations to combat the bureaucracy, while also tactically allying

---

1. "El pensamiento de Amado Olmos," op. cit.
2. "La Burocracia," Militancia, no. 19 (18th October 1973), pp. 16-17.
3. Biographical data about Jorge Di Pasquale is drawn from "Balance de un año de gobierno," De Frente, no. 2 (9th May 1974), pp. 26-37.

with displaced sectors of the bureaucracy, in the case of the 62 on Foot, against the Vandorists.

Ongaro [1] became a public figure much later. Along with other militant Peronists, he was elected to the leadership of the Printers Union in November 1966 but was still not a universally-known name in the labour movement until elected General Secretary at the March 1968 'Amado Olmos' CGT Congress. It was radical Catholicism as much as union experience which led the young Ongaro to embrace the cause of socialism. Influenced by the 'theology of liberation' and the examples of Camilo Torres and Helder Câmara, as well as the poverty of his own childhood, Ongaro took the Bible as his political text book. Interviewed at the end of 1968, he declared that:

> "Christ was no proprietor; he surrounded himself with the humble, used the whip against the traders; he was no mercantilist, economist or financier, he condemned lucre and exploitation". [2]

For Ongaro, capitalism was a negation of Christianity and private property an invention of man which Christ had condemned. Socialism held out the promise not only of structural revolution but also of spiritual liberation. In trying to live up to his faith, Ongaro suffered the same persecution as the early Christian martyrs but always remained dignified, principled and incorruptible. During his many terms in prison, he is reputed to have endured the agonies of torture by reciting chunks of the Bible to his police tormentors.

As leader of the Printers Union, Ongaro rose to prominence through being elected General Secretary at the March 1968 CGT Conference. This was a victory for the militants but they were unable to take the whole labour movement with them. Though "the rebels", as they were called, had a

---

1. Biographical data about Raimundo Ongaro is drawn from his book, Solo el pueblo salvará al pueblo, op. cit., passim.
2. Ibid., p. 90.

majority at the Congress, their strength lay mainly amongst the smaller unions. Larger and more powerful unions refused to recognise the new leadership and the result was a two-year split between Ongaro's CGT of the Argentines and the Vandorist CGT which managed to hold on to the General Labour Confederation's Azopardo HQ. Ongaro's faction for a time had the support of several of the more militant regional CGT's in the interior of the country, especially the Córdoba CGT, as well as that of the Communist Party until the latter realised that it could not take the CGT of the Argentines over.

On 1st May 1968, the CGT of the Argentines issued a militant manifesto which reiterated the central points of the Huerta Grande Programme and declared that "Property must only exist for the benefit of society". It carried a call to action and struggle from below against the military regime and monopolies: "The CGT of the Argentines does not offer the workers an easy road, a pleasing outlook, another lie. It offers each person a battle station". Supported by the "classist" and "combative" wings of the labour movement, the May Day programme maintained that "The struggle against the monopolies and all forms of foreign penetration is the natural mission of the working class". It called for the recovery of "freedom and social justice" and for the "exercise of power to be returned to the people". However, its working-class emphasis was qualified by its support for "each national company opposing a foreign company". [1]

Throughout 1968 and 1969, the CGT of the Argentines led numerous struggles, often with political overtones, which played a decisive part in the downfall of Onganía. Its finest hour came during the Córdoban worker-student rising of May 1969 which, though not planned or formally led by the CGTA, owed a lot to the preparations made by Ongaro's "rebels"

---

1. CGT de los Argentinos, Mensaje a los Trabajadores y al Pueblo, 1st May 1968, ibid., pp. 27-40.

for such a spontaneous outburst of protest. Ongaro himself had promoted student-worker unity by receiving the leaders of 14 student groups at a Printers Union holiday camp in June 1968 to discuss joint action against the regime.

Through setting a combative example and often providing a degree of ad hoc leadership during the 1969 provincial insurrections, the CGT of Argentines fulfilled one of its main purposes, but its success was short-lived. It never saw itself as a revolutionary instrument, both due to the importance of legality to successful trade unionism and to the need for unions to incorporate all workers, regardless of their political views and levels of consciousness. Rather, its intent was to develop a new style of trade unionism and establish more democratic and representative union structures. The reasons behind its long-term failure, after several glorious moments, were fourfold.

Firstly and most importantly, the CGT of the Argentines lacked the support of the big strategic unions, like the metalworkers, whose bureaucracies often had firm roots in their relatively well-paid memberships. [1] Backed initially by only half the labour movement, the CGTA rapidly lost many of its affiliates because, secondly, late in 1968 Perón ordered its dissolution and CGT reunification. [2] As in the case of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (MRP) of 1964, Perón had encouraged the formation of the CGTA when he received Ongaro at his Madrid residence in February 1968, but once the "participationists" had been given their warning, Perón suspended the experiment, fearful that it would get out of hand and alienate bourgeois allies. This tactical switch was seen in the replacement of Bernardo Alberte by Jerónimo Remorino as "delegate", the latter being strongly opposed to the CGTA majority which ignored Perón's order.

---

1. See Peralta Ramos, op. cit., pp. 60-61, for data on the dramatic improvement in the relative wage position of metalworkers between 1948-66.
2. "Mayo 69: Cordobazo," En Lucha, no. 16 (June 1974), p. 6.

Ultimately, one has to say that the strong opposition to Ongaro within the labour movement of the late 1960's reflected working class reformism as well as a defence of bureaucratic privilege. Ongaro was unable to undermine the power bases of the Vandorist labour barons significantly but his attempts here prefigured those of Rank-and-File Peronism a little later. For those unions supporting the Vandorist CGT of Azopardo, Ongaro and the CGTA raised the cry of "Rank-and-File Rebellion" and encouraged militants to organise rank-and-file groups (agrupaciones de base) which would serve as the effective leadership in conflicts. Their success here was not negligible - textile workers, metalworkers, builders, meat workers and others joined the 1st July 1969 CGTA general strike in spite of their union leaders' boycott [1] - but neither was it generalised.

A third contributing reason was a successful campaign by employers against the nerve-centre of the CGTA: the Printers Union, which not only provided the "rebel" confederation with its leader but also, after the "rebels" had been evicted from the Transport Union (UTA) HQ by armed thugs, with its headquarters. Early in 1969, the Compañía General Fabril Financiera, Argentina's largest printing company, sacked 47 militants and though the printers struck for several months in their defence, the eventual redundancy toll was around 1,000. [2]

Finally, political repression had the effect of isolating and stifling expressions of militant trade unionism before executing the coup de grâce to the declining CGTA. In addition to the considerable number of students and workers killed during the suppression of the provincial rebellions of 1969, the CGT of the Argentines gained a martyr in Emiliano Jáuregui, former Peronist Revolutionary Youth (JRP) activist and Press

---

1. Ongaro, op. cit., p. 109.
2. Buenos Aires Herald, 11th April 1969.

Secretary of the Press Workers Union, shot dead by a policeman during a June 1969 CGTA demonstration against a visit by Nelson Rockefeller. Many union leaders were subjected to constant harassment and none more than Ongaro. In the first six months of 1969, Ongaro was arrested by the police no fewer than six times, often to prevent his participation in workers' meetings or strikes. When nearing Bella Vista to join a sugar workers' protest against a sugar mill closure in January 1969, he was simply kidnapped by the Tucumán police, flown to Bahía Blanca and just dumped there.

While Onganía's threats were generally enough to persuade "participationist" union leaders not to join CGTA general strikes, and were often superfluous, more extreme measures were needed to undermine the influence of the CGTA hard core. Urban guerrillas should be reminded of the manner in which Onganía was able to turn Vandor's June 1969 assassination temporarily to his advantage. It was used as a pretext for outlawing the CGTA, taking over all the unions supporting a CGTA strike call, declaring a State of Seige and imposing martial law. Hundreds of workers and students were imprisoned and Ongaro, charged with responsibility for Vandor's death, was deprived of his liberty for the rest of that year. After this experience, labour militants like Ongaro and Di Pasquale looked more to clandestine rank-and-file activity, having seen the vulnerability of surface organisations to enemy attack. New forms of popular organisation had to be developed and the sympathy of many of these militants for the emerging armed organisations was openly expressed. "If there is an enemy army, if there is an army to defend North American capital, then we will create an army to defend the Argentine worker", Ongaro declared after his release from prison.[1]

Rank-and-File Peronism was a direct product of these experiences.

---

1. Ongaro, op. cit., p. 138.

Due to its stress upon rank-and-file organisation and concentration on trade union struggles, PB has often been assumed to have had syndicalist tendencies. In fact, however, it was well aware of the limitations of trade unions for purposes of revolutionary struggle. It devoted a lot of time to campaigning and organising for trade union democracy but its fundamental objectives were the creation of a workers' party and a people's army. In practice, PB's emphasis was overwhelmingly on the former, on the creation of an independent working-class party which would first be nurtured in embryonic form within the Peronist Movement. Though PB fully supported the idea of revolutionary warfare and applauded guerrilla actions, it is important to note that none of the leading working-class militants were directly drawn into guerrilla activity. Di Pasquale was certainly close to the FAP and Ongaro maintained relations with several of the "special formations", but both men recognised that the labour front was a far more fruitful and decisive, if less glamorous, area of struggle than the military front.

Indeed, this was a generalised phenomenon, the only important labour leader to actively engage in guerrilla action being the Tucumán sugar workers' leader Antonio del Carmen Fernández who joined the Guevarist ERP and was killed in Catamarca in 1974. Obviously, the fact that a sector of labour militants sympathised with and supported the armed struggle of the early 1970's did not amount to the integration of armed actions with mass struggles envisaged by the proponents of an "integral strategy", like the Montoneros.

The early documents produced by PB were far more <u>alternativista</u> than the contemporary pronouncements of the FAP. Examining the early Peronist governments, PB noted their "multiple limitations" [1] which had

---

1. PB: "Porqué somos peronistas de base," <u>Cristianismo y Revolución</u>, no. 30 (September 1971), pp. 9-12.

ultimately led to the 1955 military coup. Peronism had meant better living standards, strong trade unions and participation in Congress for the working class but "in 1955 we paid dearly for the error of not having organised ourselves independently of our erstwhile allies". [1] Having lacked an independent organisation and with the Peronist political and union bureaucracies as constraining forces, the working class had not been able to avoid a defeat following the desertion of bourgeois and military sectors from the Movement. Equally important to their commitment to an "independent alternative" was PB's recognition of the fact that there had been political and class conflicts within Peronism, at least since 1952, "between Perón and the rest of the Army, between the workers and the trade union bureaucracy, between workers and Peronist capitalist sectors". [2]

Here, there was of course an implicit exaggeration of Perón's revolutionary role and this was carried forward in analysing his behaviour in the early 1970's, though stopping short of presenting him as a socialist. In December 1970, Ongaro attacked the Hour of the People alliance formed the previous month, arguing that the reformist bourgeois parties were motivated by "the sacred hope that they would be able once again to keep the benches of Congress warm and find some vendepatria to run for president". [3] However, PB's interpretation was that "Perón is using a tactic, which we don't share, which serves a strategy with which we agree: revolutionary war". At the same time, there was recognition of the fact that "Perón is not going to make the revolution for us" [4] and here PB differentiated itself from the mainstream Peronist Left who, publicly at least, regarded Perón's return as a panacea.

---

1. PB of Tucumán: "Por una Argentina Socialista," ibid., pp. 57-64.
2. "Peronismo de Base: El Peronismo Revolucionario," a selection of extracts from PB statements and documents, Nuevo Hombre, no. 14 (20-26th October 1971), p. 10.
3. Ongaro, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 19th December 1970.
4. "Peronismo de Base: El Peronismo Revolucionario," op. cit.

PB maintained its tactical independence of Perón, feeling that he as leader of a broad Movement could not be expected to follow a unilateral revolutionary path. Perón would play a part in the development of the revolutionary process but "The leaders of our revolution will be born amongst the rank-and-file". The task of PB was "to build an independent, revolutionary, class alternative, which can be seen by the working class as the real road to power, and then he can choose". Perón was respected and admired as "an anti-imperialist leader" by PB, whose militants realised what Perón still meant to the workers: "for us, when a worker says Perón, he is saying that he is not in agreement with the existing order". PB declared that it would:

> "advance, not denying our previous experience, but going beyond it" 1 ..."our struggle is not to win crumbs, but for final liberation through the seizure of power by the working class and the exploited people in order to bring about a free, just and sovereign fatherland, an Argentina with neither oppressors nor oppressed; in other words, a national and socialist revolution".[2]

The originality of PB as a Peronist political organisation lay in it being commited "totally to rank-and-file work".[3] Its organisational structure was not preconceived but developed out of the exigencies of rank-and-file struggle, with this gradually leading to minimal organisational forms being established to coordinate activity. In its infancy, PB was correct when stating that "the originality of our organisational form is precisely that we are formless". Nor did it start life with a comprehensive political programme, with an "encyclopaedia" providing all the answers - rather, organisation and theory were constantly developed in interaction with the practical experience of workers' struggles and

---

1. PB: Porqué somos....," op. cit.
2. PB of Fiat Concord leaflet issued in support of SITRAC occupation, reproduced in "Córdoba: la docta montonera," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971), pp. 6-10.
3. PB interview, "La revolución de las bases," ibid., no. 29 (June 1971), pp. 11-13.

with the full participation of all activists. This did not reflect a disdain for theory. In fact, PB was impeccably Leninist in maintaining that "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement, but also...without revolutionary practice there can be no revolutionary theory". [1] What PB was contemptuous of was not theory as such but the abstract and arid theorising divorced from the political experiences of the workers which had plagued broad sectors of the traditional Left.

PB's theoretical radicalism was to be seen in its declaration that, though Peronist, this did not mean "that we reject the contribution of Marxism which we see as a scientific instrument for the interpretation of reality". Like the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), it did not see Marxism as a "universal political banner", but unlike the FAR, PB did not let its class analysis become submerged in classical Peronist antinomies. Its practical radicalism was seen in PB's greater readiness to work with the non-Peronist sectors of the revolutionary Left than with the non-revolutionary sectors of Peronism:

> "Our postulation of an alliance with the revolutionary Left and not with other sectors of Peronism signifies that we have found ourselves alongside the comrades of the Left in the struggle".

Due to the experience of the CGT of the Argentines, PB was wary of creating superstructures which by definition were vulnerable to enemy attack. Instead, it worked at rank-and-file level in the factories "trying to build, on the basis of the best trade union comrades, a political organisation with a revolutionary policy, with revolutionary methods". [2] Rather than attempt to mobilise large numbers of workers on the basis of short-term subjective desires, PB looked to the creation

---

1. "Peronismo de Base: El Peronismo Revolucionario," op. cit.
2. Ibid.

of a cadre organisation of steeled semi-professional worker revolutionaries, to some extent recognising the limitations of existing levels of working-class consciousness but laying the foundations for the future when conditions for the emergence of a movement which would be both mass-based and revolutionary might mature.

The location of PB's stronghold in Córdoba, especially among the car workers, was perfectly logical. Though not able to control strategic unions at national level, the "combative" and "classist" labour tendencies[1] were strongest in Córdoba and gave the 1969 Cordobazo its main impetus. The militancy of the Córdoban car workers needs to be further researched but existing studies of the Cordobazo point to a number of explanatory factors.[2] Córdoban industry is predominantly small-scale and artisanal in terms of numbers of productive units but the foreign-owned car companies contribute large enclaves of well-organised, highly concentrated, skilled workers. Around 45% of the provincial manual workforce is engaged in the production of vehicles and machinery. Moreover, though the industrial productive structure is not homogenous, some community of interest is provided by the dependence of many of the small workshops on the car factories, linking the fate of their employees to that of the workers of the major Fiat and IKA-Renault plants. In contrast, the provincial bourgeoisie lacks homogeneity, being composed of a declining rural bourgeoisie, a weak local industrial bourgeoisie owning small and medium-sized enterprises and a predominant external

---

1. Generally speaking, combativos were militant Peronists prepared to use combative methods but not necessarily to achieve socialist goals; clasistas were class-conscious militants influenced by Marxism-Leninism and committed to a socialist struggle.

2. See Beba Balvé et al, Lucha de calles..., op. cit., especially pp. 155-7 from where the economic data on Córdoba is drawn, and pp. 163-67 on the Córdoban class structure. For a more general sociological analysis of Córdoban labour militancy, see Delich, Crisis y protesta social..., op. cit.

bourgeoisie, resident in Buenos Aires and representing foreign capital.

Objectively, the relatively well-paid Córdoban car workers of the late 1960's formed part of the "labour aristocracy" and their militancy sharply contrasted with the behaviour of similarly remunerated groups. This demonstrates that the "labour aristocracy" cannot be regarded as monolithically reformist. In a wage-freeze situation, such as that imposed by Economy Minister Krieger Vasena in 1967, this sector suffers relatively more than poorer sectors and is socially better equipped to resist. In the period under consideration, the Córdoban car workers' militant response needs to be seen in the light of a number of provincial features.

Firstly, the Córdoban car industry is relatively young and its "new proletariat", which became increasingly dominant in the provincial labour movement during the 1950's and 1960's, is said to lack the traditions of other sections of the working class. Secondly, the Córdoban car workers were one of those sectors affected by Onganía's economic "rationalisation" plans. Their loss of the "English Saturday", four hours for which they were paid but did not work, was an important catalyst in the outbreak of the Cordobazo. Thirdly, the geographical concentration of 48% of provincial manufacturing manual labour in the provincial capital (1963) and the productive concentration of large numbers in the car factories appears significant. This provided a basis for strong trade union organisation and a high level of class consciousness based on shared experiences and interdependence. Fourthly, the Córdoban car industry, crucial to the health of the provincial economy, suffered a marked decline in the 1960's. Alongside an agrarian crisis came a loss of predominance in the national automobile market. Whereas in 1960, 60% of national car production had been located in the province, by 1969 its share was down to 20% with Ford and other companies operating around Buenos

Aires becoming dominant. Finally, the trade union bureaucracy had its main power base in Buenos Aires and found it harder to control concentrations of workers in the interior of the country than workforces near the capital.

In many ways, therefore, Córdoba's industrial workers, with the car workers as their vanguard, constituted a strong force within a weak, declining provincial economy, seen by analysts as:

> "a weak link of Argentine capitalism, sufficiently weak to be hit by the effects of crises before and more radically than other industrial zones but sufficiently strong to be able to react". [1]

Córdoban working-class militancy found expression in the new leadership of the Córdoba CGT elected in April 1971, led by Atilio López, and even more strongly in the short-lived independent clasista unions SITRAC and SITRAM, which organised the Fiat Concord car workers and Materfer railway goods workers respectively until outlawed and fiercely repressed in October 1971. In March of that year, PB played a leading part in the SITRAC occupation of the Fiat Concord plant, taking hostages in an attempt to secure the reinstatement of militant activists sacked two months earlier. At the end of August, a "1st Congress of Revolutionary Workers", convoked by SITRAC-SITRAM, revealed that PB was the strongest political tendency in these unions. [2] Di Pasquale played a leading role, the keynote of his intervention being "Neither coups nor elections: Revolution!", [3] a slogan anticipated in the dichotomies presented in Bernardo Alberte's 1968 paper Con Todo: "Dictatorship or Revolution"..."Imperialist bourgeois dictatorial regime or revolutionary people's government". [4]

---

1. Bebe Balvé et al, op. cit., p. 196.
2. Ariel Pelayo, "Del Sitrac-Sitram a la tendencia nacional clasista, El poder obrero," Nuevo Hombre, no. 10 (22nd-28th September 1971), pp. 2-4.
3. "El sindicalismo de liberación," ibid., no. 8 (8-14th September 1971), p. 11.
3. Bernardo Alberte (editorial), "Dictadura o revolución," Con Todo, no. 0 (sic), September 1968, p. 3.

In fact, the "1st Congress of Revolutionary Workers" had a student majority, due to arrests of worker delegates on the way to the meeting, but the event was nevertheless important for it counted with representatives from all the main revolutionary parties and organisations. What is interesting is that at the Congress PB allied itself closely with the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), both in defending armed struggle against Trotskyist and Maoist critics and in calling for an independent workers' alternative which was too independent for the "combative" tendency of Peronism. PB defined the Peronist bourgeoisie as a class enemy. [1]

By the end of 1971, many PB activists were accepting the political leadership of the FAP but a significant sector retained its independence, wary of the FAP's equivocal alternativismo. In April 1972, Di Pasquale publicly argued that the only solution to Argentina's crisis was one to be achieved through the violence practised by such organisations as the FAP, [2] a claim which brought him imprisonment for incitement to violence and condoning crime. Ongaro's exact loyalties were more elusive - in May 1971 he declared that "we are with the Montoneros" [3] and spent 8 months in prison for it, though formally accused of complicity in a military putsch organised by General Labanca. In prison he developed a close friendship with his cell-mate, the Córdoban power workers' leader Agustín Tosco, [4] and together they issued statements denouncing CGT General Secretary José Rucci for "selling-out" workers' struggles.

---

1. Ariel Pelayo, op. cit.
2. Di Pasquale article, Nuevo Hombre (11th April 1972).
3. Ongaro, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 14th May 1971.
4. Tosco often shared the political line of the Argentine Communist Party but did not join a party. See his book, La lucha debe continuar (Buenos Aires: Libros para el Tercer Mundo, 1975). He died in November 1975.

It must be emphasised, however, that PB and other tendencies urging class struggle with a socialist content did not capture the hearts and minds of a majority of workers in this period. When the CGT was re-unified in July 1970, the San Nicolás metalworker José Rucci was elected General Secretary and then re-elected with a large majority in July 1972. Rucci's initial preparedness to lead wage struggles, as seen in the general strikes of October and November 1970, won him a genuine basis of support among sectors of the labour movement, though this was partially undermined subsequently when he attempted to bridle strike movements. In holding back on strikes, however, Rucci as an orthodox Peronist was just fulfilling the orders of Perón sent in March 1972, [1] if not earlier; orders inspired by Perón's fear of alarming his bourgeois supporters and his need to prove to General Lanusse that he could indeed control the labour movement - the main reason why the regime countenanced Perón's return.

PB's political strength in the labour movement in 1970-73 is impossible to measure because its main organisational efforts came at factory level. All that one can say with certainty is that its main bastions were the Córdoban car workers and the Pharmacy, Printers and Publicity unions in Buenos Aires, which it controlled. The pro-Montonero Peronist Working Youth (JTP), once formed, was easily able to out-mobilise PB but never achieved its solid rank-and-file penetration. The Montoneros maintained that one could not "lead this process with pure militants and revolutionaries, lacking defects", citing Perón's "if I had stayed with just the good ones, I would have had very few men", [2] Nor can one measure the precise proportions of the late 1972 split when, mirroring the FAP division, PB National called for a "blank vote" in

---

1. See the Buenos Aires Herald, 19th March 1972.
2. "La JP toma la iniciativa," El Descamisado, no. 19 (26th September 1973), p. 7.

the coming elections and labelled Perón a bourgeois representative, while the other wing, christened PB 17 in 1973, moved closer to the movimientistas. However, Caride's July 1974 announcement of the dissolution of PB 17's Federal Capital and North Zone areas and their incorporation into the Montonero tendency implied that PB 17's strength was restricted to these sections. [1]

Like the FAP National Command, PB National revised its attitude to the government and came out with qualified support for Perón in the September presidential elections. It did not, however, participate in either the 31st August CGT march or in the 1st May 1974 Plaza de Mayo rally, feeling that the former was organised by an unrepresentative bureaucracy and that the latter was a manoeuvre designed to mobilise artificial support for unpopular government measures. Yet on both occasions around 100,000 people turned out, even if about half were mobilised by the Montonero tendency, and here PB fell into the trap of translating the feelings of the most class-conscious workers into those of the class as a whole. In De Frente, Edmundo Oribe voiced some pertinent criticisms of the PB May Day boycott, pointing out that while the working class had not been massively present in Plaza de Mayo, at least 80,000 activists had been. Through non-participation, PB had allowed a "reformist" force (i.e. the Montoneros) to capitalise on the event and transform the whole meaning of the rally through its questioning of Perón and mass withdrawal. [2] Though PB built a more solid labour structure composed of militant activists, it restricted its own possibilities of growth by refusing to participate in mass events on the grounds that they were organised by the enemy. Its own largest rally, in the Federal Boxing Stadium at the end of April

---

1. Reported in "Fidelidad a los trabajadores peronistas," La Causa Peronista, no. 2 (16th July 1974), p. 16.
2. Edmundo Oribe, "Opiniones: el 1° de Mayo," De Frente, no. 4 (23rd May 1974), pp. 32-36.

1974, apparently possessed "the unusual feature of having attracted a worker majority, authentic men and women of labour", but was only attended by 7,000 activists. [1]

Tactical support for Perón in the September 1973 elections represented a gesture towards the feelings of the mass of workers but did not in itself overcome the limitations of PB National's mass line. Its analyses, though accurate in their appraisal of objective class divisions, tended to gloss over the reformist attitudes of most Peronist workers and assume that the rank-and-file was already massively revolutionary. This was reflected in a speech by the La Calera combatant Luis Losada at a September 1973 PB National rally, in which he argued that the difference between the "Peronism of the conciliators" and that of revolutionaries and the rank-and-file:

> "is not one of shades. The difference, comrades, is one of social class....The negotiators want to use Peronism and Perón to prop up this system of exploitation and dependency....while the Peronism of the rank-and-file, combative Peronism, wants to make the Just, Free and Sovereign Fatherland a reality". 2

PB National was the first Peronist organisation to question Perón's behaviour after the September election. On the day of his inauguration in October 1973, PB "John William Cooke" of Buenos Aires, after referring to the unpopular measures taken by the government, asked "how is it possible that Perón is endorsing all this by not denouncing it? How is it possible that he is backing the bosses?". Their answer was that Perón:

> "in trying to pull the country forward, convoking the employers, not denouncing the bureaucrats and not fundamentally supporting himself among the workers, raises a programme which the bosses and the bureaucracy make their own, since it is they who are implementing it, not obstructed in the least, and which at the

---

1. Peronismo de Base: "Conformes los burgueses...," ibid., no. 1 (2nd May 1974), pp. 8-10.
2. Speech of Luis Losada at PB Córdoba rally, text in Militancia, no. 16 (27th September 1973), pp. 19-21.

same time allows them to advance in their encirclement of Perón".[1]

Still believing that Perón as an anti-imperialist leader would attempt some reforms, PB National initially went along with the movimientista idea that Perón's endorsement of right-wing measures was explicable by the fact that he was "encircled" by reactionary elements in the government and was thus unable to act freely. By January 1974, however, Perón was being made personally responsible for his actions and statements, and after his May Day performance PB National decided that his political definition was now irreversible: "Perón opted for Peronism from above, of the exploiters, not for Peronism from below, of the exploited".[2] Now that it was clear that the rank-and-file would gain no assistance from above, PB National's alternativismo became totally independent. However, Rank-and-File Peronism mistook its own militancy for that of the Peronist rank-and-file as a whole, feeling that the May Day events had signified a complete working-class break with Perón's project of crowning Lanusse's Great National Agreement (GAN) plans. On this point, it is significant that Di Pasquale's evaluation of the first year of this Peronist government referred to the fact that "the working class had converted Perón into its own historical project, through depositing all its trust and aspirations for justice and liberation in him" in the past tense.[3]

In October 1973, PB National attempted to consolidate its rank-and-file work and overcome the previous isolation of many of its branches from each other through holding a 2nd National Conference at La Falda, Córdoba Province. After listening to speeches from Ongaro and

---

1. PB "John William Cooke" communiqué of 12th October 1973. ibid., no. 19 (18th October 1973), pp. 46-47.
2. "Una semana de especulaciones," De Frente, no. 2 (9th May 1974), pp. 5-7.
3. Di Pasquale article in ibid., pp. 26-37.

Di Pasquale, delegates from 17 Regionales [1] formed a provisional committee composed of delegates from each unit as a first step towards establishing an effective national organisation. Two months later, the conference decisions were synthesised in a programmatic document entitled "Trade Unionism and Classism" which, as well as presenting the independent alternative strategic line, for the first time and somewhat belatedly provided a series of minimum and transitional demands, such as workers' control of production, designed to relate to the immediate short-term needs and demands of the workers. The document pointed to the limitations of trade unions as instruments of social change ("they have to represent all workers, whatever their political ideology") and argued that the "revolutionary organisation of the working class must be politico-military" because the "system defends itself with gun in hand". This did not, however, involve a downgrading of union work - the struggle for control of the unions by their members was still to be a central PB activity and one which was closely related to anti-capitalist struggle, for "the main enemy is the boss, the capitalist....the bureaucracy is an instrument of the bosses". [2]

Like the FAP, Rank-and-File Peronism faded from public view after 1974. As the Peronist government moved further to the Right and became more repressive, PB, having already lost PB 17 to movimientismo, appears to have split again in October 1974, with some groups following the FAP National Command evolution and adopting a Guevarist identity while others

---

1. PB National's 17 Regionales were in Formosa, Reconquista, Corrientes, Chaco, Tucumán, Salta, Mendoza, General Roca, Miramar, Córdoba, Río Cuarto, Paraná, Rosario, Bahía Blanca, Mar del Plata, La Plata and Buenos Aires. Regionales here implies something less regional than when used by the mass fronts of the Montonero tendency. For the latter, a Regional usually embraced 2-4 provinces whereas PB Regionales referred to either city-based or provincial organisational units.

2. PB supplement, "Sindicalismo y clasismo," Militancia, no. 33 (31st January 1974).

attempted to strengthen clasista anti-bureaucratic labour currents grouping militant Peronists and non-Peronists alike.

Sympathies for the Guevarist People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) had been first voiced at a PB National press conference early in February 1974 when Di Pasquale, while arguing that the ERP's Azul attack had been inappropriate to the political situation and expressing disagreement with the ERP political project, qualified his criticisms: "what is clear is that the action was against the military....against the sustainers of the power of the privileged classes". [1]

PB National, along with other alternativista tendencies, attended the conferences of the ERP-dominated Socialist Anti-Imperialist Front (FAS), formed in Tucumán in August 1973, which at its peak rallied 20,000 supporters to a 6th Congress in Rosario in June 1974. However, there is much reason to doubt whether the strongly clasista PB National unitedly associated with ERP fronts after 1974, for around this time the ERP abandoned its erstwhile clasista line and then attempted to broaden its alliances. Whereas the 5th Congress of the FAS had approved a "united front" approach, designed to unite all non-bourgeois popular sectors under working-class leadership, the 6th Congress switched clearly to a "popular front" approach:

> "All, without exception - Peronists, Radicals, Socialists, Communists, Christians, etc., i.e. all the progressive, patriotic, anti-imperialist, democratic and revolutionary forces - must reach an agreement on how to work together to defend freedom and democracy, with the objective of broadening the breech opened up by the people on 25th May 1973".

This led five revolutionary organisations to withdraw, refusing to accept "a conciliatory position towards reformism and progressive sectors

---

1. Reported in ibid., no. 34 (7th February 1974), pp. 10-12; and in Nuevo Hombre, no. 56 (1st fortnight of February 1974), pp. 14-17.

of the bourgeoisie". [1] Given the essential character of PB as a rank-and-file organisation, it would have been very strange had most of PB National, or at least its workers, not detached themselves from the ERP alignment over this issue.

However, hypotheses here must remain tentative, for it appears that the social complexion of PB underwent significant changes in 1974. The opinion of some activists that PB National was "flooded" by student recruits in 1974 would appear to have some validity. Early in 1974, PB National had only had an organised student presence in Córdoba, had only presented candidates in the Faculty of Chemical Sciences' elections there and had won with 900 votes. [2] By the middle of the year though, it had sympathising groups in Bahía Blanca, Córdoba, Corrientes, La Plata, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Rosario and Tucumán - none in Buenos Aires. [3] Though PB National student groups stressed student participation in mass workers' struggles, given the generally greater propensity of students as opposed to workers to engage in guerrilla activity it may well be that there was a tendency for PB National students to transfer to the ERP late in 1974, whereas workers were readier to continue with existing forms of struggle through anti-bureaucratic alliances. The most important examples of the latter were the Rank-and-File Trade Union Movement (Movimiento Sindical de Base - MSB), which PB helped to form, and Tosco's Combative Trade Union Movement (Movimiento Sindical Combativo - MSC),

---

1. Report on the 6th FAS Conference, Nuevo Hombre, no. 65 (2nd fortnight of June 1974), pp. 12-23. The five organisations which pulled out were El Obrero, the Organización Revolucionaria Comunista, the Organización Revolucionaria Poder Obrero, the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria and the Liga Socialista de Tucumán.
2. Results from "Universidad: a cara o crisis," Carta Política, no. 20 (1st week of April 1975), pp. 13-16.
3. See their statement, "A un año de gobierno: los estudiantes junto a las bases peronistas por la Patria Socialista," De Frente, no. 4 (23rd May 1974), pp. 24-25.

both of which had around 5,000 workers at their respective plenaries in 1974. [1]

Repression also contributed to the disintegration of Rank-and-File Peronism. PB martyrdom was conferred on José Antonio Pastor Deleroni after he was assassinated, along with his wife, on 28th November 1973, the first anniversary of the kidnapping of Angel Enrique Brandazza (a 23-year old student leader and Rosario PB militant, subsequently tortured to death by a para-military-police organisation). [2] Deleroni was the best known of a considerable number of PB activists slain, having been a Peronist Youth militant before becoming a CGT of the Argentines and PB lawyer and defender of political prisoners. One of his assassins, Ricardo Julio Villanueva, former Social Welfare Ministry bodyguard and member of Julio Yessi's right-wing Peronist Youth of the Argentine Republic (JPRA) and the fascist Organisational Command (C de O), confessed to the killing and said that he had only been fulfilling Peronist Movement orders for a purge of infiltrated Marxists. [3]

In 1974, PB National lost not only two important vehicles for the propagation of its views, Militancia and De Frente, but was also deprived of the prestigious support of the former's co-editor, Rodolfo Ortega Peña, by assassins' bullets. It is worth briefly looking at Ortega Peña's background and evolution for they had much in common with those of many previously anti-Peronist movimientistas and help to provide, at a socio-psychological level, an explanation of the appeal

---

1. Reported in Nuevo Hombre, nos. 60 (1st fortnight of April 1974), pp. 4-5 & 8; and 61 (18th April 1974), pp. 4-10 & 19.
2. For reports on the investigation into the Brandazza case, see Militancia, nos. 26 (6th December 1973), 27 (13th December 1973) & 28 (20th December 1973). Accusing fingers were pointed at General Elvio Anaya, Commander of the 2nd Army Corps and brother of General Leandro Anaya who replaced Carcagno as C-in-C of the Armed Forces in December 1973.
3. Ibid., no. 26, pp. 26-30.

of movimientismo to the radicalised petty bourgeoisie including, for a while, Ortega Peña himself. Ortega Peña's own brief sketch of his formative years was contained in a prologue he wrote to Hernández Arregui's Imperialismo y Cultura, one of the "three or four great books" of his intellectual experience.[1] Born of Liberal, anti-Peronist, petty-bourgeois parents, Ortega Peña like many students of his social class had participated in plots against what they saw as "the dictatorship" of Perón. He had fully supported the "Liberating Revolution" of 1955 but it was not long before his first political doubts made themselves felt.

Ortega Peña recounted exactly how he first began to question his inherited political ideas and revise his attitude towards Peronism one day in Plaza de Mayo:

> "While Lonardi was using the balconies (of the Casa Rosada) to speak for the last time to a rally, there arose in me a perplexing worry. I decided to turn my attention to who was in the plaza. This was not difficult to determine. There were the fat ladies, the friends of my parents, the students. It was useless to look for the cabecitas. In the afternoon, leaving the centre and barrio norte behind and approaching the conventillos of the great city, we became aware of sullen, mistrustful, indignant looks. The people, the authentic people, were living their defeat". 2

Ortega Peña's conversion was not instantaneous. He went through frustrating experiences with Frondizi's Radicals and in the Communist Party before, intellectually converted by authors such as Hernández Arregui, embracing Peronism in the early 1960's. It is clear, however, that his

---

1. Rodolfo Ortega Peña, January 1964 Prologue to Juan José Hernández Arregui, Imperialismo y Cultura, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973), pp. 7-13.

2. Ibid. The Casa Rosa is the pink Government House in Plaza de Mayo, the central square of Buenos Aires; cabecitas or cabecitas negras was the pejorative name given by the privileged classes of Buenos Aires to rural migrants and the Peronist masses in general; barrio norte is a fashionable residential area in Buenos Aires; and conventillos are single-room tenement blocks.

Plaza de Mayo experience, his feeling of alienation from the ordinary people, was a cardinal factor in his political transformation and perhaps also explains why he indulged in certain movimientista fancies, in part the fancies of "the people" he now considered himself united with, when writing in the early editions of Militancia.

With fellow lawyer Eduardo Duhalde, Ortega Peña wrote several revisionist historical works during the 1960's, authored a book denouncing the disappearance of Peronist Youth activist Felipe Vallese and became a courageous defender of political prisoners. In August 1972, he made desperate attempts to get to Trewlew in an attempt to prevent the impending massacre of guerrilla prisoners and in November, along with Father Carlos Mugica and other movimientistas, he was a member of Perón's entourage on the flight back from Madrid. Both Ortega Peña and Duhalde became lecturers and legal advisors in the University of Buenos Aires after Cámpora's victory. [1]

Following the resignation of the eight Peronist Youth deputies in January 1974, Ortega Peña became a deputy and immediately differentiated himself from other Congressmen. Unlike the Peronist Youth parliamentarians who had made repeated compromises in order to remain with the FREJULI bloc, he retained his political independence by forming his own one-man Bloque de Base (Rank-and-File Bloc). Congress for him was a "bourgeois and lonely place", [2] useful only for making revolutionary propaganda, denouncing anti-popular government measures and for demanding

---

1. Bibliographical data about Ortega Peña is drawn from "Compañero Ortega Peña: presente hasta la victoria siempre," Nuevo Hombre, no. 67 (1st fortnight of August 1974), pp. 6-11; and "Rodolfo Ortega Peña: ese guerrero del pueblo," La Causa Peronista, no. 5 (6th August 1974), pp. 20-21.

2. Ortega Peña, quoted in the Buenos Aires Herald, 15th March 1974.

enquiries into assassinations and the torture of militants. Even after the closure of his review and his dismissal from the University, Ortega Peña remained a thorn in the flesh of the Peronist administration.

To deal with this dissident, who had promised when sworn in that "the blood spilled will not be negotiated", Perón resurrected the old crime of desacato - disrespect for authority. He got Judge Alfredo Nocetti Fasolini, appointed by the previous military regime, to ask Congress to lift Ortega Peña's parliamentary immunity so that he could be tried for desacato, merely because he had criticised government officials. This was, as Ortega Peña stated, "a threat to the whole Argentine Parliament",[1] but one which did not in the end materialise. On 31st July 1974, five weeks after the judicial request was made, Ortega Peña at the age of 38 was assassinated by the Triple A, the right-wing death squad directed from the Social Welfare Ministry by López Rega. Five thousand marchers who joined his funeral procession in protest against the 43rd political killing of that year were violently attacked by police and anti-riot troops who made 350 arrests. Nevertheless, repression could not prevent a successful 24-hour printers' general strike from taking place, nor protest strikes in the Villa Constitución steel plants of Marathon, Metcon and Acindar,[2] which together demonstrated that the alternativista views of Militancia had really influenced and reflected the feelings of the more radical sectors of the labour movement.

The March 1974 police coup, followed by federal "intervention", in PB's Córdoba stronghold must also have had adverse effects on rank-and-file work. It meant an end to the left-of-centre provincial government led by Ricardo Obregón Cano and Atilio López and facilitated the forcible

---

1. Ortega Peña, quoted in La Nación, 21st June 1974.
2. Reported in ibid., 1st August 1974: and "Compañero Ortega Peña: presente...," op. cit.

takeover of the regional CGT by a clique of bureaucrats led by Bárcena. Equally important was the national government's suppression of the Printers Union (FGB) which in 1973-74 had led a number of successful strikes through which over 100 printshops had broken through Social Pact wage ceilings. [1] In May 1974, an FGB general strike in support of 500 striking and occupying IVISA printers had forced employers to reinstate 16 sacked workers and concede back-pay. [2] Union elections that month resulted in a sweeping victory for Ongaro's "Green List" by 4,800 - 682 votes over a CGT-62 Organisations sponsored list, [3] but the advance was soon halted. In August, the government with CGT and 62 Organisations endorsement simply outlawed the union and confiscated its funds to pre-empt another wave of strikes. Four months later, a stooge union, the Sindicato Gráfico Argentino, was created by union and State bureaucrats who were handed the property rights to the FGB headquarters by the government.

Ongaro was jailed while the FGB closure took place and then again in October 1974 for alleged possession of war weapons, making him one of the most frequently imprisoned leaders in Argentine labour history. Eventually, his enemies were only able to rid themselves of his threatening presence through attacks on his family. In June 1975 Alfredo Máximo Ongaro was assassinated but Raimundo's other son narrowly managed to escape abduction by uniformed policemen when walking along a central Buenos Aires street in broad daylight. Shortly afterwards, a dispirited Ongaro left for exile in Peru and later, at the end of 1976, his colleague Jorge Di Pasquale was arrested and imprisoned without trial by the new military regime.

---

1. Ongaro interview, De Frente, no. 1 (2nd May 1974), p. 50.
2. "El significado del triunfo de IVISA," ibid., no. 4 (23rd May 1974), p. 29.
3. "La federación gráfica es de los gráficos," ibid., no. 1, p. 50.

Other 'Alternativista' Political Organisations

Two smaller alternativista organisations, both with reservations over the immediate advisability of armed struggle and led by outstanding Peronist Left figures, deserve brief mention here: Gustavo Rearte's 17th October Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario 17 de Octubre - MR 17) and Armando Jaime's Revolutionary Peronist Front (Frente Revolucionario Peronista - FRP).

Gustavo Rearte [1] was one of the young militants to rise in the Argentine labour movement during the early post-1955 Resistance years. After playing a leading role in the reconquest of the "intervened" Federation of Soap and Perfume Workers, he became its General Secretary (1957-58) at the age of 25. Subsequently, he helped to found first the Peronist Youth (1958) and then the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (1964), and became an executive member of both. He was the leader of the Peronist Revolutionary Youth (JRP) from its 1963 foundation and it was mainly cadres from this organisation who in 1970 created MR 17, an attempt to overcome the weaknesses of the MRP and CGT of the Argentines. Essentially, MR 17's creation was motivated by the need to unify radical political and union expressions through structuring the political vanguard within the labour movement. In their daily work, MR 17 activists worked closely alongside PB members.

It was Rearte who organised the August 1968 first plenary of Revolutionary Peronism, an attempt to unify the Peronist Left which failed

---

1. Biographical data about Gustavo Rearte is drawn from "Gustavo Rearte, su vida, su lucha, sus ideas, su ejemplo," En Lucha, no. 11 (September-October 1973), pp. 3-11; and "Ha muerto Gustavo Rearte," Militancia, no. 4 (5th July 1973), pp. 10-11.

due to disagreements over armed struggle. At the plenary, while calling for the creation of a politico-military organisation to lead a revolutionary war, Rearte opposed the immediate initiation of armed actions. While firmly rejecting the "opportunist and conservative attitudes of those who consider it necessary to first build a mass party" before unleashing revolutionary warfare, he was equally adamant that:

> "armed struggle cannot be carried out separated or isolated from the mass struggle without renouncing victory and without risking the annihilation of your best and most qualified cadres".

Rearte considered that armed action could accelerate the tempo of class war but that it should only be embarked upon after a "minimum of organised vanguard" had been established in the labour movement. [1]

Through a series of supplements to its periodical En Lucha (In Struggle), [2] MR 17 provided the most developed outline of the history of the Peronist Resistance years to be offered by the Peronist Left, but its membership remained small, partly because it swam against the tide of new Peronist activists who generally identified revolutionary struggle with armed struggle. Many of them, quite erroneously, considered MR 17's position as reformist. Moreover, it lost its prestigious leader Gustavo Rearte in July 1973, a victim of leukaemia at the age of 40.

The Revolutionary Peronist Front (FRP), created after Onganía came to power, also counted with an experienced leader. Armando Jaime [3] had

---

1. "Gustavo Rearte, su vida...," op. cit. (The statement was also published as a Peronist Revolutionary Youth document in García Elorrio's review, Che Compañero, no. 4, (August 1968, p. 7)

2. "Apuntes para una historia de la resistencia y del peronismo revolucionario," six supplements to En Lucha, nos. 13 (December 1973), 14 (February 1974), 15 (April 1974), 16 (June 1974), 17 (July 1974) & 18 (September 1974). It deals with the period from 1955 to 1964.

3. Biographical data about Armando Jaime is drawn from "Armando Jaime: preso por revolucionario," Nuevo Hombre, no. 58 (1st fortnight of March 1974), pp. 6-7.

been active in the unidades básicas (local branches) of Peronism prior to 1955 and after the coup engaged in commando resistance actions. He became active in the combative "Green List" of Salta trade unionism and helped Rearte, Caride, El Kadri and others to form the first Peronist Youth in 1958. The following year he lent his assistance to the Uturuncos and, like Cooke, was deeply impressed by the Cuban Revolution. Cooke and Jaime first met in 1963 and established a working relationship but Jaime's main efforts at this time went into the building of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (MRP) of which he was an executive member.

When the MRP declined following Perón's disclaimer, Jaime forged an alliance with two small groups including Cooke's Peronist Revolutionary Action (ARP), though unity was not total - Cooke and later his widow Alicia Eguren continued to use ARP as their credential. Jaime, who declared himself to be a Marxist-Leninist as well as a Peronist, was a proponent of armed struggle but considered that a revolutionary party, composed fundamentally of workers, had first to be formed in order to provide guerrilla warfare with sound political direction. His mass proselytizing work through the FRP was concentrated in the North, particularly in Salta, Tucumán and Jujuy, and two provincial papers, Vocero Popular and Cabecita Negra, were launched in the early 1970's to assist in this work.

The consistent rank-and-file work put in by Jaime's FRP reached fruition in July 1973 when a mass meeting of workers in Salta voted to take over the regional CGT headquarters and transform the entity into a "Peronist, Classist, Anti-Imperialist CGT of Salta". Representatives of this body, at a press conference in the Printers Union HQ, declared that the options facing Peronists and Argentines were "Socialism or Dependency". They referred to Peronism as an expression of national and working-class struggle but called for its limitations to be overcome,

leaving behind the "bureaucrats, reformists and class conciliation". [1] The "Classist" CGT, led by Carlos Oscar Aramajo, had the tacit support of a Left faction within Ragone's provincial government but it did not last long. Five weeks after its creation, following an armed attack by right-wing groups on Salta's Government House, the CGT buildings were taken by storm and the regional CGT "normalised" by the former leaders.

Since the early 1960's, Jaime had held more in common with Cuban-style Marxism than with orthodox Peronism. In November 1973, he referred to Perón's idea of "generational rejuvenation" as a "deceitful theory" which pointed to a generational solution to trade union problems when what was needed was to change "the ideas and social practice of the trade union leader". [2] His analysis of Peronism was highly schematic but contained no illusions in the Peronist leadership. Interviewed by the Córdoban review Posición in January 1974, Jaime rejected the "20 Truths of Justicialism" and the Movement's "verticalist" principle of authority. He stated that Peronism could not escape a dialectical process of political and ideological development, "predetermined by the presence of the working class and popular masses". Equally inevitable was the "fascistization of the bourgeois wing" of the Movement and the "defection of the leader". [3]

Jaime is best known though for his efforts to forge the unity of the Argentine revolutionary Left. In November 1973, he announced the merger of more than a dozen regional and local organisations with his FRP which by this time had regional bodies in Salta, Jujuy, Tucumán,

---

1. "La nueva CGT Peronista - Clasista - Antiimperialista de Salta," Militancia, no. 8 (2nd August 1973), pp. 10-11.
2. Armando Jaime, "Qué es el peronismo revolucionario?", Nuevo Hombre, no. 50 (1st fortnight of November 1973), p. 4.
3. Jaime, "El Peronismo," Posición, (Córdoba), no. 11, January 1974, pp. 17-20.

Santiago del Estero, Santa Fe, the Federal Capital and Buenos Aires Province. While not all that important in numerical terms, it was a fusion based upon clearly-defined political theses: agreement over the "principal contradiction" being between the working class and the people, on the one hand, and on the other imperialism, the big bourgeoisie, the oligarchy and their politico-military expression, the Army; recognition of the existence of antagonistic political projects within Peronism, representing the interests of different social classes and including the "reformist project" of the "more or less radicalised petty bourgeoisie", which aspired to the "conciliation of the irreconcilable: Capital - Labour"; and a common commitment to struggle against the bureaucracy, to promote revolutionary ideology and fight for a Socialist Fatherland. [1]

More important was Jaime's convergence with the People's Revolutionary Army through the Socialist Anti-Imperialist Front (FAS) of which he was the prime mentor. Jaime was elected President of the FAS at its 5th Congress but there were limits to its political cohesion. For example, when Guevarist tendencies called for an independent class "ticket" of Tosco and Jaime to challenge Perón and Isabel in the September 1973 elections, most revolutionary Peronists, as well as Tosco, disagreed - at least over the timing of the challenge. Thus, while promoting FAS development with Tosco, Solomón, Alicia Eguren de Cooke, Ortega Peña and Silvio Frondizi, Jaime also devoted his energies to unity in action

---

1. "Acta de Unificación," Militancia, no. 29 (27th December 1973) p. 46. Unity was established between the FRP (which had Regionales in Salta, Jujuy, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Santa Fe, the Federal Capital & Buenos Aires Province), the Bloc of Peronist Groupings of Paraná, the Peronist Revolutionary Youth of Jujuy, the Peronist Youth of Salta, the Peronist Working Youth of Salta, the Revolutionary Grouping of Peronist Students of Tucumán, the Peronist Shanty-Town Centre of Tucumán, the Peronist Revolutionary Youth of Tucumán, the Peronist Revolutionary Students Front of Buenos Aires, the Revolutionary Unidades Básicas of Córdoba and several unidades básicas of the Federal Capital, Rosario and the Interior.

through the anti-bureaucratic labour organisations and to revolutionary Peronist unity with PB National and MR 17.

The disintegration of PB in 1974 prevented a formal FRP-PB merger but overtures to MR 17 were relatively successful. In February 1975, the two organisations announced that they had created a "unification committee" and issued a joint leaflet ("The Government Deceives the People") which called on the working class to repudiate "usurpers" of Peronism such as Isabel and López Rega, the "fascist clique" and the trade union bureaucracy.[1] Unity was formalised on the basis of a joint document shortly afterwards, the new organisation baptising itself the 17th October Revolutionary Front (Frente Revolucionario 17 de Octubre - FR 17). However, unity was not to last. Early in 1976 it split with one faction retaining the FR 17 initials and confirming its Guevarism, while the other became known as the Socialist Fatherland Movement (Movimiento Patria Socialista) and took up a position adjacent to the Montoneros.

This process of mergers and splits often only involved a few hundred, and occasionally a few dozen, militants but it retains its relevance because it demonstrated the unviability of alternativismo as a long-term strategy. As in the case of the FAP and PB, the organisations painstakingly constructed by Gustavo Rearte and Armando Jaime splintered into pro-ERP and pro-Montonero factions as Peronism in government encountered a deepening crisis. Alternativismo was therefore essentially a transitional phenomenon which ended up in polarisation and the incorporation of many former alternativistas into the Montoneros and ERP. Those who avoided these options, apart from those who fell victims to repression, ended up in often non-Peronist, anti-bureaucratic labour organisations where

---

1. See the FRP-MR 17 joint communiqué in En Lucha, no. 20 (February 1975), pp. 1-2.

clasismo replaced alternativismo. Of course, alternativismo was always intended as a transitional response by revolutionaries to the Peronist identity of the working class, but most alternativistas had believed that the Peronist crisis would not arrive so soon and had envisaged a lengthier period of building the "independent alternative" within Peronism before completely breaking with the Movement. They misjudged the time-scale of developments in articulating their strategy, though it probably would not have been radically different had their predictions been more precise.

CONCLUSIONS

Alternativismo emerged as an expression of the aspirations of the most radical worker sectors of the Peronist Movement. Apart from the partly Cuban-inspired class commitment of Cooke, its inspiration came from the experience of labour struggles and its formulation from militant trade union activists. Di Pasquale, Rearte, Jaime and Olmos all came to the forefront of the labour movement as a result of their roles in the post-1955 resistance struggles. All were to some extent eclipsed by the rise of Vandorism during the 1960's and the experience led them to look primarily to working-class organisation and struggle "from below". For most of them, the failure of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (MRP) and other radical political initiatives led to support for politico-military organisational formulae while the failings of the CGT of the Argentines confirmed the necessity of strong rank-and-file union organisation.

Within the alternativista camp, political and social heterogeneity was evident. Though data on social composition is limited and only suggestive, it seems fairly clear that the petty-bourgeois sector had a

greater faith in Perón and was less unequivocally alternativista than the working-class component. As a tendency, alternativismo only attracted a class-conscious minority of the working class and had a narrower social base than the CGT of the Argentines. Moreover, the participation of students appears to have increased quite dramatically in 1974. The "combative" sector of Peronist trade unionism, which had supported the CGT of the Argentines, did not massively incorporate itself into the more radical Rank-and-File Peronism. Combativos like Ricardo de Luca were to go along with the Law of Professional Associations, which strengthened the union bureaucracy, in an attempt to keep in with the Peronist leadership and maintain their positions in the Movement.

The alternativistas failed organisationally at a mass level. For one sector, principally the FAP, the key problem was the divisive effect of guerrilla warfare in isolating revolutionaries from workers. For both wings, military and political, there was the general problem of implicitly assuming that all rank-and-file workers were as class conscious as themselves. Moreover, there was a tendency for their propaganda to be presented in the form of general postulations without a comprehensive political programme to go with them and in general strategies and ultimate goals without the provision of tactical proposals and transitional demands. Again, one must differentiate here and emphasise that this was less true of PB than of the FAP, especially by 1974.

All these factors limited the political impact of alternativismo on the working class but were less important than an overriding factor over which the alternativistas had no control - the fact that theoretical and practical revolutionary work among the workers is in itself incapable of "revolutionizing" them. Alternativismo made an impression on the more class-conscious labour sectors but most workers, schooled in the university of adversity, also needed the experience of Peronism in office

during a difficult economic period for their Peronist loyalties to be undermined. It must also be noted that even when workers experienced the limitations of Peronist government, they did not automatically all turn to the Left. Many continued to support the government, if only as a lesser evil, acutely aware of the fact that the military had their own version of alternativismo in store: military intervention in the case of Peronism losing the support of or control over the labour movement.

As organisations, the FAP and PB had virtually collapsed by the end of 1974, the bottom having fallen out of their intermediate position between movimientismo and non-Peronist clasismo as Peronism in government moved to the Right and resorted to increasingly repressive methods. There had, however, always been problems attached to attempting rank-and-file work in a Movement structured from the top downwards. Peronism in the period under consideration lacked mass organisations with coherent participatory structures. It controlled the CGT and the major unions but here bureaucratic domination prevented the establishment of healthy organisational forms at base level - except for the organisations set up by the clasista sectors against the bureaucracy. The amorphousness of Peronism at a mass level, being a mass movement rather than a mass organisation, helped the Left in the sense that, during the 18 years of opposition, left-wing tendencies could "be" Peronist without bureaucratic authorisation. However, this also meant that rank-and-file Peronist revolutionary groups were merely rank-and-file groups of activists who identified with Peronism but who were not part of a mass organisation.

Since the alternativistas' struggle was essentially political, even when conducted in the unions, it was limited by the fact that Peronism lacked a democratic mass political structure. The Left, both movimientistas and alternativistas, attempted to rectify this situation by creating their own unidades básicas at grass-roots level from late 1972 onwards

but this initiative was frustrated by the closures of left-wing party branches by the Provisional Superior Council of Peronism in mid-1973. At that time, all the "mixed" (i.e. men and women) unidades básicas, which had been promoted by the Peronist Youth and Montoneros, were closed down. Alternativismo did not therefore count with a mass political organisation, with an organised rank-and-file from which to recruit. It had to build its own rank-and-file organisation from scratch, an arduous task even though it enhanced the "independent" aspect of the "independent alternative".

Rank-and-File Peronism, qualitatively, had stronger roots in the labour movement than the Montoneros due to its emphasis upon developing cadres, irrespective of whether this brought with it the control of unions. It did, however, exaggerate the revolutionary identification of the mass of workers with its own programme, forgetting that were it already speaking for the whole of the rank-and-file, there would have been no need for an "independent alternative" for the working class would have already "gone beyond" Peronism. Moreover, though PB saw Perón's limitations far more clearly than the movimientistas, it did feel that he would lead a broad movement for longer than he did. PB underestimated the rapidity with which Peronist contradictions would come into the open, political polarisation would take place and Perón be forced to opt for the enemy wing in defining his specific loyalties.

Both the FAP and PB, as well as the lesser expressions of alternativismo, can be said to have "failed" in that they did not become massive rank-and-file organisations within Peronism and then go on to create a new revolutionary organisation devoid of the limitations of Peronism. This does not mean, however, that their work and sacrifices were completely in vain. Though impossible to measure the extent, the rank-and-file

work put in by PB made a significant contribution to the development of base-level workers' organisations. PB certainly played a leading role in the Rank-and-File Trade Union Movement (MSB) and the probability is that its former cadres did likewise in subsequent organisations of the same nature - the prime movers of the labour struggles of the second half of 1975 and early 1976. Though greatly weakened by the March 1976 coup, it would seem reasonable to assume, in the light of the defection or imprisonment of many former union leaders, that this type of organisation has been providing a degree of leadership in the wage struggles against the post-1976 military economic plans. Though conclusions on this point must remain tentative, one can at least say that PB's contribution to the development of militant rank-and-file workers' organisations was by no means negligible, and history may even judge it to have been crucial.

CONCLUSION

It has been seen that both organisationally and ideologically the Peronist Left consisted of two major tendencies, the movimientistas and the alternativistas. Both had their strengths and weaknesses. The strength of the movimientistas lay in their recognition of the fact that support for a socialist revolution was limited in 1973. Though there was a vague desire for radical change, most popular aspirations were channelled in the direction of Perón. At the same time, such realism was countered by the propensity of this tendency to fall into line with contemporary popular demands and illusions in an attempt to share the "experience of the people". Moreover, their performance was flawed by an over-optimistic estimation of the potential of the Peronist Movement for radical transformations, seen especially in their totally unrealistic expectations of the national bourgeoisie.

Alternativistas, on the other hand, did have a realistic view of the limitations of bourgeois Peronism, even if they initially exempted Perón from their class analysis. They accurately predicted that an important phase of independent capitalist development would not materialize, both due to the weakening of the national bourgeoisie since the 1950's and the parlous state of the economy. Their own weakness lay in an exaggeration of working-class socialist attachment and conversely in their underestimation of working-class economism. The alternativistas concentrated their organisational attentions on the more radicalised labour sectors but for a long time lacked a policy for the working class as a whole.

However, no evaluation of the performance of these two tendencies can be divorced from an understanding of the conditions in which they were operating. The failure of the Peronist Left could only be

attributed solely to their own inadequacies if one regarded the Argentina of 1973-76 as a country in which revolutionary conditions were present. In fact, though certain conditions were present, one cannot say that the situation was potentially revolutionary. There were certainly divisions in the dominant power bloc over how to deal with the popular movement, and shifts to the Left had been effected by sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and working class. However, the bulk of the working class was still influenced more by economism and nationalism than by socialism and great problems were encountered in trying to forge a solid alliance of the working class and petty bourgeoisie. Though sectors of both classes were radicalised in recent years, their radicalism, as has been seen, found expression in quite distinct ways.

The failure of the Peronist Left, then, was not solely their own responsibility but reflected the immaturity of political, social and ideological conditions. What one can criticise the Left for, however, was their failure to really answer the question of what constitutes a revolutionary situation. It would appear that most considered this vital question as rather an academic one, and here the impact of foquismo in Argentina was crucial. For what major sections of the Peronist Left shared was a commitment to armed struggle and a belief that this would itself create a revolutionary situation.

This study of the Peronist Left has indicated a fairly strong correspondence between class, ideology, politics and forms of struggle. There was a marked tendency for the petty-bourgeois component to be mainly influenced by radical nationalist ideologists, to practise the reformist politics of movimientismo and to employ the method of the urban guerrilla. This was true not only of the Montoneros but also of many petty-bourgeois alternativistas, as was seen in the desertion of a whole wing of the Peronist Armed Forces to movimientismo. Equally, one can point to a

tendency for the predominantly working-class sectors, those organised in Rank-and-File Peronism, to be more open to socialist ideas, to practise independent revolutionary politics which emphasized class struggle, and to look to collective or mass forms of struggle, even though on paper they subscribed to armed struggle.

Though committed to socialism as a long-term objective, the petty-bourgeois sectors demonstrated a stronger susceptibility to the theory of revolutionary stages, whether this came to them from nationalist or Stalinist mentors. In the short-term, they were prepared to form part of a multi-class reformist alliance which they hoped to gradually take over through generational promotion. It was not in their objective interests to smash the old system which, though no longer serving them as well as it did previously, still offered them a privileged position vis-à-vis the working class. Moreover, the individualism which generally characterises this class gained reflection in their faith in guerrilla warfare and the efficacy of individual and small group actions.

Among the proletarians of the Peronist Left, the idea of the unity of national and social revolution was far more influential. Here the works of Cooke and, indirectly, of Marxism were persuasive, though the radicalism of Rank-and-File Peronism probably owed less to ideological influence than to workers' practical experiences. Alternativista militants, or at least their leaders, were more experienced than those of movimientismo and had learnt something about the inadequacies of their former conceptions from the frustrating experiences of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement and the CGT of the Argentines. Their belief in the indivisibility of national liberation and socialist revolution owed little to the reading of Trotsky and much to the fact that the opponent they encountered in their industrial struggles was "indivisibly" both a capitalist and imperialist. It was not surprising that Córdoban car

workers, workers in an economic sector totally dominated by foreign capital, should form a bastion of this tendency because for them struggles against employers were by their very nature anti-imperialist.

The youthfulness and inexperience of the movimientistas must be emphasized, since it was the background to their frequent blinkered naivety. Equally important was the fact that many leading activists here had originally participated in anti-Peronist, right-wing, Catholic and nationalist organisations. Only when affected by socio-economic decline and when excluded from the political system did they "discover the people" and embrace the Peronist Movement. To make amends for their past history, they then took to Peronism with the zeal of reformed sinners. Only if one recognises this guilt complex can one understand their attempts to portray themselves as the most orthodox and loyal Peronists. This in turn was bound to lead to compromises, made in the name of verticalismo, and to the vacillations and retreats of 1973-74. Even in the case of some of those new to political life, one can detect hints of feelings of vicarious guilt over the opposition of their student predecessors to Peronism in the pre- and post-1955 periods.

The movimientistas ignored all the lessons which the rich experience of the Revolutionary Peronist Movement had offered. They resurrected its basic documents as banners but failed to analyse Perón's manipulative behaviour in that period. Here, the more experienced alternativista Left was to some extent responsible, for those who had suffered as a result of Perón's manoeuvre kept quiet about it and maintained their revolutionary flattery of Perón in the years which followed. At the same time, this behaviour by the Left was entirely understandable and practically inevitable, given that they considered it vital to work in the Peronist Movement. They continued to play up to Perón because of the legitimacy which this bestowed upon them, because of the loyalty to Perón of

a highly economistic working class and also because Perón had briefly made a concession to the Left at that time and had thus given substance to the idea that he might be used again, to some extent, by the Left in the future.

At a more general level, the Peronist Left experience reflected the continuing strength of nationalism in a dependent country - especially in one where a multi-class national process had already taken place. Peronism not only survived after 1955 but also managed by the late 1960's to attract new sectors such as the students. The social and political breadth of Peronism and its firm trade union support prevented its opponents from establishing a stable alternative institutional order. However, this breadth also prevented Peronism from doing so. In a period of economic adversity, the 1973-76 Peronist governments were unable to satisfy and reconcile the demands of the social integrants of the Movement and of its political poles. The breadth of Peronism had been maintainable while Peronism was in opposition, with the exiled Perón able to appear as all things to all men. In office, however, that loose unity could not be preserved. Though Perón tried to keep his Movement united, it was on a basis which the Left, after many concessions and compromises, could not ultimately accept without renouncing their raison d'être. As the Movement began to polarise and disintegrate under his feet, it was Perón who initiated the persecution of the Left once he realised that he was unable to satisfy all of his supporters.

The recent Argentine experience demonstrated that a unity of objective interests does not necessarily arise out of a shared condition of being adversely affected by imperialist penetration of a country's economy and other spheres of life. Those affected by this process in Argentina, while mouthing some common slogans, never arrived at programmatic unity, nor were they able to work together during a "national liberation"

stage such as that envisaged by the movimientistas. The national bourgeoisie failed to lived up to movimientista expectations of them because in a period of economic crisis they needed working-class sacrifices to be made on the altars of "National Reconstruction". Moreover, the process of foreign economic penetration had gone so far that the national bourgeoisie alone could not fight back successfully. It needed a powerful State to intervene in dynamic economic areas, a State bolstered by popular organisation and mobilisation. Yet in turn this had socialist implications.

To the national bourgeoisie, the idea of a popular-based interventionist State contained the danger of unleashing a Cuban-type process which might get out of control. They therefore drew back from attempting to repeat the strategy of the early Peronist years and instead concentrated on their own narrow interests. After a number of initial concessions, popular demands were increasingly suppressed by violent means. What one saw in the 1973-76 years was a national bourgeoisie attempting to improve its position at the expense of the workers more than at the expense of foreign capital.

In the process, the theory of revolutionary stages espoused by the Communist Parties was further discredited. It is indeed ironic that one of the fundamental issues which separated the two main Peronist Left tendencies, which both sought "national" roads to socialism, was the same one over which Stalin and Trotsky had locked horns in the Communist International controversy over China in the latter half of the 1920's, and which Leninists and Mensheviks had fought over in and before 1917. Post-1955 Argentine history lends no support whatever to the idea of the national bourgeoisie having the strength to lead an anti-imperialist process or the desire to support one hegemonised by non-bourgeois sectors.

However, analysis of the Peronist Left has also illustrated the tremendous problems which face attempts to forge an alternative non-bourgeois revolutionary alliance led by the working class. In Argentina, the problem of economism in the labour movement was paramount and was never faced up to publicly by the Left, This was partly due to the presence of a large petty-bourgeois contingent which was unable, for reasons of class extraction and membership, to fully understand the personality of the Argentine working class. They tended to recognise that the labour movement was Peronist but went from there to conclude that Peronism <u>had to be</u> revolutionary, rather than that the mass of the working class was, for the moment, reformist.

Another reason was the psychological need which the Left had to believe that the revolution was near and that their efforts were not in vain. Moreover, the provincial insurrections and general strikes of the late 1960's onwards seemed superficially to indicate that this was so. As in their equation of revolutionary politics with armed struggle, the definition of revolutionary characteristics for much of the Left was provided by the methodology of struggle employed rather than levels of revolutionary consciousness and organisation. Furthermore, this equation of militancy with revolutionary fervour was not totally mistaken but did have some basis in reality. In a few isolated places where the Peronist and non-Peronist Left was strong, the working class, though not typical, <u>was indeed</u> revolutionary or at least had exhibited great revolutionary potential. This appears to have been the case in Córdoba and to some extent in Villa Constitución where highly political strikes took place for the right of the work-forces to freely choose their own (left-wing) union leaders.

Economism at a broader level was nevertheless a problem which

prevented the emergence of a revolutionary alliance of workers and petty bourgeois. Just as critical however was the tendency of these classes to opt for different forms of struggle, political strategies and short-term goals. This was aggravated by the Montonero policy of having separate front organisations for different social groups, something which could only reinforce these differences. Fundamentally, though, it was a class problem which reflected the limited progress of petty-bourgeois proletarianisation as much as the economism of the labour movement.

Conclusions can also be drawn from this study about the role of urban guerrilla warfare and about political violence in general. The guerrilla campaigns launched by the Peronist Left were never exempt from the problem of guerrilla isolation, even in the case of those with a strong orientation towards the mass movement. As argued above, Peronist guerrilla isolation from the labour movement was partly a result of the class composition of guerrilla organisations and partly stemmed from the nature of guerrilla struggle itself. By definition, it has to be clandestine, illegal and secretive to be militarily successful and, moreover, there is a tendency for it to become increasingly isolated from the masses as it develops. Saltos at a military level in no way implied political advances for guerrilla organisations for they involved a movement towards actions which were divorced both from the immediate needs and the collective struggles of the labour movement.

Moreover, as the guerrilla struggle developed and escalated, the catalytic effect of armed struggle, though demonstrated, did not have the impact which the guerrillas desired. Far from inspiring the masses to revolutionary deeds, one saw a rise in repressive violence to counter it. Guerrilla warfare provided conservative forces with a pretext for repressing not only its practitioners but the labour movement as well.

The backlash grew with each guerrilla salto and affected not only the guerrillas but also their periphery and those beyond it. Armed struggle helped to legitimise a level of State repression with which the guerrillas could not ultimately cope. It led liberals to tolerate "emergency powers" which once enacted were never repealed.

The result in Brazil and Uruguay had been the total destruction of the guerrillas. In Argentina, the backlash also put an end to most organisations and led to the subdual of the Montoneros. No major actions have taken place since the end of 1976. By selecting guerrilla struggle as the highest form of revolutionary struggle, a major section of the Peronist Left chose a method which would ultimately place them at a disadvantage. To attract mass support, they had to be exceedingly discriminate in their deployment of violence, whereas the forces of the status quo and those seeking more authoritarian forms of government could and did use violence far more widely. For General Videla,

> "A terrorist is not just someone with a gun or a bomb but also someone who spreads ideas that are contrary to Western and Christian civilization".1

For his colleague, General Vilas,

> "It is necessary to destroy the sources which feed, form and indoctrinate the subversive delinquent, and this source is in the universities and secondary schools".2

One of the major defects of urban guerrilla warfare as a form of struggle is thus that it is used as a pretext for terrorising the intelligentsia and attacking fictitious "industrial guerrillas", which in turn weakens

---

1. General Videla, quoted in the Times (London), 4th January 1978.
2. General Vilas, declaration in Bahía Blanca on 4th August 1976, quoted in the Amnesty International report, Academic Repression in Argentina (c.1977).

the potential social base of the guerrilla and preserves or increases its isolation.

Once a government feels that it cannot rest upon popular support, it has nothing to lose by unleashing State terror. Whereas those dependent upon popular support do to some extent need to use discriminate counter-insurgency methods, those resting solely upon economic power and the means of coercion can afford to hammer both the guerrilla periphery and its real and imagined potential periphery, before shooting down what remains of the combatant force in an uneven war between military apparata. In selecting a militaristic form of struggle, major sections of the Peronist Left chose a battlefield upon which might rather than right became the decisive issue. They chose a method which was unable to harness the economic power of labour but which enabled the enemy to use the full force of the repressive machinery of the State against them. When revolutionary politics is reduced to a military struggle unleashed by revolutionaries rather than the masses, those with superior weaponry, logistics supports, intelligence services and financial strength ultimately win.

At the same time, the Argentine guerrilla experience has shown that under certain conditions, when a military regime is already beginning to disintegrate, urban guerrilla warfare can play a part in its downfall. The Peronist "special formations" did contribute to the demise of the 1966-73 military regime, though it should be stressed that the regime was already divided, with sectors looking to a political solution, by the time the guerrillas had their public baptisms. Collective rebellions, such as the Cordobazo, had already shaken the regime and were arguably more instrumental in the military decision to retreat to their barracks in the early 1970's.

It is not only in Argentina that the potent blend of nationalism and guerrillerismo has demonstrated its forcefulness. Both the Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna (E.T.A.) in the Basque Country and the Iranian Moslem Mojahaddin-e-Khalq and Marxist Fedayan-e-Khalq have shown that guerrilla warfare can draw upon the reserves of nationalism and under certain circumstances win a genuine basis of support. The problem, however, has always been in organising that support. Guerrilla warfare has shown its capacity for weakening authoritian regimes but due to its military nature has not been able to take advantage of the political openings which have ensued.

The political benefits of the 1969-73 guerrilla campaign went not to the Peronist Left but to Perón who had used them. In Iran, the main beneficiary of the guerrilla campaign against the Shah was, initially at least, the Ayatollah Khomeini - another previously exiled Padre Eterno. And in Spain, the Basque Nationalist Party may well have cause to thank E.T.A. for their armed campaign in the long run. The inability of the urban guerrilla to impose its specific political will in these cases has been a product of the fact that, though politically-motivated, such organisations are not suited to tasks of political organisation and struggle and thus leave the way open for those who are. They have managed to win a fair degree of popular support among national movements but, so far at least, have not proved capable of channelling that support and fusing their armed actions with mass struggles in a consistent and effective manner.

Urban guerrilla organisations have only been able to actually organise their popular support through abandoning armed struggle and developing into political organisations. Though the Montonero performance above ground is open to much criticism, it at least showed that the potential for a large radical movement was present. All of that potential

rapidly evaporated when that organisation resumed armed struggle, albeit at a higher military level. This was a fundamental turning point in Montonero fortunes, for shortly afterwards important clashes developed between the government and Peronist Right, on the one hand, and broad sectors of the labour movement on the other. By resuming warfare, the Montoneros renounced all possibility of taking advantage of that conflict and of gaining a stronger labour base.

Had they maintained a political orientation, from a situation of clandestinity, they might well have strengthened their weak political authority in the labour movement and might, moreover, have been further radicalised themselves as a result of rank-and-file pressures. As it was, guerrilla warfare led to a freezing of their political conceptions, with the result that their 1975 Auténtico project was just a revamped version of what they had proposed in 1973.

The resumption of a militaristic strategy can with hindsight be seen as a mistake, but more than a mistake it was a confirmation of the nature of the Montoneros. For they were not a group of radical Peronists who merely regarded armed struggle as the best method to employ - rather, they had become totally militarised through practising that method. This was seen even when they were above ground, in their inability to leave behind the authoritarian command structure and bureaucratism of the 1970-73 years. They continued to promote the cult of the guerrilla fighter and their heroic mystique, and later went so far as to award combatants medals for bravery and to wear military uniform when attending international political events and meetings.[1]

---

1. After this thesis was written, a split developed within the Montonero leadership when Rodolfo Galimberti, Pablo Fernández Long and Juan Gelman denounced Firmenich and his supporters, among other things, for their militarism. See the Guardian, 26th March 1979, and the open letter of 22nd February 1979 (mimeo), signed by Galimberti and Fernández Long, in which the dissident leaders explained their reasons for resigning from the Montonero Party, giving up their commissions in the Montonero Army and abandoning their positions in the Montonero Peronist Movement.

It is certainly true that the history of the Peronist Left has been one full of instances of heroism and self-sacrifice. The tragedy is that so much of it now resides in graveyards.

APPENDIX A

ARGENTINE GUERRILLA SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

1) PERONIST

M.N.R.T. [1]

José ("Joe") Luis Baxter	- law student
Jorge Norberto Caffati	- student
Mario Héctor Duaihy	- student
Carlos Fuentes	- student
José Luis Nell	- conscript soldier
Gustavo José Posse (sympathiser)	- employee
Lorenzo Andrés Posse	- employee
Tomislav Rivaric (Yugoslav)	- student
Horacio Francisco Rossi	- "criminal"
Ricardo Sergio Ramón Viera	- senior medical practitioner

PERONIST ARMED FORCES (FAP) [2]

Juan Eugenio Bertelli	- trader
Carlos Caride	- post-office employee
Amanda Beatriz Peralta de Diéguez	- teacher & literature student
Gerardo Ferrari	- ex-seminarist, worker
Arturo Ferré Gadea	- ex-seminarist, worker
Envar El Kadri	- law student, employee
Hernán Ceferino Laredo	- public employee
Edgardo Olivera	- state airline employee
José Luis Rojas (ex-Uturunco)	- trader
Samuel Leonardo Slutzsky	- doctor
Néstor Raúl Verdinelli	- insurance employee
Miguel Zavala Rodríguez	- lawyer

REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES (FAR) [3]

Carlos Heriberto Astudillo	- medical student
María Antonia Berger	- sociology student
Alberto Miguel Camps	- student
Raquel Liliana Gelín	- student
Alfredo Elías Kohon	- engineering student and metalworker

---

1. MNRT data refers mainly to members captured after the Policlínico raid, and is drawn from Ocurrió, April 1964; and La Razón, 25th March 1964.

2. FAP data refers mainly to original members, most of those listed being guerrillas captured at Taco Ralo in 1968. Drawn from La Razón, 20th-29th September 1968; and "Los Nuestros," Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 18 (July 1969), pp. 10-16.

3. FAR data refers to leaders of the organisation and victims of the Trelew massacre, and is drawn from El Descamisado, El Peronista and La Causa Peronista, passim; Urondo, op. cit., pp. 137-139; and Eloy Martínez, op. cit., pp. 15-22.

Juan Pablo Maestre	- sociology student, then Gillette employee
Carlos Enrique Olmedo	- philosophy student, then Gillette employee
Marcos Osatinsky	- employee
Roberto Jorge Quieto	- law student, then lawyer
María Angélica Sabelli	- student and teacher

MONTONEROS [1]

a) Combatants

Nelida Ester "Norma" Arrostito	- teacher
Dardo Manuel Cabo	- metalworker, then journalist
José Enrique Carral	- railway worker
Pablo Fernández Long	- sociology student
Mario Eduardo Firmenich	- engineering student
Norberto Habegger (ex-Descamisado)	- bank employee
Adriana Lesgart	- student
Susana Graciela Lesgart	- teacher
Carlos Alberto Maguid	- photographer/TV cameraman
Benito Bernabe Martínez	- worker
Carlos Capuano Martínez	- student
Emilio Angel Maza	- medical student
José Sabino Navarro	- car worker
Manuel Enrique Pedreira	- student
Mariano Pujadas	- agronomy student
Carlos Gustavo Ramus	- student
Jorge Gustavo Rossi	- worker in publicity company
Fernando Vaca Narvaja	- student

b) Leaders of Mass Fronts

Padre Jorge Adur	- priest
Mario Aguirre	- state employee
Guillermo Amarilla	- student
Eduardo Beckerman	- secondary student
Silva Bermann Barrancos	- student, then lecturer
Oscar Bidegain	- doctor, politician
Miguel Bonasso	- journalist
Norman Briski	- theatre/cinema producer, actor
Jorge Cepernic	- politician
Gonzalo Chávez	- telecommunications worker
René Chávez	- student
Armando Daniel Croatto	- municipal employee
José Dalmaso López	- worker in chemical industry
Jaime Feliciano Dri	- public employee

---

1. Montonero data refers to military and mass front leaders and martyrs, and is drawn from ibid.; "La conducción del MPA...," El Auténtico, op. cit.; Montonero Peronist Movement Superior Council, Resistance Leads to Victory, undated document; Montonero Peronist Movement, Victory is Born with People's Unity, undated document.

Juan Figueredo	- state employee
Andrés Framini	- ex-textile worker
Juan Gelman	- poet, journalist
Guillermo Greco	- state gas employee
Ramón Antonio Herrera	- car worker
Padre Rafael Iaccuzzi	- priest
Holver Martínez Borelli	- law student, poet, essayist
Ricardo Obregón Cano	- politician
Ramón Puch	- student
Rodolfo Puiggrós	- historian, author
Reginaldo Ramallo	- state employee
Julio Rodríguez Anido	- journalist
Susana Sanz de Llorente	- lawyer
Claudio Slemenson	- secondary student
Roberto Tapia	- transport worker
Herriberto Torres	- ex-oil worker
José Pablo Ventura	- student
Rodolfo Walsh	- journalist, author

2) NON-PERONIST

PEOPLE'S GUERRILLA ARMY (EGP) [1]

Fernando Alvarez	- printing worker
Agustín Enrique Bollini Roca	- engineering student
Alfredo Campos	- painter
Salvador del Carril	- radio interviewer
Raúl Dávila	- unemployed
Víctor Eduardo Fernández	- employee
Federico Raúl Frontini	- professional photographer
Santiago Garrido	- worker
Pedro González	- book-seller
Oscar del Hoyo	- builder
Juan Jouvé	- student
Jorge Ricardo Masetti	- journalist
Federico Mendez	- mechanic
Hermes Peña	- Cuban professional revolutionary
Lazaro Peña	- medical student, waiter
Name unknown	- unemployed mechanic
" "	- unemployed mechanic
" "	- bank employee
" "	- bank employee
" "	- unemployed oil driller
" "	- philosophy student
" "	- medical student
" "	- flower vendor
" "	- merchant marine

1. EGP data refers mainly to those of the 44-member Salta foco who were killed, died or were captured, and to a few who escaped to Bolivia. Drawn from La Nación, 6th-13th March 1964; Rodolfo Walsh, prologue to Masetti, op. cit., pp. 17-18; Ricardo Rojo, op. cit., pp. 147-162; and Luis Mercier Vega, Guerrillas in Latin America: The Technique of the Counter-State (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), 115-117.

BUENOS AIRES COMMAND (Comando Buenos Aires) [1]

Intended urban support apparatus of EGP

Angel Amadeo Bengochea	- professional revolutionary
Lázaro Saúl Feldman	- businessman
Raúl Reig	- student
Hugo Pelino Santilli	- doctor
Carlos Guillermo Schiavello	- student, former owner of factory making pyrotechnical articles

PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY (ERP) [2]

Rubén Pedro Bonet	- student
Eduardo Capello	- economics student
Antonio del Carmen Fernández	- sugar worker
Manuel Carrizo	- economics student, then public accountant
Mario Emilio Delfino	- engineering student
Juan Eliseo Ledesma	- Fiat car worker
Domingo Menna	- medical student
Luis Pujals	- economics student
Mario Roberto Santucho	- economics student, then public accountant
Luis Sbédico	- economics student, then public accountant
Jorge Alejandro Ulla	- student
Ana María Villarreal de Santucho	- teacher of plastic arts

Though the above data is incomplete and mainly pertains to leaders and "martyrs", the pattern of petty-bourgeois predominance among Argentine guerrillas which it strongly suggests is supported by two other pieces of evidence: the fact that on the 31st August 1973 CGT marchpast, the Montonero trade union columns only took 21 minutes to pass the review stand whereas the rest of the tendency took 146 minutes; [3] and the

---

1. Comando de Buenos Aires data refers to activists killed in the 1964 Posadas Street explosion, and is drawn from La Razón, 4th August 1964.

2. ERP data refers to leaders and "martyrs", and is drawn from Estrella Roja and El Combatiente, passim; Urondo, op. cit., pp. 137-139; and Eloy Martínez, op. cit., pp. 15-22.

3. "Perón llegó a su pueblo," special supplement to El Descamisado, 4th September 1973, p. 6; La Razón, 1st September 1973.

admission of Mario Roberto Santucho that the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT), political leadership of the ERP, suffered from "weaknesses in social composition (only 30% factory workers)". [1]

---

1. Mario Roberto Santucho, "The Revolutionary Worker's Party," 23rd August 1974, in Santucho, Argentina: Bourgeois Power, Revolutionary Power (Oakland, California: Resistance Publications: nd), p. 29.

APPENDIX B

EARLY RADICAL PERONIST PROGRAMMES

PROGRAMME OF HUERTA GRANDE (1962)[1]

1. Nationalisation of the banking system.

2. State control over foreign trade.

3. Nationalisation of key sectors of the economy: oil, electricity, steel production, meat-packing plants.

4. Expropriation without compensation of land owned by the oligarchy.

5. Non-recognition of international financial agreements made behind the backs of the people.

6. A ban on all imports which compete with national products.

7. A ban on all direct and indirect capital exports.

8. Workers' control over exportation.

9. The opening up of business account books so that costs can be verified and tax evasion exposed.

10. Integral planning of the economy, with the establishment of priorities and minimum and maximum production targets.

DECALOGO REVOLUCIONARIO
Revolutionary Peronist Movement Programme (1964)[2]

1. Nationalisation of all key sectors of the economy so as to ensure national sovereignty: subsoil, iron and steel, energy, public services, banks, foreign trade, monopolies and foreign enterprises.

2. Agrarian reform: expropriation of land from the oligarchy without compensation.

3. State take-overs of all financial, industrial and commercial monopolistic groups and of all companies of the big, anti-national bourgeoisie, totally or partially dependent on foreign capital.

4. The abolition of secret trade. Rigorous taxation of all industrial, financial and commercial enterprises. A ban on all direct and indirect exports of capital. Workers' control of production.

5. Integral State planning of the economy so as to promote harmonious development. An industrialisation programme based upon State exploitation of extractive industries, energy, intermediate goods and the machine and tool industry. Stimulation of national industry and its protection against foreign competition. Improved communications.

6. Urban reform, especially house building.

7. "Dignification" of the worker and the people - an end to exploitation. Just rewards according to effort. The socialisation of medicine.

8. An education programme to spread literacy and promote the development of "national consciousness". Encouragement of national culture. State support for sport.

9. Defence of national sovereignty and a foreign policy based on the right to self-determination and the equality of peoples.

10. Solidarity with and active support for all people fighting against imperialism and colonialism. Recovery of the Malvinas, Puerto Rico, the Guayanas, Panama Canal, Guantánamo and the Antillas Islands.

---

1. Source: Ernesto González, op. cit., p. 156.

2. Source: Supplement to En Lucha, no. 18 (September 1974), p. 4.

APPENDIX C

SOURCES

This thesis is largely based upon primary sources, the most important of which were the political reviews which the Peronist Left themselves produced. Here, Compañero (1963-65) was vital reading for material on the early Peronist Left, particularly on the Revolutionary Peronist Movement (MRP) and the early radical youth organisations of Peronism. In more recent years, the Montoneros' own reviews, El Descamisado, El Peronista and La Causa Peronista, of the May 1973-September 1974 period, and later El Auténtico (September-December 1975), were indispensable movimientista sources. For the alternativistas, Militancia and the second De Frente, covering the June 1973-July 1974 period, performed the same function. The first De Frente (1954-55) provided an illustration of the political thought of its editor, John William Cooke, during the crisis years of early Peronism. En Lucha, organ of the 17th October Revolutionary Movement (MR 17), also deserves special mention for its provision of the ideas of Gustavo Reatre and its special supplements which contained the best outline of the history of the Resistance period and Revolutionary Peronist Movement to be offered by the Peronist Left.

Non-Peronist reviews which promoted the unity of the Peronist and Guevarist Left were also useful, for they published basic documents, key interviews and the communiqués of the Peronist Left in periods when the latter lacked regular organs of their own. Here, Cristianismo y Revolución (September 1966-September 1971), apart from being the principal source of information on Catholic radicalism, was immensely valuable, as too was Nuevo Hombre, especially its first (September 1971-September 1974) series.

The political organs of the non-Peronist revolutionary Left were also consulted for their critiques of the Peronist Left. These were crucial to an understanding of the divisions within the Argentine Left in general, and also isolated some of the main weaknesses of the Peronist Left as seen by those influenced by Marxism. The most important items here were the National Left journal, Izquierda Nacional (1963-1976), Avanzada Socialista, organ of the Socialist Workers Party (PST), El Combatiente, organ of the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT), and Estrella Roja, organ of the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). Non-party political reviews, such as Cuestionario (1973-76) and Carta Política (1974-) were also consulted. The former was a source of radical, though not left-wing, commentary on political events until its military-pressured closure, whereas the latter often provided guides to the divisions within the political parties and trade union movement.

Newspapers were an essential source in constructing a background chronology of events for the post-1955 period. The Buenos Aires Herald was examined for the entire January 1966-October 1976 period, as was La Opinión of July 1975-October 1976. La Nación, La Razón and the pre-1966 Buenos Aires Herald were used less thoroughly, just to obtain detailed information about specific events once the basic chronology had been constructured and could act as a guide. Work on the Buenos Aires Herald was made a priority because, being an English-language paper, it was often able to publish more news about guerrilla operations than other papers. In recent years, Argentine governments have not even allowed newspapers to refer to guerrilla organisations by their names, though the restriction was circumnavigated by references to "the organisation declared illegal" (ERP) and to "the self-proscribed organisation" (Montoneros). The Montonero newspaper Noticias and the pro-ERP El Mundo

were both banned by the government in 1974 and were, apart from a few copies of Noticias, unfortunately not available by 1975-76 when the research for this thesis was undertaken.

Interviews were also valuable as a means of clarifying the political conceptions of the Peronist Left, discovering inside information about political and guerrilla organisations and obtaining secret guerrilla documents. Apart from the formal interviews cited in the bibliography, there were numerous informal discussions with activists. Of particular value were regular meetings with two Montoneros and a couple of meetings with a former Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement combatant. There were also several discussions with Peronist Youth, People's Revolutionary Army, former 17th October Revolutionary Movement and former Peronist Armed Forces activists and sympathisers. Some useful guidance and comments also emerged from interviews with journalists, academics and authors, all of whom expressed a desire that their anonymity be respected for reasons of security.

Finally, books written by or about the Peronist Left had some utility. Here, the most useful items were the ideological works cited in the first two chapters. Very few background political histories of the post-1955 period have been published. All of these suffer to some extent from superficiality, partisan distortion or factual errors. They were never, therefore, relied upon as basic sources, though were of some value due to their provision of pertinent quotations and as illustrations of the views of political tendencies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The lists of books and articles below only contain items which are cited in the text and do not include surplus background material. Sources are arranged alphabetically, though in the articles section items from the major Peronist Left reviews are listed together under the name of the review, due to the large number of such items. These reviews are presented in the chronological order in which they appeared, though the articles published in them are listed in alphabetical order. Signed and unsigned articles are segregated from each other. The bibliography falls into eight major sections: Newspapers; Periodicals; Articles and Editorials; Books; Pamphlets and Supplements; Documents; Personal Interviews; and Published Interviews, Letters, Communiqués and Texts of Speeches.

NEWSPAPERS (all of Buenos Aires)

Buenos Aires Herald, January 1966-October 1976 and numerous editions 1955-66.

La Nación, numerous editions 1955-1976.

La Opinión, July 1975-October 1976.

La Razón, numerous editions 1955-1976.

Noticias, 3rd-11th June 1974.

PERIODICALS

Avanzada Socialista, Buenos Aires, May-December 1974, nos. 104-131.

Carta Política, Buenos Aires, September 1974-September 1975, nos. 7-30.

Che, Buenos Aires, October 1960-November 1961, nos. 1-16.

Che Compañero, Buenos Aires, August 1968, no. 4.

Combate, Buenos Aires, 15th August 1973, no. 1.

Compañero, Buenos Aires, June 1963-February 1965, nos. 1-77.

Confirmado, Buenos Aires, December 1975-August 1976, nos. 401-411.

Con Todo, Buenos Aires, late 1968, nos. 0 & 2.

Cristianismo y Revolución, Buenos Aires, September 1966-September 1971, nos. 1-30.

Cuestionario, Buenos Aires, March 1974-June 1976, nos. 11-38.

De Frente (con las bases peronistas), Buenos Aires, May 1974-July 1974, nos. 1-9.

De Frente (Un testigo insobornable de la realidad mundial), Buenos Aires, March 1954-October 1955, nos. 2-85.

El Auténtico, Buenos Aires, September-December 1975, nos. 1-9.

El Caudillo (de la tercera posición), Buenos Aires, 15th October 1975, no. 68.

El Combatiente, Buenos Aires, June 1968-April 1974, nos. 9-114; February 1976, nos. 204-205.

El Combativo, Buenos Aires, November 1972, no. 1.

El Descamisado, Buenos Aires, May 1973-April 1974, nos. 1-46.

El Peronista (lucha para la Liberación), Buenos Aires, April 1974- May 1974, nos. 1-6.

En Lucha, Buenos Aires, November 1973-September 1974, nos. 12-18.

Estrella Federal, n.p., August-September 1978, nos. 5-6.

Estrella Roja, Buenos Aires, July-September 1973, nos. 22-25.

Izquierda Nacional, Buenos Aires, October 1963-March 1976, nos. 4-44.

La Causa Peronista, Buenos Aires, July-September 1974, nos. 1-9.

La Opinión Cultural, Buenos Aires, July 1973-March 1974.

Liberación, Buenos Aires, 27th July 1973, no. 7.

Militancia (Peronista para la Liberación), Buenos Aires, June 1973-March 1974, nos. 1-38.

Nueva Hora, Buenos Aires, May 1974-August 1975, nos. 141-190.

Nuevo Hombre, Buenos Aires. First series: September 1971-September 1974, nos. 8-70. Second series: November 1975-March 1976, nos. 2-10.

Palabra Obrera, Buenos Aires, 30th June 1964, no. 364.

Peronismo y Liberación, Buenos Aires, August 1974, no. 1.

Peronismo y Socialismo, Buenos Aires, September 1973, no. 1.

Posición, Córdoba, January 1974, no. 11.

Todo es Historia, Buenos Aires, April 1971-February 1976, nos. 48-105.

Trinchera (de la Juventud Peronista), Buenos Aires, May-September 1973, nos. 1-4.

Ya (es tiempo de pueblo), Buenos Aires, 16th August 1973, no. 8.

ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS

De Frente, (Editor: John William Cooke)

Cooke, John William. "Capitalización de los trabajadores." No. 48 (7th February 1955): 3.

———. "El equilibrio de los precios y salarios." No. 2 (18th March 1954): 4.

———. "El futuro destino de la CGT." No. 70 (11th July 1955): 44-45.

———. "El sabotaje del papelero." No. 45 (17th January 1955): 3.

———. "Nuestra línea insobornable." No. 81 (3rd October 1955): 3.

———. "Paneslavismo, comunismo e imperialismo rojo." No. 37 (22nd November 1954): 18-21.

———. "Patria y proletariado." No. 60 (2nd May 1955): 3.

Compañero (Editor: Juan García Elorrio)

Rearte, Gustavo. "La única respuesta válida." No. 77 (2nd fortnight of February 1965): 3.

"5 de agosto: jornada histórica." No. 59 (11th August 1964): 1.

"Dos batallas fundamentales." No. 34 (18th February 1964): 1.

"El fin de la farsa." No. 58 (4th August 1964): 1.

"Falsa opción." No. 1 (7th June 1963): 1.

"Interesado confusionismo." No. 32 (4th February 1964): 1.

"La línea justa." No. 14 (10th September 1963): 1.

"No habrá perdón." No. 71 (3rd November 1964): 1.

"Nuestras consignas." No. 63 (8th September 1964): 1.

"Peronismo y revolución." No. 17 (16th October 1963): 1.

"Reorganización para la lucha." No. 16 (9th October 1963): 1.

"Salta: la juventud en marcha." No. 71 (3rd November 1964): 6.

"Un desafío histórico." No. 38 (11th March 1964): 1.

"Un paso atrás." No. 24 (5th December 1963): 1.

"Vandor se une a Frigerio: pretenden 'eliminar' a Perón." No. 51 (16th June 1964): 3.

<u>El Descamisado</u> (Editor: Dardo Manuel Cabo)

Cabo, Dardo Manuel. "Carta del director: Compañeros." No. 13 (14th August 1973): 2-3.

———. "Compañeros." No. 26 (13th November 1973): 2-3.

Dante Gullo, Juan Carlos. "El país se pregunta: Qué es la Juventud Peronista?" No. 8 (10th July 1973): 10-13.

"Ante la muerte de José Rucci." No. 20 (2nd October 1973): 2-3.

"Atentar contra la organización del pueblo." No. 34 (8th January 1974): 2-3.

"Balance de Operativo Dorrego: la Juventud Peronista fue a trabajar." No. 25 (6th November 1973): 27.

"Carlos Menem: Nuestro reaseguro está en la juventud." No. 4 (12th June 1973): 8.

"Chau militares!" No. 1 (22nd May 1973): 5.

"Cómo y de quién le defendemos, General?" No. 37 (29th January 1974): 2-3.

"Compañeros presos: la aurora de la libertad." No. 1 (22nd May 1973): back page.

"Con el pueblo hacia Perón." No. 16 (4th September 1973): 2-3.

"Construir el poder popular." No. 4 (12th June 1973): 2-4.

"El asesinato del compañero Chejolán: el pueblo ya marcó al culpable." No. 46 (2nd April 1974): 16-21.

"El final de una batalla: Perón presidente; el comienzo de otra: liberación." No. 19 (26th September 1973): 2-3.

"El pacto social: instrumento de la Liberación o instrumento de dependencia." No. 44 (19th March 1974): 16-19.

"FAR y Montoneros: apoyar, defender y controlar." No. 2 (29th May 1973): 2.

"Hacia la toma de la batuta." No. 17 (11th September 1973): 11.

"José Sabino Navarro: un trabajador, un montonero, un peronista." No. 12 (7th August 1973): 30.

"La Agrupación Evita de la Rama Femenina del Movimiento Peronista organizó un acto en homenaje a la madre peronista." No. 25 (6th November 1973): 28-31.

"La historia de un peronista." No. 40 (19th February 1974): 4-7.

"La JP toma la iniciativa." No. 19 (26th September 1973): 7.

"La JP y la Reconstrucción Nacional." No. 20 (2nd October 1973): 25.

"La Juventud Peronista y Perón: Contacto permanante, sin intermedios." No. 10 (24th July 1973): 2-7.

"La mujer presente." No. 19 (26th September 1973): 25.

"La UES está presente, mi general." No. 18 (18th September 1973): 26-27.

"La unidad de FAR y Montoneros." No. 22 (16th October 1973): 6-7.

"La Universidad al borde de la opción: liberación o continuismo gorila." No. 43 (12th March 1974): 7-8.

"La universidad del pueblo ." No. 7 (3rd July 1973): 10-11.

"Las urnas 'revantaron'....de aire." No. 36 (22nd January 1974): 25.

"Las villas triunfarán." No. 43 (12th January 1974): 12-14.

"Operativo Dorrego." No. 22 (16th October 1973): 28-30.

"Organizar, movilizar...." No. 24 (30th October 1973): 14.

"Organizar, movilizar, controlar, custodiar, apoyar...." No. 22 (16th October 1973): 8.

"Paco: dió la vida por Perón." No. 40 (19th February 1974): 23.

"Perón: la reconquista del gobierno." No. 5 (19th June 1973): 11-15.

"Qué pasa con el pacto social?" No. 31 (18th December 1973): 2-3.

"Qué votamos el 11 de marzo." No. 43 (12th March 1974): 2-3.

"Renunciamos a los honores, no a la lucha." No. 38 (5th February 1974): 4-8.

"7 de setiembre - Día del Montonero." No. 17 (11th September 1973): 5-8.

"Soy leal, total, incondicional a Perón." No. 9 (17th July 1973): 12.

"Soy peronista como se es hincha de Gardel o de Boca." No. 8 (10th July 1973): 9.

"Telefónicos: combativos o vandoristas?" No. 16 (4th September 1973): 27.

"Torrijos: un general peronista." No. 36 (22nd January 1974): 6-8.

"Universidad: o del pueblo o de nadie." No. 45 (26th March 1974): 22-24.

"Y esto, qué es?" No. 21 (9th October 1973): 2-3.

Militancia (Editors: Rodolfo Ortega Peña & Eduardo L. Duhalde)

Dri, Rubén R. "La alternativa y la lucha de clases." No. 33 (31st January 1974): 20-22.

"Argentina impotente: Nos cerca el imperialismo?" No. 34 (7th February 1974): 14-19.

"Discusión: Aportes para una autocrítica de la Tendencia." No. 9 (9th August 1973): 12-14.

"El apoyo al gobierno para llegar al poder." No. 4 (5th July 1973): 4.

"El caso Gelbard." No. 2 (21st June 1973): 14-15.

"El movimientismo, enfermedad infantil del peronismo." No. 7 (26th July 1973): 7-9.

"El pacto social, los planes de la burocracia y otras intoxicaciones." No. 6 (19th July 1973): 26-32.

"El pensamiento de Amado Olmos, a cinco años de su muerte." No. 33 (31st January 1974): 26-30.

"El pueblo ya lo dice, Cámpora es el vice." No. 6 (19th July 1973): 8-9.

"Eva revolucionaria." No. 7 (26th July 1973): 35-48.

"Ha muerto Gustavo Rearte." No. 4 (5th July 1973): 10-11.

"La Burocracia." No. 19 (18th October 1973): 16-17.

"La nueva CGT Peronista - Clasista - Antiimperialista de Salta." No. 8 (2nd August 1973): 10-11.

"Las mujeres de Evita dijeron presente." No. 22 (8th November 1973): 10-11.

"Liberación o dependencia." No. 14 (13th September 1973): 19-23.

"Militancia entre el ahogo y la clausura." No. 38 (28th March 1974): 3.

"Perón, la juventud y la guerrilla peronista." No. 9 (9th August 1973); 4-7.

"Perón o la guerra." No. 6 (19th July 1973): 4-6.

"Perón presidente." No. 19 (18th October 1973): 4-7.

"Puiggrós y el avance del pueblo." No. 5 (12th July 1973): 16-20.

"Righi: el nuevo orden revolucionario." No. 5 (12th July 1973): 7.

"11° informe Gelbard." No. 8 (2nd August 1973): 41-48.

"Semana política: entre la definición y la violencia." No. 35 (21st February 1974): 4-9.

"Semana política: una maraton hacia atrás sin aviso de retorno." No. 33 (31st January 1974): 4-9.

"Un agente de la CIA y el entierro de Kloosterman." No. 9 (9th August 1973): 34.

El Peronista (Editor: Miguel Lizaso)

Firmenich, Mario Eduardo. "Nuestras diferencias políticas;" "Mi afecto y agradecimiento al Padre Carlos Mugica;" "La provocación de derecha no puede dividirnos." No. 5 (21st May 1974): 4-8.

Lizaso, Miguel. "General: el peronismo no está de acuerdo." No. 3 (4th May 1974): 2-4.

"Córdoba: a ciñco anos del 29 de mayo, un montonero cuenta el cordobazo." No. 6 (28th May 1974): 26.

"Movimiento de Inquilinos Peronistas, 2° Congreso Capital." No. 1 (19th March 1974): 55-57.

De Frente (Editor: Vicente Oscar del Hoyo)

Oribe, Edmundo. "Opiniones: el 1° de mayo." No. 4 (23rd May 1974): 32-36.

"A un año de gobierno: los estudiantes junto a las bases peronistas por la Patria Socialista." No. 4 (23rd May 1974): 24-25.

"Balance de un año de gobierno." No. 2 (9th May 1974): 26-37.

"El modelo argentino." No. 7 (20th June 1974): 12-17.

"El significado del triunfo de IVISA." No. 1 (2nd May 1974): 29.

"La federacion gráfica es de los gráficos." No. 1 (2nd May 1974): 50.

"Peronismo de Base: Conformes los burgueses..." No. 1 (2nd May 1974): 8-10.

"Una semana de especulaciones." No. 2 (9th May 1974): 5-7.

La Causa Peronista (Editor: Rodolfo Galimberti)

Cabo, Dardo Manuel. "La milicia peronista." No. 4 (30th July 1974): 29.

Caride, Carlos. "Escribe Carlos Caride: Yo la muerte del general la sentí como la muerte de un compañero." No. 1 (9th July 1974): 42-43.

Framini, Andrés. "Habla Andrés Framini: Hacia la unidad que nos marcaba Perón." No. 1 (9th July 1974): 46.

Galimberti, Rodolfo. "Quiénes son y para quién gobernan?" No. 9 (3rd September 1974): 2-3.

————. "Unidad nacional o 'Gran Acuerdo Nacional'." No. 3 (23rd July 1974): 2-3.

"Carlos Capuano Martínez, por compañero, por peronista, por montonero, ya sos entraña de tu pueblo." No. 7 (20th August 1974): 22-23.

"Como murió Aramburu." No. 9 (3rd September 1974): 25-31.

"Córdoba: el porqué del conflicto de Smata." No. 4 (30th June 1974): 30-31.

"Córdoba: Si es necesario aquí pondremos sangre montonera." No. 6 (13th August 1974): 26-31.

"Fidelidad a los trabajadores peronistas." No. 2 (16th July 1974): 16.

"Mendoza. Intervención: el vandorismo trabajó para López Rega." No. 5 (6th August 1974): 22-24.

"Montonero Emilio Maza: La Calera." No. 2 (16th June 1974): 22-23.

"Montonero José Sabino Navarro. Volverás en brazos de tu pueblo." No. 4 (30th July 1974): 9-11.

Quién votó a Isabel - López Rega?" No. 8 (27th August 1974): 2-3.

"Quiénes, cómo y por qué lo ejecutaron. La muerte de José Alonso." No. 8 (27th August 1974): 25-29.

"Rodolfo Ortega Peña: ese guerrero del pueblo." No. 5 (6th August 1974): 20-21.

El Auténtico (Editor: Miguel Zavala Rodríguez)

Aguirre, Mario. "Este gobierno traicionó al pueblo y a Perón." No. 5 (12th November 1975): 6.

"Congreso Nacional del PPA." No. 4 (29th October 1975): 6.

"Con Perón era otra cosa." No. 1 (17th September 1975): 6.

"Coordinadora de Gremios en Lucha: 'La guerrilla industrial, un nuevo cuento para perseguir a los trabajadores." No. 8 (23rd December 1975): 6.

"Historia de la Triple A." Nos. 6 (26th November 1975), 7 (10th December 1975) & 8 (24th December 1975).

"La conducción del MPA: hombres y mujeres con trajectoria de lucha en defensa de los intereses populares." No. 2 (1st October 1975): 4.

Other Articles and Editorials

Alberte, Bernardo. "Dictadura o revolución." Con Todo, no. 0 (September 1968): 3.

Alberti, Blas Manuel. "De como se puede llegar a ser peronista con fundamentos antiperonistas; o las vicisitudes de dos ideológicos perdidos en el océano de la confusión." In Blas Manuel Alberti, Peronismo, burocracia y burguesía nacional. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Rancagua, 1974, pp. 41-90.

Avalo, Carlos. "De Gelbard a Cafiero." Tercer Mundo (Buenos Aires), no. 7 (October 1975): 93-96.

Benítez, Padre Hernán, "Causas y responsables de la 'ejecución' de Aramburu." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 25 (September 1970): 5-11.

Concatti, Pbro. Rolando. "Nuestra opción por el peronismo." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971): 28-36.

Cooke, John William. "Aportes a la crítica del reformismo en la Argentina." Pasado y Presente (Buenos Aires), nos. 2-3 (July-December 1973): 373-401.

———. "El retorno de Perón," (1964). In Cooke, La lucha por la liberación nacional. 2nd Ed. Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973, pp. 33-77.

———. "La lucha por la liberación nacional," (1959). In Cooke, La lucha por la liberacion nacional, pp. 9-32.

———. "La revolución y el peronismo," (1967). In Cooke, La lucha por la liberación nacional, pp. 79-107.

Corbière, Emilio. Regular articles on the Argentine Socialist Party. Cuestionario, 1975-76.

Cornblit, Oscar, "European Immigrants in Argentine Industry and Politics." In Claudio Veliz, ed., The Politics of Conformity in Latin America. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 221-248.

Dri, Rubén R. "Alienación y liberación." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970): 59-64.

Eguren de Cooke, Alicia. "Notas para una biografía de John." Nuevo Hombre, no. 9 (15th-21st September 1971): 10.

Elorrio, Juan García. "The Sign of the Revolution." In Alain Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America. Great Britain: Penguin, 1974, pp. 304-307.

Goldar, Ernesto. "La literatura peronista." In Gonzalo Cárdenas, Angel Cairo, Pedro Geltman and Ernesto Goldar, El Peronismo, 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1973, pp. 139-186.

González Ruiz, José María. "Cristo guerrillero o Cristo rey?" Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971): 39-41.

Hernández Arregui, Juan José. Editorial. Peronismo y Socialismo, no. 1 (September 1973): 5.

——— and editorial board. "Aclaración sobre el cambio de nombre de nuestra revista." Peronismo y Liberación, no. 1 (August 1974): 5.

Jaime, Armando. "El Peronismo." Posición, no. 11 (January 1974): 17-20.

———. "Qué es el peronismo revolucionario?" Nuevo Hombre, no. 50 (1st fortnight of November 1973): 4.

James, Daniel. "Power and Politics in Peronist Trade Unions." Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, vol. 20, no. 1 (February 1978): 3-36.

———. "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975." Journal of Latin American Studies, vol. 8, no. 2 (1976): 273-296.

Kendell, Jonathan. "I cannot imagine what would happen if the police left." Times Higher Education Supplement (London), 7th January 1977: 9.

Laclau, Ernesto. "Argentina - Imperialist Strategy and the May Crisis." New Left Review, no. 62 (July-August 1970): 3-21.

———. "Peronism and Revolution." Latin American Review of Books (London & Leeds), no. 1, Spring 1973: 117-130.

———. "Towards a Theory of Populism." In Ernesto Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. London: New Left Books, 1977, pp. 143-198.

Lenin, V.I. "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," (1920). In Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970, pp. 20-29.

———. "The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions," (1920). In Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions, pp. 30-37.

Little, Walter. "Party and State in Peronist Argentina, 1945-55." Hispanic American Historical Review, vol.53, no. 4 (November 1973): 644-662.

———. "The Popular Origins of Peronism." In David Rock (ed.), Argentina in the Twentieth Century. London: Duckworth, 1975 pp. 162-178.

Monahan, Joan. "I agreed to teach but not to be a gaoler." Times Higher Education Supplement, 11th February 1977: 10.

Munck, Ronaldo, "The Crisis of Late Peronism and the Working Class (1973-1976)." SLAS, Bulletin of the Society for Latin American Studies, no. 30 (Spring 1979).

Ortega Peña, Rodolfo. Prologue to Juan José Hernández Arregui, Imperialismo y cultura. 3rd ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973, pp. 7-13.

——— and Duhalde, Eduardo L. "Peronismo Revolucionario en el tercer año de la muerte de John W. Cooke." Nuevo Hombre, no. 9 (15th-21st September 1971): 8-9.

Pelayo, Ariel. "Del Sitrac-Sitram a la tendencia nacional clasista. El poder obrero." Nuevo Hombre, no. 10 (22nd-28th September 1971): 2-4.

Portantiero, Juan Carlos. "Introducción a un inédito de Cooke." Pasado y Presente, nos. 2-3 (July-December 1973): 369-372.

Rearte, Gustavo. "Por que fracasó el MRP." Supplement to En Lucha, no. 18 (September 1974): 3.

Rock, David. "Machine Politics in Buenos Aires and the Argentine Radical Party, 1912-1930." Journal of Latin American Studies, vol.4, part 2 (November 1972): 233-274.

Rojo, Ricardo. "Guerrillas in Argentina." In Ricardo Rojo, My Friend Che. New York: Grove Press, 1968, pp. 147-162.

Salas, Horacio. "La ideología de la violencia." Discusión (Buenos Aires), no. 15, 3rd-16th April 1975: 14-17.

Snow, Peter G. "The Class Basis of Argentine Political Parties." American Political Science Review, 63 (March 1969): 163-167.

Strafford, Peter. "The Church of Change." Times (London), 2nd December 1977.

Szpunberg, Alberto. "El pensamiento vivo de un militante." La Opinión Cultural, 9th September 1973, pp. 2-3.

Torres, Camilo. "A Message to Christians." In Dorothy Day (ed.) Camilo Torres: Priest and Revolutionary. London: Sheed and Ward, 1968, pp. 72-74.

Torres Molina, Ramón. "La etapa actual de las guerrillas argentinas." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971): 17-19.

Walsh, Rodolfo. Introduction to Jorge Ricardo Masetti, Los que luchan y los que lloran. Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1969, pp. 7-18.

"Alrededor de John William Cooke." Peronismo y Socialismo, no. 1 (September 1973): 10-13.

"Armando Jaime: preso por revolucionario." Nuevo Hombre, no. 58 (1st fortnight of March 1974): 6-7.

"Compañero Ortega Peña: presente hasta la victoria siempre." Nuevo Hombre, no. 67 (1st fortnight of August 1974): 6-11.

"Córdoba: la docta montonera." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 6-10.

"El sindicalismo de liberación." Nuevo Hombre, no. 8 (8-14th September 1971): 2-4.

"Gustavo Rearte, su vida, su lucha, sus ideas, su ejemplo." En Lucha, no. 11 (September-October 1973): 3-11.

"Infiltración, alianzas y fracaso de los militares." Denuncia (New York), May 1978: 3.

"Juan García Elorrio." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 23.

"Key test for Pope on Latin America's contending bishops." Sunday Times (London), 17th September 1978.

"La CGT y el 17 de octubre de 1945." Todo es Historia, no. 105 (February 1976): 70-90.

"La Izquierda, sus grupos y tendencias." Cuarto Poder (Buenos Aires), August 1972: 3-24.

"La santa alianza de Kloosterman y Peugeot." El Combativo, no. 1 (November 1972): 4.

"Laica o Libre." Todo es Historia, no. 80 (January 1974): 9-23.

"Los libros peronistas." La Opinión Cultural, 19th August 1973.

"Los nuestros." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 18 (July 1969): 10-16.

"Mayo 69: Cordobazo." En Lucha, no. 16 (June 1974): 6.

"Para una interpretación de Tacuara. Ante que nada: GORILAS." Ocurrió (aquí y en el mundo), Buenos Aires, 1st April 1964: 12-14 & 21-23.

"Paralizar el país para frenar el golpe," El Combatiente, no. 204 (18th February 1976): 2.

"Perón habla a la juventud." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971): 8-10.

"Peronismo de Base: el Peronismo Revolucionario." Nuevo Hombre, no. 14 (20-26th October 1971): 10.

"Por la decisión democrática de los claustros." Nueva Hora, no. 142 (1st fortnight of June 1974): 9.

"Por qué nos separamos de la Cuarta Internacional." El Combatiente, no. 86 (17th August 1973): 6-9.

"Respuesta socialista al llamamiento montonero." Avanzada Socialista, no. 120 (9th September 1974): 8-9.

"Seguiré vivo en los que luchan." Ya (es tiempo de pueblo), no. 13 (20th September 1973): 10-12.

"Si Evita viviera sería montonera." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971): 2.

"Taco Ralo: errores tácticos en una estrategia correcta." El Combatiente, no. 18 (17th October 1968): 4.

"Tacuara juega a la milicia revolucionaria." Che, no. 15 (2nd June 1961): 10-11.

"30 meses de camino descendente." Confirmado, no. 400 (3rd-9th December 1975): 52-54.

"Universidad: a cara o crisis." Carta Política, no. 20 (1st week of April 1975): 13-16.

"Volvemos para triunfar o morir junto a Isabel." El Caudillo, no. 68 (15th October 1975): 3.

BOOKS

Balvé, Beba; Murmis, M.; Marin, J.C.; Aufgang, L.; Bar, T.C.; Balvé, Beatriz; and Jacoby, R. Lucha de calles, lucha de clases. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Rosa Blindada, 1973.

Barnes, John. Eva Perón. Great Britain: Fontana/Collins, 1978.

Braun, Oscar. El capitalismo argentino en crisis. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1973.

Cairo, Angel R. Peronismo claves. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Centro de Estudios Aporte, 1975.

Canton, Darío. Elecciones y partidos políticos en la Argentina. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1973.

C.I.C.S.O. (Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales). Los asalariados. Composición social y orientaciones organizativas. Buenos Aires: C.I.C.S.O., nd.

Cimillo, Elsa; Lifschitz, E.; Gastiazoro, E.; Ciafardini, H.; and Turkieh, M. Acumulación y centralización del capital en la industria argentina. Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1973.

Codovilla, Vittorio. Trabajos escogidos. Buenos Aires: Editorial Anteo, 1972.

Cooke, John William. Apuntes para la militancia. Buenos Aires: Schapire Editor, 1973.

———. El peronismo y el golpe de Estado. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Acción Revolucionaria Peronista, 1966. Also published as Peronismo y revolución. Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1971.

———. La lucha por la liberación nacional. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973.

Correa, Jorge. Los jerarcas sindicales. Buenos Aires: Editorial Obrador, 1974.

Day, Dorothy (ed.). Camilo Torres: Priest and Revolutionary. London: Sheed and Ward, 1968.

Delich, Francisco J. Crisis y protesta social. Buenos Aires. Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1974.

Diario de Sesiones. Argentina: Cámara de Diputados, 1946-55 and 1973-74.

Eggers Lan, Conrado. Izquierda, peronismo y socialismo nacional. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972.

Eloy Martínez, Tomás. La pasión según Trelew. Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973.

Feinmann, José Pablo. El peronismo y la primacía de la política. Argentina: Editorial Cimarron, 1974.

Fernández Alvariño, Próspero Germán. Z. - Argentina, el crimen del siglo. Buenos Aires: By the Author, 1973.

Frondizi, Arturo. Petróleo y política. Buenos Aires: Editorial Raigal, 1955.

Galasso, Norberto. Manuel Ugarte. 2 vols. Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1973. Vol. 1: Del vasallaje a la liberación nacional; Vol. 2: De la liberación nacional al socialismo.

García Lupo, Rogelio. La rebelión de los generales. Buenos Aires: Proceso Ediciones, 1962.

Gheerbrant, Alain. The Rebel Church in Latin America. Great Britain: Penguin, 1974.

Goldar, Ernesto. La descolonización ideológica. Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo Editor, 1973.

González, Ernesto. Qué fue y qué es el peronismo? Buenos Aires: Ediciones Pluma, 1974.

González Janzen, Ignacio. Argentina: 20 años de luchas peronistas. Mexico: Ediciones de la Patria Grande, 1975.

Graham-Yooll, Andrew. Tiempo de tragedia. Cronología de la Revolución Argentina. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1972.

———. Tiempo de violencia. Cronología del 'Gran Acuerdo Nacional'. Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973.

Guevara, Che. Guerrilla Warfare. England: Pelican, 1969.

Guillén, Abraham. Teoría de la violencia. Buenos Aires: Editorial Jamcana, 1965.

Hernández Arregui, Juan José. Imperialismo y cultura. 3rd ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973.

———. La formación de la conciencia nacional. 3rd ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973.

———. Nacionalismo y liberación. 3rd ed. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 1973.

———. Qué es el ser nacional? 3rd ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973.

Hodges, Donald C. Argentina 1943-1976. The National Revolution and Resistance. USA: University of New Mexico Press, 1976.

———. Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla. New York: William Morris & Co., 1973.

Jauretche, Arturo. FORJA y la década infame. Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo Editor, 1962.

Kandel, Pablo, and Monteverde, Mario. Entorno y caída. Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1976.

Kohl, James, and Litt, John. Urban Guerrilla Warfare in Latin America. USA: MIT Press, 1974.

Lenin, V.I. What is to be Done? London: Panther Books, 1970.

Luna, Félix. De Perón a Lanusse, 1943-1973. Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta Argentina, 1973.

———. El 45. 7th ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1975.

Main, Mary. Evita: The Woman with the Whip. Great Britain: Corgi, 1977.

Masetti, Jorge Ricardo. Los que luchan y los que lloran. Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1969.

Meinvielle, Julio. El comunismo en la revolución anticristiana. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Teoría, 1961.

———. El judío en el misterio de la historia. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Teoría, 1959.

Mercier Vega, Luis. Guerrillas in Latin America: The Technique of the Counter-State. London: Pall Mall Press, 1969.

Mugica, P. Carlos. Peronismo y cristianismo Buenos Aires: Editorial Merlin, 1973.

Nadra, Fernando. Perón hoy y ayer, 1971-1943. Buenos Aires: Editorial Polémica, 1972.

Navarro Gerassi, Marysa. Los nacionalistas. Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1968.

Niosi, Jorge. Los empresarios y el estado argentino, 1955-1969. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, 1974.

Ongaro, Raimundo. Solo el pueblo salvará al pueblo. Argentina: Editorial de las Bases, 1970.

Ortega Peña, Rodolfo, and Duhalde, Eduardo L. Felipe Vallese: Proceso al sistema. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudestada, 1967.

Pavón Pereyra, Enrique. Perón tal como es. Buenos Aires: Editorial Macacha Güemes, 1973.

Peña, Milciades. El peronismo, selección de documentos para la historia. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Fichas, 1973.

Peralta Ramos, Mónica. Etapas de acumulación y alianzas de clases en la Argentina, 1930-1970. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores 1972.

Perón, Eva. Historia del peronismo. Buenos Aires: Presidencia de la Nación, Subsecretaría de Informaciones, 1953

———. La razón de mi vida. Buenos Aires: Editorial Relevo, 1973.

Perón, Juan Domingo. Doctrina peronista. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Macacha Güemes, 1973.

———. La comunidad organizada. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1974.

———. La hora de los pueblos. Buenos Aires: Editorial Norte, 1968.

——— and Cooke, John William. Correspondencia Perón-Cooke. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973.

Pinedo, Jorge. Consignas y lucha popular en el proceso revolucionario argentino, 1955-1973. Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1974.

Poulantzas, Nicos. Classes in Contemporary Capitalism. London: Verso, 1978.

Prieto, Ramón. Correspondencia Perón-Frigerio, 1958-1973. Argentina: Editorial Macacha Güemes, 1975.

Puiggrós, Rodolfo. El peronismo: sus causas. 4th ed. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1974.

———. El proletariado en la revolución nacional. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudestada, 1968.

———. La universidad del pueblo. Buenos Aires: Editorial Crisis, 1974.

———. Las izquierdas y el problema nacional. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cepe, 1973.

Ramil Cepeda, Carlos. Crisis de una burguesía dependiente. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Rosa Blindada, 1972.

Ramos, Jorge Abelardo. América Latina: un país. Buenos Aires: Editorial Octubre, 1949.

———. Ejército y semicolonía. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudestada, 1968.

Ramos, Jorge Abelardo. El marxismo de Indias. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1963.

———. Historia del stalinismo en la Argentina. Buenos Aires: Editorial Rancagua, 1974.

———. La lucha por un partido revolucionario. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1964.

———. Revolución y contrarrevolución en la Argentina. 5 vols. 5th ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973.
Vol. I: Las masas y las lanzas (1810-1862).
Vol. II: Del patriciado a la oligarquía (1862-1904).
Vol. III: La bella época (1904-1922).
Vol. IV: El sexto dominio (1922-1943).
Vol. V: La era del bonapartismo (1943-1973).

Rivera, Enrique. Peronismo y frondizismo. Buenos Aires: Editorial Patria Grande, 1958.

Rock, David (ed.). Argentina in the Twentieth Century. London: Duckworth, 1975.

Scobie, James R. Argentina: A City and a Nation. 2nd ed. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Senén González, Santiago. El sindicalismo después de Perón. Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1971.

Spilimbergo, Jorge Enea. El socialismo en la Argentina. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Octubre, 1974.
Vol. I: Juan B. Justo y el socialismo cipayo.
Vol II: De la izquierda cipaya a la izquierda nacional.

Tosco, Agustín. La lucha debe continuar. Buenos Aires: Libros para el Tercer Mundo, 1975.

Urondo, Francisco. La patria fusilada. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Crisis, 1973.

Walsh, Rodolfo. Operación masacre. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1972.

Walter, Richard J. The Socialist Party of Argentina, 1890-1930. USA: Institute of Latin American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1977.

PAMPHLETS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Pamphlets

Cooke, John William. Apuntes sobre 'el Che'. Published as an edition of Compromiso (Buenos Aires), no. 3, October 1973.

Lenin, V.I. "Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder (1920). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970.

Lenin, V.I. Revolutionary Adventurism (1902). Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA). Argentina in the Hour of the Furnaces. USA: NACLA, 1975.

Santucho, Mario Roberto. Argentina: Bourgeois Power, Revolutionary Power. Oakland, California: Resistance Publications, nd.

Trotsky, Leon. Why Marxists Oppose Individual Terrorism (1911). Oxford Militant Pamphlet No. 1. London: Cambridge Heath Press, 1973. Also published in the Militant, organ of the Socialist Workers Party (USA), 7th September 1973.

Walsh, Rodolfo. A Year of Dictatorship in Argentina, March 1976-March 1977. Open letter to the military junta. London: Committee to Save Rodolfo Walsh, 1977.

Eva Perón. Buenos Aires: Cuadernos de Crisis, 1974.

Cooke. Buenos Aires: Cuadernos de Crisis, March 1974.

Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970.

Supplements

"Apuntes para una historia de la resistencia y del peronismo revolucionario." Six supplements to En Lucha, nos. 13 (December 1973), 14 (February 1974), 15 (April 1974), 16 (June 1974), 17 (July 1974) & 18 (September 1974).

"El Auténtico Suplemento Especial." In El Auténtico, no. 6 (26th November 1975).

"Perón llegó a su pueblo." Supplement to El Descamisado, 4th September 1973.

"Que pasa general....está lleno de gorilas el gobierno popular." Supplement to El Descamisado, 14th March 1973.

DOCUMENTS

CGT de los Argentinos, "Mensaje a los trabajadores y al pueblo" (1st May 1968). In Raimundo Ongaro, Solo el pueblo salvará al pueblo. Argentina: Editorial de las Bases, 1970: 27-40.

Cooke, John William. "La proclama de la huelga del frigorífico Lisandro de la Torre." In De Frente 2nd series, no. 8 (27th June 1974): 30.

Firmenich, Mario Eduardo. Acerca de la unidad del peronismo (20th June 1978). Mimeo: np.

Frente Revolucionario Peronista. "Acta de Unificación." In Militancia, no. 29 (27th December 1973): 46.

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias. "Aporte al proceso de confrontación de posiciones y polémica política que abordamos con el ERP." In Militancia, No. 4 (5th July 1973): 35-38.

Juventud Revolucionaria Peronista. "Llamando a las organizaciones revolucionarias." In Che Compañero, no. 4 (August 1968): 7.

Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara. "Violencia Revolucionaria" (1st May 1964). In Militancia, no. 6 (19th July 1973): 35-38.

Montonero Peronist Movement. Victory is Born with People's Unity. Undated (c.1978).

Montonero Peronist Movement Superior Council. Resistance Leads to Victory. Undated (c.1978).

Montoneros. "El llanto del enemigo." In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 70-73.

————. "Hablan los Montoneros." In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970): 11-14.

————. "Hablan los Montoneros." In La Causa Peronista, no. 4 (30th July 1974): 6-8.

————. "Las armas de la Independencia hoy están apuntadas hacia el pueblo." In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971): 13-15.

———— and mass front organisations. "Un documento para la liberación." With El Peronista, no. 1 (19th April 1974).

Montoneros-Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias. "Acta de Unidad." In El Descamisado, no. 22 (16th October 1973): 7.

Movimiento Peronista Auténtico, Consejo Superior. "Emprendemos la histórica transformación del Movimiento." In El Auténtico, no. 2 (1st October 1975): 5.

Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista. "Decálogo Revolucionario" (1964). In supplement to En Lucha, no. 18 (September 1974): 4.

————, "Declaración de Principios" (1964). In supplement to En Lucha, no. 18 (September 1974): 1-2.

————. "Manifiesto Revolucionario" (1964). In supplement to En Lucha, no. 18 (September 1974): 3.

Partido Comunista de la Argentina. Programa del Partido Comunista de la Argentina. Buenos Aires: Editorial Anteo, 1963.

Peronismo de Base. "Porqué somos peronistas de base." In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971): 9-12.

————. "Sindicalismo y clasismo." In Militancia, no. 33 (31st January 1974).

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Colegio Nacional. Interview with a former leading secondary student activist at the Colegio Nacional. Buenos Aires, 4th August 1976.

Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas. Interview with a former member of the FAP, Buenos Aires, 12th August 1975.

Juventud Peronista. Interview with a former Peronist Youth activist, Buenos Aires, 16th February 1976

Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara. Interview with a former member of the MNRT, Buenos Aires, 14th October 1976.

Montoneros. Interview with a Montonero supporter who held a minor government post during the Cámpora period. Buenos Aires, 27th September 1975.

———. Interview with a Montonero. Buenos Aires, 16th November 1975.

———. Interview with Montoneros, Buenos Aires, 23rd November 1975.

———. Interview with a Montonero. Buenos Aires, 30th September 1976.

PUBLISHED INTERVIEWS, LETTERS, COMMUNIQUES AND TEXTS OF SPEECHES

Interviews

Baxter, José ("Joe") Luis. Interview in Pregón (Argentina), 1st April 1964.

Cooke, John William. "El peronismo y la revolución cubana. Reportaje a John William Cooke." Che, no. 22 (8th September 1961): 8-9.

El Kadri, Envar. Interview in Liberación, no. 5, undated (1973): 3-5.

Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas. "Con las armas en la mano." FAP interview. In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 77-80.

———. "Reportaje a las FAP." In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 25 (September 1970): 17-20.

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias. "Los de Garín." FAR interview. In Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 56-70.

———. "The Revolutionary Armed Forces: With Che's Weapons." FAR members interviewed by Héctor Víctor Suarez. In James Kohl and John Litt, Urban Guerrilla Warfare in Latin America. USA: MIT Press, 1974, pp. 379-386.

———. "13 preguntas a las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias." In Nuevo Hombre, no. 17 (10-16th November 1971): 2-3.

Lozada, Luis. Interview in Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 14-18.

MNRT. "Reportaje al Movimiento Revolucionario Nacionalista Tacuara." In Compañero, no. 63 (8th September 1964): 4.

Montonero leader. "Argentina: un país en guerra." Interview in Revolución (np), December 1977: 20-31.

Ongaro, Raimundo. Interview in De Frente, no. 1 (2nd May 1974): 50.

Peronismo de Base. "La revolución de las bases." Interview in Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 29 (June 1971): 11-13.

Perón, Juan Domingo. Interviewed by Ricardo Grassi. In El Descamisado, no. 27 (20th November 1973): 3-5.

Puiggrós, Rodolfo. "El peronismo debe darse una conducción revolucionaria." Interview in Compañero, no. 38 (11th March 1964).

———. Interview in Militancia, no. 5 (12th July 1973): 16-20.

Letters

Agrupación del Peronismo Auténtico. "Al General Perón de sus viejos amigos y leales soldados peronistas." El Peronista, no. 4 (14th May 1974): 10-11.

Cooke, John William. "Carta a Salvador Allende." In Cooke. Buenos Aires: Cuadernos de Crisis, March 1974, pp. 46-49.

———. Letter to Adela Olmos of 15th February 1968. Militancia, no. 33 (31st January 1974): 31.

El Kadri, Envar. Letter to Juan José Hernández Arregui of 15th January 1970. In Hernández Arregui, La formación de la conciencia nacional. 3rd ed. Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973, pp. 547-549.

Elorrio, Juan García. "Open Letter to MGR. J.C. Aramburu, Archbishop of Tucumán." In Alain Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America. Great Britain: Penguin, 1974, pp. 311-314.

Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas. Letter to the Police of Buenos Aires Province Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970): 54.

———. "Carta de las FAP a los Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970): 15-20.

Fernández Long, Pablo, and Galimberti, Rodolfo. Open letter of 22nd February 1979, explaining their resignations from the Montonero leadership. Mimeo.

Montoneros. "Los Montoneros a Perón." 9th February 1971. La Causa Peronista, no. 9 (3rd September 1974): 26-27.

Perón, Juan Domingo. "Carta a las FAP," 12th July 1970. Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 25 (September 1970): 20.

———. Letter to Hernández Arregui of 10th December 1969. In Enrique Pavón Pereyra, Perón tal como es. Buenos Aires: Editorial Macacha Güemes, 1973, pp. 183-190.

Perón Juan Domingo. "Mensaje a la Juventud," 20th October 1965. Militancia, no. 11 (23rd August 1973): 49.

———. "Perón a los Montoneros," 20th February 1971. La Causa Peronista, no. 9 (3rd September 1974): 28-29.

Villalón, Héctor. "Mensaje del compañero Héctor Villalón." Compañero, no. 59 (11th August 1964): back cover.

Communiqués

Bases Universitarias de Córdoba. Communiqué of November 1973. Militancia, no. 25 (29th November 1973): 44.

Ejército Montonero. "Condecoración." Estrella Federal, no. 5 (September 1978): 12.

Ejército Nacional Revolucionario. "Declaración del ENR con motivo del ajusticiamiento de Augusto T. Vandor." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 52-53.

FAP. "A la clase obrera y al pueblo peronista." Militancia, no. 4 (5th July 1973): 12-14.

———. "FAP al pueblo." Militancia, no. 6 (19th July 1973): 12

———. "Nuestros errores pueden servir de lección y ejemplo, pero no de negación de la única salida del pueblo ante la violencia gorila." Con Todo, nd (late 1968): 4.

———. "Perón al gobierno." Militancia, no. 13 (6th September 1973): 29.

———. Communiqué of 17th October 1970. Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 26 (November-December 1970): 55.

———. Communiqué. Militancia, no. 22 (8th November 1973): 44-45.

FAP Nacional. Communiqué of 27th August 1973. Militancia, no. 13 (6th September 1973): 28-29.

———. Communiqué. Militancia, no. 26 (6th December 1973): 46.

FAP Regional Buenos Aires. "Aportes para el análisis de la situación actual." Militancia, no. 10 (16th August 1973): 19-21.

FAP Regional La Plata, Berisso, Ensenada. Communiqué of 5th January 1974. Militancia, no. 31 (17th January 1974): 44-45.

FAP 17 de Octubre. "A la clase obrera y al pueblo peronista." Militancia, no. 17 (4th October 1973): 46-48.

———. Communiqué. El Descamisado, no. 16 (4th September 1973): 29.

FRP-MR 17. Joint communiqué. En Lucha, no. 20 (February 1975): 1-2.

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias. "Comunicado no. 2." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 25 (September 1970): 59.

Juventud Peronista. "La JP no se presta al juego de los traidores." Compañero, no. 42 (14th April 1964).

———. "La Juventud Peronista de Santa Fe denuncia a falsos dirigentes." Compañero, no. 48 (26th May 1964).

———. Press release. La Causa Peronista, no. 1 (9th July 1974): 41.

———. "Una estrategia revolucionaria." Compañero, no. 16 (9th October 1963).

Juventud Trabajadora Peronista. "Propuestas para el trabajo sindical." Militancia, no. 16 (4th September 1973): 30-31.

——— Agrupación Metalúrgica 17 de Octubre. Communiqué. El Descamisado, no. 43 (12th March 1974): 15.

——— Agrupación Mussi-Retamar. Communiqué. Militancia, no. 14 (13th September 1973): 32-35.

Juventud Universitaria Peronista. "Bases para la reconstrucción universitaria." Militancia, no. 5 (12th July 1973): 18-19.

———. "La JUP denuncia una ofensiva reaccionaria que intenta frenar la liberación nacional." El Descamisado, no. 20 (2nd October 1973): 30.

———. Paid advertisement. "Ganó el estudiantado, ganó el Peronismo Auténtico." La Opinión, 19th December 1975.

Montoneros, Columna de Recuperación Cooke-Pujadas. "Material de discusión." Militancia, no. 38 (28th March 1974): 20-22.

Montoneros José Sabino Navarro. "Ante la confusión." Militancia, no. 32 (24th January 1974): 32-37.

———. "Cartilla para militantes no. 1." Militancia, no. 20. (25th October 1973): 43-44.

———. "Cartilla para militantes no. 4." Militancia, no. 30. (3rd January 1974): 20-22.

———: "Cartilla para militantes no. 5." Militancia, no. 35. (21st February 1974): 30-33.

———. Communiqué of 24th July 1973. Militancia, no. 8 (2nd August 1973): 22-23.

Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista. "El MRP fija su posición en la hora actual." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 28 (April 1971): 49.

Partido Comunista de la Argentina. "El Partido Comunista apoya la decisión de la CGT y reclama la formación de un gabinete cívico-militar de amplia coalición democrática." La Opinión, 6th July 1975.

PB de Tucumán. "Por una Argentina Socialista." Cristianismo y Revolución, no. 30 (September 1971): 57-64.

PB "John William Cooke." Communiqué of 12th October 1973. Militancia, no. 19 (18th October 1973): 46-47.

Texts of Speeches

Firmenich, Mario Eduardo. "Atlanta." Text of speech made on 22nd August 1973. Militancia, no. 12 (30th August 1973): 26-29.

———. "Etapa y conjuntura." Typescript of speech delivered at a Peronist Youth cadre school in January 1974.

———. "Palabras de Firmenich." Text of speech in Atlanta Stadium on 11th March 1974. Militancia, no. 37 (14th March 1974): 37-42.

Losada, Luis. Text of speech at a PB rally in Córdoba. Militancia, no. 16 (27th September 1973): 19-21.

Quieto, Roberto. "Hablan los Montoneros." Text of speech in La Plata on 26th July 1974. La Causa Peronista, no. 4 (30th July 1974): 6-8.

———. Text of 17th October 1973 speech in La Plata. El Descamisado, no. 23 (23rd October 1973): 16-20.

GLOSSARY OF SPANISH TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SPANISH TERMS

Agrupación	- Group or grouping. For the Peronist Left, a group of their activists within a trade union or broader political party or movement.
Alternativismo	- A Peronist Left tendency (principally the Peronist Armed Forces and Rank-and-File Peronism) which argued that only the working-class and left-wing sectors of Peronism were really revolutionary and had to be organised independently of the leadership of the Movement.
Alternativista	- One who subscribes to the ideas of alternativismo.
Aramburazo	- The May 1970 Montonero kidnapping and subsequent "execution" of former President Aramburu.
Blandos	- Peronist "soft-liners"; conciliatory reformists.
Cerco	- In Peronist usage, a group of opportunists and traitors who supposedly encircled Peron in order to block the dynamic Peron-mass relationship, misinterpret Peron's views to the masses and the masses' views to Peron.
Cipayo	- Noun: imperialist lackey; adjective: somebody or something which is servile and dependent in relation to an imperialist power.
Comandante	- Guerrilla commander; the highest rank in the Montoneros during the early years.
Comando	- Commando or guerrilla unit.
Cordobazo	- The May 1969 student-worker insurrection in the city of Cordoba.
Delegado	- Degegate; rank-and-file trade union representative; Peron's representatives in Argentina during his 1955-73 years of exile.
Descamisado	- Shirtless one; Peron's followers.
Digitismo	- Peronist "fingering" principle, according to which the leader has the authority to nominate people to command positions, rather than them being elected.

Duro	- Hard-liner; militant Peronist.
Foco	- guerrilla band or camp.
Foquismo	- The guerrilla theories associated with Debray and Guevara, according to which armed struggle can help to create revolutionary conditions.
Gorila	- Reactionary, often a military anti-Peronist officer.
Gorilitas	- Young gorilas.
Intervención	- The appointment of a trustee by a government or party/union leadership to take over the running of a province, university, party branch, union branch, etc.
Interventor	- A trustee appointed when there is an intervención.
Línea dura	- The "hard-line" of Peronism; militant or combative Peronists.
Movimientismo	- A Peronist Left tendency (principally the Montoneros and their mass front organisations) which viewed the Peronist Movement as a whole as revolutionary in terms of "National Liberation" tasks.
Movimientista	- One who subscribes to the ideas of movimientismo.
Operación/Operativo	- A guerrilla action.
Regional	- Regional organisational unit of Peronist Left tendencies.
Resistencia	- The early post-1955 years of Peronist opposition and resistance to anti-Peronist and non-Peronist governments.
Salto	- Literally, a leap or jump; in guerrilla usage, a shift to a higher level of revolutionary warfare.
Socialismo Nacional	- For the Peronist Left, a national road to socialism; for the Peronist Right, National Socialism as understood by Hitler.

Superación	- A resolution of contradictions leading to a new synthesis through a process of dialectical development. Used especially in arguing that Peronism could develop into, or had developed into, a revolutionary socialist movement.
Trasvasamiento generacional	- Term used by Perón to denote a generational rejuvenation of the Peronist Movement through the promotion of young activists to command positions.
Unidad básica	- Basic political unit of the Justicialist or Peronist Party.
Vendepatria	- Traitor prepared to sacrifice national interests to his own.
Verticalismo/ Verticalidad	- Peronist principle of authority and command, according to which all Peronists are expected to obey orders emanating from the leader and his official representatives.
Villa miseria	- Shanty-town.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAA - Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance)

AB - Asociación Bancaria (Bank Employees Association)

AC - Acción Católica (Catholic Action)

AJES - Agrupación Justicialista de Estudiantes Secundarios (Justicialist Secondary Students Grouping)

APA - Agrupación del Peronismo Auténtico (Authentic Peronist Grouping)

APEGE - Asamblea Permanante de Entidades Gremiales Empresarias (Permanent Assembly of Entrepreneurial Entities)

ARP - Acción Revolucionaria Peronista (Peronist Revolutionary Action)

ATE - Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado (State Workers Association)

ATSA - Asociación de Trabajadores de la Sanidad Argentina (Argentine Health Workers Association)

CAOP - Confederación de Asociaciones Ortodoxos Peronistas (Confederation of Orthodox Peronist Associations)

C de O - Comando de Organización (Organisational Command)

CGE - Confederación General Económica (General Economic Confederation)

CGT - Confederación General del Trabajo (General Labour Confederation)

CGTA - Confederación General del Trabajo de los Argentinos (General Labour Confederation of the Argentines)

CGTR - Confederación General del Trabajo en la Resistencia (General Labour Confederation in the Resistance)

CGU - Confederación General Universitaria (General University Confederation)

CICSO - Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales (Social Science Research Centre)

CNFC - Consejo Nacional de Centros y Federaciones (National Council of Centres and Federations)

CNP - Comando Nacional Peronista (Peronist National Command)

CNU - Concentración Nacional Universitaria (University National Concentration)

CONINTES - Conmoción Interna del Estado (The Frondizi provisions for use against civil disturbances and insurgency)

COR	- Centro de Operaciones de la Resistencia (Centre of Resistance Operations)
CRA	- Corriente Revolucionaria Argentina (Argentine Revolutionary Current)
CSP	- Comando Superior Peronista (Peronist Superior Command)
EGP	- Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo (People's Guerrilla Army)
ENR	- Ejército Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Army)
ERP	- Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (People's Revolutionary Army)
FAL	- Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación (Armed Forces of Liberation)
FAP	- Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas (Peronist Armed Forces)
FAP Nacional	- Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas, Comando Nacional (Peronist Armed Forces, National Command)
FAP 17	- Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas 17 de Octubre (Peronist Armed Forces, 17th October)
FAR	- Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (Revolutionary Armed Forces)
FAS	- Frente Antiimperialista y por el Socialismo (Socialist Anti-Imperialist Front)
FAUDI	- Frente de Agrupaciones Universitarias de Izquierda Left-Wing University Groups Front)
FEN	- Frente Estudiantil Nacionalista (Nationalist Student Front)
FGB	- Federación Gráfica Bonaerense (Buenos Aires Printers Federation.
FIP	- Frente de Izquierda Popular (Popular Left Front)
FOETRA	- Federación de Obreros y Empleados Telefónicos de la República Argentina (Federation of Telephone Workers and Employees of the Argentine Republic)
FORJA	- Fuerza de Orientación Radical de la Joven Argentina (Argentine Youth Force of Radical Orientation)
FREJULI	- Frente Justicialista de Liberación (Justicialist Liberation Front)
FRP	- Frente Revolucionario Peronista (Revolutionary Peronist Front)
FR 17	- Frente Revolucionario 17 de Octubre (17th October Revolutionary Front)
FUA	- Federación Universitaria Argentina (Argentine University Federation)

GAN - Gran Acuerdo Nacional (Lanusse's Great National Agreement scheme)

GNR - Guardia Nacionalista Restauradora (Restorationist Nationalist Guard)

JAEN - Juventud Argentina por la Emancipación Nacional (Argentine Youth for National Emancipation)

JEC - Juventud Estudiantil Católica (Catholic Secondary Student Youth)

JOC - Juventud Obrera Católica (Catholic Working Youth)

JP - Juventud Peronista (Peronist Youth)

JPA - Juventudes Políticas Argentinas (Argentine Political Youth)

JPRA - Juventud Peronista de la República Argentina (Peronist Youth of the Argentine Republic)

JRP - Juventud Revolucionaria Peronista (Peronist Revolutionary Youth)

JSP - Juventud Sindical Peronista (Peronist Trade Union Youth)

JTP - Juventud Trabajadora Peronista (Peronist Working Youth)

JUC - Juventud Universitaria Católica (Catholic University Youth)

JUP - Juventud Universitaria Peronista (Peronist University Youth - pro-Montonero)

JUP - Juventudes Universitarias Peronistas (Peronist University Youth - pre-Montonero)

MASA - Movimiento Antiimperialista por el Socialismo en la Argentina (Anti-Imperialist Movement for Socialism in Argentina)

MIP - Movimiento de Inquilinos Peronistas (Peronist Tenants Movement)

MJP - Movimiento de la Juventud Peronista (Peronist Youth Movement)

MLN - Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Movement)

MNA - Movimiento Nueva Argentina (New Argentina Movement)

MNRT - Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara (Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement)

MOR - Movimiento de Orientación Reformista (Movement of Reformist Orientation)

MPA - Movimiento Peronista Auténtico (Authentic Peronist Movement)

MPM	- Movimiento Peronista Montonero (Montonero Peronist Movement)
MRA	- Movimiento Revolucionario Argentino (Argentine Revolutionary Movement)
MRP	- Movimiento Revolucionario Peronista (Revolutionary Peronist Movement)
MR 17	- Movimiento Revolucionario 17 de October (17th October Revolutionary Movement)
MSB	- Movimiento Sindical de Base (Rank-and-File Trade Union Movement)
MSC	- Movimiento Sindical Combativo (Combative Trade Union Movement)
MVP	- Movimiento de Villeros Peronistas (Peronist Shanty-Town Dwellers Movement)
NACLA	- North American Congress on Latin America
OAP	- Organizaciones Armadas Peronistas (Peronist Armed Organisations)
OCPO	- Organización Comunista Poder Obrero (Workers' Power Communist Organisation)
OLA	- Organización para la Liberación de Argentina (Argentine Liberation Organisation)
OLAS	- Organisation for Latin American Solidarity
PB	- Peronismo de Base (Rank-and-File Peronism)
PB Nacional	- Peronismo de Base, Comando Nacional (Rank-and-File Peronism, National Command)
PB 17	- Peronismo de Base 17 de Octubre (Rank-and-File Peronism, 17th October)
PCA	- Partido Comunista de la Argentina (Argentine Communist Party)
PCR	- Partido Comunista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Communist Party)
PI	- Partido Intransigente (Intransigent Party)
PJ	- Partido Justicialista (Justicialist Party)
PM	- Partido Montonero (Montonero Party)
PPA	- Partido Peronista Auténtico (Authentic Peronist Party)
PRC	- Partido Revolucionario Cristiano (Revolutionary Christian Party)
PRT	- Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Workers' Revolutionary Party)

PSA - Partido Socialista Argentino (Argentine Socialist Party)

PSIN - Partido Socialista de la Izquierda Nacional (Socialist Party of the National Left)

PSRN - Partido Socialista de la Revolución Nacional (Socialist Party of the National Revolution)

PST - Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party)

PSV - Partido Socialista de Vanguardia (Vanguard Socialist Party)

SITRAC - Sindicato de Trabajadores de Concord (Concord Workers Union - Córdoba)

SITRAM - Sindicato de Trabajadores de Materfer (Materfer Workers Union - Córdoba)

62 de Pie - 62 de Pie junto a Perón (62 on Foot with Perón)

SMATA - Sindicato de Mecánicos y Afines del Transporte Automotor (Car Workers Union)

SUD - Sindicato Universitario de Derecho (University Law Union)

UCR - Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union)

UCRI - Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (Intransigent Radical Civic Union)

UCRP - Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo (People's Radical Civic Union)

UES - Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios (Secondary Students Union)

UNES - Unión Nacionalista de Estudiantes Secundarios (Secondary Students Nationalist Union)

UOCRA - Unión Obrera de la Construcción de la República Argentina (Construction Workers Union of the Argentine Republic)

UOM - Unión Obrera Metalúrgica (Metalworkers Union)

UTA - Unión Tranviarios Automotor (Transport Workers Union)