

Wolfgang R. Heuer

THE POLITICS OF ATROCITY

On the Genealogy of Structural Violence in Argentina

[transcript] PoliticalScience

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For Matilda

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1 Preface

We must demilitarise trade union and political life.
We must banish arrogance from Argentine society.

And I believe – this is something that all Argentinians who are in their right mind after the absolute madness that this has all become, with the incredible climax of the Malvinas question – that there is no reasonable Argentine who does not share these ideas. I believe that this time it will be possible.

Juan Manuel Abal Medina

*Secretary General of the Peronist Movement
1972–1974*

Interview with Revista Siete Días, March 1983

When I was invited to a conference on the culture of remembrance at the University of Córdoba, Argentina, in 2023, I had no idea how much this visit would move me and inspire me to take a journey through Argentine history. The conference was organised by colleagues I knew very well, and they had asked me to give the closing speech. I was very surprised at how strongly my rather casual criticism of the Montoneros (the Peronist urban guerrilla group) was received. Even decades later, the horror, pain and loss of that period are still very much present. The past has not yet passed, and the present is the time and place for controversial interpretations.

Forty years after the end of the military dictatorship, there was still no unanimous opinion on the actions of the Montoneros. While the right-wing Peronists apologetically spoke of the “two demons”, the military and the guerrilla, the left-wing Peronists were reluctant to openly criticise the Montoneros. It was obviously impossible to equate the experiences in Argentina with mine in Germany. Thirty thousand young people, mainly from the Argentine middle class, had been kidnapped and murdered. Siblings, friends, children, people were arrested at random.

The outcome was disastrous for everyone involved. The novel on this subject by the Argentine Martin Caparrós is titled “A quien corresponda” (*To Whom it may Concern*).

When I accompanied a student group from West Berlin to Argentina in 1974, I saw only the glittering façade, the radical. Tens of thousands of supporters of the Montoneros took part in frequent demonstrations, accompanied by loud drums and chanting slogans. The weekly magazine “La Causa Peronista” was available at news-stands, featuring spectacular reports on kidnappings and assassinations.

The sensational rise of the Montoneros, attracting a significant proportion of the Argentine youth of that era, was followed by disillusionment in the face of increasing murders by right-wing death squads and later by the military. In contrast, the West German terrorist organisation ‘Red Army Faction’ (Baader–Meinhof Group) remained marginal throughout its existence. And while in West Germany the constitutional state successfully combated the RAF through propaganda and police action, the Argentine military unleashed a “dirty war” unprecedented in Latin America to annihilate the guerrilla movement.

The fact that today, many decades later, there seems to be little criticism or self-criticism of, for example, the murder of right-wing Peronist officials by the Montoneros made me pause. These murders are still justified as resistance against the exploiters and oppressors in the country, and of course thousands of Montoneros were armed to start a revolutionary war when the opportunity arose.

This led me to consider the role of violence, which seemed to take precedence over the movement’s political goals. Given the politically divided society, a revolution would be bloody above all else. On the other hand, a counter-revolution took shape in the form of a military dictatorship that did not shy away from genocidal measures to exterminate the children of the middle class and was therefore the decisive opponent of the revolutionaries. The supporters of the violent war of liberation in Argentina and their sympathisers in Europe recklessly believed that unleashing the struggle would bring the goal of a revolutionary society closer.

No one had read Hannah Arendt. And even if they had, her uncomfortable theses would have been summarily rejected. “What a load of crap,” was how a left-wing journalist in Berlin described Arendt’s book on the revolution to me. My observation that violence tends to unleash a momentum of its own that is difficult to rein in did not impress him. People like to read what reinforces their existing opinions, not what requires them to engage in critical reflection.

However, there is one phenomenon that distinguishes Argentina from the wealthy countries of Europe, namely the social question. Poverty, the division between rich and poor, the arrogance of power, corruption and the lack of a tradition of enlightenment all promote violence, both on the side of oppression and of resistance. A look at Argentina’s history reveals a wealth of violent relationships since the wars of independence. Deep-seated social and political injustice is compounded by

anomie, the structural weakness of the state, the resulting lack of law enforcement and spread of corruption, and finally a deep-rooted culture of violence.

These are presented here in chronological order: the politics of violence, the culture of violence, and the culture of cruelty. After the War of Independence (1810 to 1818), Argentina sank into a 40-year civil war between the provinces. This was finally ended by the bloody dictatorship of Rosas, which also enabled the formation of a unified state. The subsequent expansion into Patagonia as the third step after independence and civil war or dictatorship directed the violence outwards and led to a war of conquest against the owners of the vast and fertile lands, the numerous indigenous peoples. Geopolitical strengthening against Chile, economic enrichment and racist extermination coincided. Thus, expansion and genocide together lead to the completion of the new nation. The war of extermination against the indigenous peoples is clearly genocide, which continues with similarly murderous energy in the unbridled willingness to crush protests by the emerging working class at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the 20th century, we encounter military dictatorships whose actors defended the power of the land oligarchy through political regulation. Between these, Perón, as a populist representative of the new social classes, advocated the idea of a corporate state borrowed from Italian fascism, but after nine years in office he was removed by the military and the bourgeoisie in a coup and prevented from returning to power for 18 years. Under the influence of the Cuban and other revolutions, Peronism split in the 1960s into a left-wing guerrilla movement and a right-wing trade union movement, leading to what was to date the last dictatorship in Argentina. After defeating the guerrilla movement, they unleashed a reckless war against Great Britain over the Falkland Islands, lost it and with it their reputation, and stepped down in favour of democratic elections.

Argentina has thus experienced every conceivable form of violence. These are expressions of a long-standing socio-cultural disposition, which may also explain the resistance to profound criticism of violence. Various phenomena of violence become apparent. In particular, a culture of violence that regulates its acceptance, as well as its use. The national epic “*Martin Fierro*”, which is steeped in violence, is still part of everyday cultural life. So too is the experience of brutal cattle ranching. Electric cattle prods are used to torture political opponents, and in the 19th century, under the dictatorship of Rosas, the people were decked out with red ribbons like cattle.

Similarly, the divisions between classes and parties provide ample opportunity for irreconcilable conflicts that lead to violence. Finally, there are psychological crises that can be counted among the various trauma caused by physical and psychological violence, such as the depressions during the long period of economic decline since the 1930s, which appear in literature as “metaphors of failure” (Scheines, Chapter 7), leading to a high number of suicides among poets.

Of course, Argentina is not alone in its excesses of violence. The Holocaust committed by the Germans, the colonial wars waged by Europeans, the Armenian genocides or the horrors of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, among many others show that such acts of violence are possible everywhere. The United States is also a nation steeped in violence. It too was founded through a war of independence, the indigenous population was killed to take possession of the land, and slavery was only finally abolished after the Civil War, when the very existence of the republic had been at stake.

But in Argentina, there is a striking continuity of class violence — no enlightened overcoming of the feudal mindset of the colonial administration, no bourgeois reform of the oligarchic land and livestock economy, and no reform of rural property relations, as in the United States, Canada or Australia, where the appropriate size has increased productivity. Cruel is the treatment of animals in the livestock industry, the genocide of indigenous peoples, the torture and murder of members of the young left-wing Peronist middle class, who were thrown into the sea while still conscious, and the new fate known as “disappeared.” Although all of these are forms of violence, this term lacks emotional impact, or subjectivity. Cruelty, on the other hand is terrible for the victim, and in its act horrific.

Other phenomena that encourage violence, besides the culture of violence, class structures and structural injustice, are weak political and administrative institutions that fail to enforce law and order, a lack of guidance caused by the collapse of social norms that is called *anomie*. The consequences are corruption, damage to economic production and losses in the financial sector. Instead of horizontal power through the empowerment of individuals, *anomie* promotes vertical rule by cliques. Whereas anarchists define power and rule in equally negative terms, republicanism distinguishes between positive politics as power in a pluralistic form on the one hand and rule as a relationship of force on the other.

The interaction between a weakening of power and the associated increase in violence can be understood as a decline in civic action and an increase in violence to enforce particular interests, but also conversely the strengthening of power reduces violent relations through consensual action. However, this requires social conditions based on justice. What Arendt describes as the formation of power is, for Lincoln, the majority principle. In his speech on the indissolubility of the Union in 1861, he declared:

A majority, held in check by the restraints and limitations of the Constitution, and constantly modified by the wise changes in the views and sentiments of the people, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Those who reject it necessarily drift towards anarchy or despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority is completely unacceptable as a permanent institution, so that if the majority principle is rejected, only anarchy or despotism in some form remains.

Power and violence mark the contrasts between a pluralistic, largely non-violent citizenry and a rule based on violence. From this contrast, it can be concluded that the weaker power, politics and civil society are, the more easily violence can spread, and conversely, an increase in violence not only reveals the weakness of power, but can also contribute to its further weakening.

Accordingly, Arendt's concludes in her essay on power and violence that "any loss of power opens the door to violence, if only because rulers who feel that power is slipping from their hands have very rarely in history been able to resist the temptation to replace it with violence." According to Arendt, there is also the "danger of violence, even when it is consciously kept within the bounds of short-term goals," in that, "as is commonly said, it is not the end that determines the means, but the means that determine the end. If the goals are not achieved quickly, the result is ultimately not only defeat, but the prevalence of violence in all areas of political life."

This interplay between violence and anarchy has accompanied politics in Argentina for the 200 years since independence. In the following, I will primarily document the sequence of forms of violence, highlighting the weaknesses of power and politics. To illustrate the violence, I will draw on numerous eyewitness accounts and literature. The events should not be left to objective, dry documentation, but should strengthen the imagination and arouse feelings such as compassion and outrage. Your outrage is necessary so that we no longer resign ourselves to violence as a supposedly unalterable part of politics and rule.

Arendt defended her stance of not writing *sine ira et studio* about totalitarian rule. She even considered it impossible to write about the situation of English miners without emotion. In this way, two perspectives are placed in a reciprocal dynamic of scientific factuality and literary interpretation, creating a unique narrative style through a shared history of micro- and macro-narratives, while at the same time producing a thematically limited narrative of its own. (Koschorke) This study thus represents an approach to an interdisciplinary scientific-literary form of investigation and knowledge, in which science is not to be replaced by literature or vice versa. Personal experience is fundamental here: "One can only survive one's own life by narrating it, by narrating oneself," explains Swiss writer Peter Bichsel. For the thinker Arendt, too, experience is the starting point of thought and at the same time the place of a reflexive connection, so as not to end up in "any" theory, i.e. one that is alien to the world.

In this study, as in the sciences of politics, society and literature, there remains an obligation to renounce violence, as Tocqueville postulated in his study of democracy in America with regard to a constitution and jurisprudence that recognise and defend human dignity, because this makes people's behaviour gentler. "In democratic ages, people rarely sacrifice themselves for one another; but they express a general sympathy for all members of the human race. They do not inflict useless suffering, and when they can alleviate the pain of others without harming themselves

much, they do so willingly; they are not unselfish, but they are mild." Conversely, morals become brutalised when politics and the judiciary disregard the principles of justice.

I ask my friends and colleagues in Argentina for their indulgence. This is the view of a friend from outside. The critical tone is not an expression of disaffection, but quite the opposite: it is an expression of sympathy for the many stories of suffering, without forgetting the great cultural achievements. After all, this is not a work of historical research, but a collection of stories that revolve around the phenomena of violence and politics in different voices.

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2 Arrival in the Present

Elections | Immigrants | The Argentinians | Protest Potential

Flight with Aerolineas Argentinas, from Madrid to Buenos Aires in 12 hours, dinner without the usual alternative: chicken or pasta. Now there is only pasta, hard, almost inedible. When the seats recline, the passengers in economy class are wedged in until breakfast – it is animal class. Meanwhile, in human class, the beds are pulled out and alcoholic beverages are served. In the morning, passengers lament the rapid end of the night, while in animal class, hope springs eternal that the stiffness in their limbs, the fright caused by turbulence, the fitful sleep and the boring films on the back of the seat in front of them will soon be over, and they can distract themselves with a meagre breakfast. Flights with other airlines don't look much different, but here you can see the consequences of a long economic crisis. At 4 a.m., the plane touches down gently on the runway.

In the taxi, we talk about the traffic congestion and the inaction of the administration. It would be very easy, says the driver, to widen the motorway. But the politicians aren't interested. Sixty years ago, they were normal people, now they're all millionaires. Why 60 years, I wonder? Because in the first 30 years, military dictatorships and civilian governments at the mercy of the military took turns in power, and in the second 30 years, the representatives of the bourgeois parties treated democracy as a self-service shop. Everyone lined their pockets. However, those who did so unscrupulously, such as former President Cristina Kirchner, ended up in court.

Elections It is disillusioning for the taxi driver that Kirchner does not belong to the rich and reactionary upper class of rural landowners, but to the social democratic wing of Peronism, which is nevertheless corrupt and obviously does not care about the interests of the population. If the populist, pro-people faction falls due to corruption, the only option left is Argentina's oldest party, the liberal UCR, which has also been happy to help itself in the past. That leaves unstable electoral alliances or – yes, banging your fist on the table and saying: I'll vote for whoever cleans up your mess, like Trump and Bolsonaro.

Isn't that to be expected? Shortly afterwards, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation declared: "To the great surprise of all experts and election researchers, the undis-

puted winner of the primaries is Javier Milei, leader of the party he founded, *La Libertad Avanza* (Freedom Advances). This surprise is no coincidence; it is part of the problem. Don't experts realise that enormous inflation is rapidly impoverishing the population? Within three weeks, the value has fallen by 10% and continues to fall. Don't they hear the rattling noises of taxis that are almost unroadworthy, don't they feel the violent swaying of the suspension? Does the taxi driver have to explain the obvious to you: that he has no money for repairs when the fare is a tenth of what it would cost for a similar journey in Berlin? That a new taxi cost 2 million pesos last year, but now costs 3 million? That he has cut back on food and drink, that he really needs to buy new trousers, but keeps putting it off? That he has two children but can only afford school fees for one – but which one? Don't the experts notice how happy this driver is about a tip with the comment that it's for a beer after work, for him alone, without thinking about whether the money is enough?

Don't the experts notice how run-down Buenos Aires is? The once-rich metropolis with its imposing bank buildings, hotels and government offices that give the impression of being in Rome or Paris? Behind one façade today are the sales rooms of a fashion chain, behind another, the yawning emptiness of a once luxurious grand hotel and a small university seminar room. And between the buildings is a dilapidated pedestrian arcade with cheap shops, street vendors and money changers.

In contrast, nearby along the former port of Puerto Madero, there are two kilometres of large residential and office buildings, next to former port buildings that have been converted into a private university, and behind them a nature reserve with a wooden footpath – all of which is very remarkable and incomparably larger than Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, which was glorified as Europe's largest construction site after German unification.

Immigrants Every time they pay what seems like a ridiculous price, foreigners rejoice inwardly. How cheap this trip is. Even for the many Brazilians in the city. Now it's worth it. That's what their feelings tell them. And reason remains silent. But reason must feel, not so much our profit as the losses of those who are becoming impoverished. Emotion must question reason, but reason must also feel, so that with every cry of joy, at least one silent cry of pain can be heard.

This explains why the tango shows are poorly attended. Artistic dancing, the wonderful Aníbal Troilo orchestra with two bandoneons, two violins, a double bass, a piano and a singer, musical and dance perfection, performed in a large 1920s-style café on a street corner, *Café de los Angelitos*. Behind the curtain, a large theatre opens up with long tables where you can eat to music and dancing, or just drink wine. At a show in *La Ventana*, Argentina is presented as a nation accompanied by tango, with Andean music showcasing its diversity and simplicity with a nationalistic flag parade that almost blows your glass off the table in the fervour of the performance. Of course, *Evita* is also a must.

The experiences of migration are widespread:

Adiós mi España querida/ Dentro de mi alma te llevo metida /Aunque soy un / emigrante jamás en / La vida yo podre olvidarte
Yo soy un pobre emigrante / Y traigo a esta tierra extraña / En mi pecho un estandarte / Con la alegría de España / Con mi patria y con mi novia / Y mi virgen de San Gil / Y mi rosario de cuentas yo me quisiera morir

Farewell, my beloved Spain. / I carry you in my soul, resting there / Even though I am an emigrant, I could never forget you in my life.
I am a poor emigrant / and I bring to this foreign land / a banner in my chest, / full of the joy of Spain. / With my homeland and my bride / and my Virgin of San Gil / and my rosary of stories / I would like to die.

El emigrante, Antonio Molina

Another emigrant comes from Berlin, Paul Zech. His relationship with the truth is fragile. It seems that he did start an apprenticeship as a baker, but all other information about his profession and academic title, Dr Zech, is invented. He is a talented expressionist poet, Else Lasker-Schüler promotes him, and he maintains a long-standing correspondence with Franz Werfel. He eventually finds a job at the Berlin State Library. When he is dismissed in 1933 because of his proximity to social democracy and is investigated for stealing several books from an estate, he flees via Trieste to Buenos Aires. He leaves his family behind. He publishes poetry collections that almost no one buys and writes 20 plays, hardly any of which are ever performed. He writes for the German-language *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, and his travelogues through South America are fictional. His novel *Michael M. irrt durch Buenos Aires. Aufzeichnungen eines Emigranten* (Michael M. Wanders Through Buenos Aires: Notes of an Emigrant), however, is based on his own experiences.

He had experienced all the hellish aspects of being an unemployed gringo. From begging on the streets to staying in a cave camp for homeless people. He had often been rounded up by the police for being in these “uncivilised” areas. And he had been even more thoroughly plundered, stabbed and beaten by the hyenas of misery, eaten by vermin and plagued by the cold of the night and scabies, when his fate had taken the lowest turn in Germany.

Night, lights, the moon, they all reflect the state of mind of the immigrants, more clearly visible in the darkness than during the day.

And where people sometimes still stood together under a group of trees, an ice cart next to them and a hearse beside it, a picture emerged, a huge painting, stark

and shadowless, reminiscent of the primitiveness of Henri Rousseau's images. This moon painted ever new evening landscapes with its broad flowing brush. Sometimes they were almost like paintings by van Gogh, so compressed and condensed to the essence of all things. And then again, ghostly Edvard Munch, in between with blown-off green and bluish inks, the houses shimmering with an unreal light, the trees in a cloud of earthiness, completely grey and tired and almost in the blackness of doom. At the outer edges, the apparition of death, a death that instils fear and terror.

As I gaze at this moon-like landscape, constantly changing in its painting style, I forget the most obvious thing: to take a tram.

And so the homeless reappear in earthly form.

Young actors, merchants and bank clerks who had left their homes to become farmers on a new earth [...] People who bravely set out for a country that actually still has plenty of room for the new Canaanites, but no money and no awareness of how to make these vast spaces habitable for human beings, have once again become bundles of misfortune, haunting the streets of Paris, Prague, Amsterdam and London in the first weeks and months of their homelessness. After a few weeks of hospital care, former young actors, merchants and bank clerks will once again become apprentices in a new working district: weavers, meat packers, warehouse workers or peddlers. Innocent, sensitive souls who often have to crawl into the most worn and stinking rags of misery to earn their daily dry bread and bed of bugs.

The Argentine population feels European, not South American. This is encouraged by the constitution: since independence in 1810, immigrants should be primarily Europeans, according to the first constitution of all 13 provinces, with the exception of Buenos Aires in 1853. Article 25 is entitled "Promotion of immigration" and reads: "The federal government shall promote European immigration; it shall not in any way restrict or impose taxes on the entry of foreigners into Argentine territory who come with the intention of cultivating the land, improving trade, and introducing and teaching science and the arts." This article survived seven constitutional reforms, the last one in 1994. The architect of the constitution, Juan Bautista Alberdi, justified this article in his 1852 work "Fundamentals and Starting Points for the Political Organisation of the Argentine Republic" with the aim of combining progress and industrialisation, i.e. attracting a suitably qualified European workforce.

This was a controlled European immigration policy.

To govern means to populate in the sense that to populate means to educate, improve, civilise, enrich and enlarge spontaneously and quickly, as has been done in the United States. But in order to civilise through population, it is necessary to

deal with civilised populations; in order to educate our America in freedom and industry, it is necessary to populate it with populations from a Europe that is more advanced in the development of freedom and industry [...] There are foreigners of all kinds; and even if Europe is the most civilised part of the world, there are still more millions of savages in Europe and in the heart of its glittering capitals than in the whole of South America. Everything that is civilised is European, at least in origin, but not everything that is civilised is European; and one can easily imagine the burden of a new country populated by Europeans who have even less knowledge of industry and freedom than the hordes of the Pampas or the Chaco.

The Argentinians Is that where the arrogance comes from? “We Argentinians are not modest, we are very conceited,” explains Pope Francis, himself an Argentinian, and asks journalist Valentina Alazraki with a smile: “Do you know how an Argentinian commits suicide? No? He climbs on his ego and throws himself off.” (14 March 2015) The Argentinians know this. “The worst thing about Argentina is ourselves. Apart from that, it’s the best country in the world.” Enough reason for neighbouring Brazil to mock them. Especially when the economy and finances are in a permanent crisis, politicians mainly serve their own clientele, and revolutionaries and the military shake the community to its core.

Reasons for psychotherapy. Buenos Aires has the highest number of psychologists and psychiatrists per capita. In the 1930s, many psychologists came from Germany and Europe. This puts Argentina, as in many other areas, far ahead of its neighbours. With the decline of Argentina and the military dictatorship that began in 1976, many fled to Brazil. The neighbouring country is catching up. “Argentina is a country enthusiastic about psychotherapy,” writes the German medical journal *Ärzteblatt*. There is “hardly any other nation that takes psychological and psychotherapeutic services for granted as much as the Argentinians.” Given the long waiting lists, “many patients from the lower classes are treated with short-term therapies” – in order to have more time for the middle and upper classes.

The ambiguity of arrogance and decline, self-importance and self-doubt is also the subject of psychological studies. The “Argentinidad-Report 2017” by the Universidad Siglo XXI in Córdoba surveyed 1000 residents of Buenos Aires and other cities aged between 18 and 65 and came to the following conclusions: 45 percent consider themselves interesting, 38 percent display a compulsive personality, 33 percent consider perfectionism important, and 55 percent feel compelled to keep their emotions completely under control, which indicates difficulties in dealing with frustration; A histrionic personality disorder in the form of attention-seeking behaviour, a need for recognition, theatricality and excessive emotionality contradicts the much-vaunted “thought control”.

After all, 35 percent of those surveyed consider feelings and intuition to be more important than rational thinking and planning. 25 percent felt ignored. The most

histrionic, i.e. narcissistic and compulsive, are the 51- to 65-year-olds, with 32 percent considering Argentinians to be histrionic, while the 18- to 31-year-olds emerge as the most paranoid in the survey. Paranoid behaviour is accompanied by mistrust of others, with 33 percent agreeing with the description of Argentinians as paranoid, 54 percent mistrusting others, and 25 percent feeling bad when ignored. Perhaps the many visits to therapy are just part of the game.

Psychologists interviewed by the newspaper *La Nación* confirm the conclusions: "A certain intolerance to frustration and difficulty empathising with others, [...] a certain difficulty in developing a community project, [...] (and) not accepting common rules." This corresponds to the type of government that exists in Latin America: [...] personalistic leadership that was legitimised after the economic and party-political crises of the late 1990s." (*La Nación*, 6 July 2017)

Accommodation in a holiday apartment in the old district of San Telmo. Two storeys for four people, modern furnishings, the owner is Danish, the manager a young Argentinean. Everything is nice, practical and perfect. It feels like being in Europe. But then again, not quite, because in winter the electric heating panels hanging on the wall, one per room, don't provide enough heat unless you sit right next to them. On the second evening, the power suddenly cuts out, lights are on everywhere except in this apartment. The heating panels cool down, mobile phones stop charging, and eventually the computers shut down. All that remains is the sofa or bed with a few thin blankets. Fortunately, cafés with power sockets and hot coffee open the next morning. By the afternoon, the damage to the power supply has been repaired. When it happens again the next evening, we know the routine.

In the historic market hall of San Telmo, at one of the many food stalls, we mention that our colleague lives in Slovenia. Where is that, asks the young man behind the counter. Between Italy and Austria. Oh, I see, he says slowly, looking through all the hall walls into the distance. Should he admit that he doesn't know where Italy is, when at least half of Argentina's population comes from there (), or is it Austria, which for him, if anything, has something to do with Vienna, but where is Vienna?

Your Spanish sounds wonderful, two taxi drivers say independently to Cristina, the Spanish woman. Argentine Spanish is characterised by an Italian sing-song, which suits the melodramatic Argentine way of life better than the rough and sonorous Castilian. But that may be a reminder of the ancestors who once came to Buenos Aires.

Have I arrived? Against the backdrop of former banks and hotels? The cafés where dozens of small espresso cups used to wait on the counter for the employees who rushed in in the morning, gathering noisily at the bar before disappearing back into the tall grey buildings half an hour later? Have I arrived at the magnificent Ateneo bookshop, where theatre was once performed and where vast quantities of books are now sold? Arrival is a long, repetitive process. It is full of surprises. Every day, you struggle with jet lag, your freedom of movement is restricted by COVID,

and you stumble into holes and trip on raised paving stones, resulting in a painfully sprained foot.

Or he comes up against the renewed border regime. Arrival as a delay in getting there. Waiting time.

Protest Potential Day trip across the River Plate to Colonia de Sacramento in Uruguay. Early to the harbour, in a hall the administrative Argentine-Uruguay border (not the geographical border). Marked by a row of two-person border huts, with an Argentine official sitting in front and a Uruguayan behind, looking in the opposite direction. At the front is Argentina, which you are leaving, and two metres further back is Uruguay. These huts are located in a large building, and you don't just walk from one official to the other, but join a queue that winds its way around until you reach the second official.

In the evening, the return journey is on a large ferry painted black, like a modern pirate ship. Cars drive into the belly of the ship and passengers climb up to the upper decks. The duty-free shop is emptied within minutes, with sweets, alcohol and toys flying off the shelves.

Arrival. Crowds stream out of the ship and into the building. Those who have forgotten are now reminded that they will not be getting home quickly, but will have to join a long queue and slowly, practically standing still, glide into the building – is it the same building? Will it be the same control booths? Like in a large car park, the arrivals move almost invisibly towards two lost hours. Then the waiting people suddenly start clapping and booing, louder and louder, clearer and clearer. When they stop some faces light up, others are red with anger. It seems as if things are moving a little faster. Everyone has understood. The new arrivals are not sleepwalkers, nor have they forgotten. When I tell those present about this later at dinner, a student beams: "That's why I love living in this country." Having a say in how you arrive.

3 Crisis and Violence

Financial and Economic Crisis | The Enigma of Economic Policy | Successors to the Successors | Corruption

Financial and Economic Crisis Back to inflation. What is its secret and that of the financial and economic crises? And what about the constant ups and downs in this country's economy?

I ask my friend Alex Bazelow in New York, who has been studying these issues for a long time. He also studied political philosophy with Hannah Arendt and her husband Heinrich Blücher and was her assistant.

There are many types of inflation and many theories about its causes, he explains. Sometimes the causes are merely the effects of other causes. A simplified theory, well known even to laypeople, is that inflation occurs when too much money chases too few goods and services. However, this theory does not distinguish between supply shocks, where the volume of goods and services collapses (as during the Covid pandemic), and currency collapses, as in Germany in the 1920s and Zimbabwe more recently. In the case of the Weimar Republic, this was the result of decisions by Hjalmar Schacht, the German Reich's Minister of Economics, to print Reichsmarks in order to pay reparations. (Ferguson) In the case of Zimbabwe, it was rampant political and economic corruption under the regime of Robert Mugabe and his successors. This latter case is most similar to Argentina, although Argentina has not yet experienced true hyperinflation (defined as a price increase of 50 per cent or more, month after month, over a prolonged period). Alex writes:

People often look for complicated explanations when less complex ones are right in front of them. Argentina, like the Soviet Union after Lenin, China after Mao, Zimbabwe after the collapse of the Rhodesian apartheid state, and Spain after the civil war, all experienced a collapse of civil society. In some countries, such as Spain after the dictatorship, South Africa or even Russia before Putin's rise, remnants of civil society remained that were strong enough to help these countries mature and reform, even if the process was long and uneven. In other countries, such as Russia, this was not the case.

When a civil society collapses and enough generations experience the collapse

as inevitable, they lose all hope. In my opinion, this is exactly what happened in Argentina. My proof is this: doesn't everyone believe that if 95 per cent of Argentina's debt were cancelled tomorrow, the same thing would happen again in ten years?

There are no economic equations that can solve the problem. It is a political problem, not an economic one, and I have the impression that the major powers, as in many other parts of the world, are easily exploiting the divisions that have arisen.

I could also say that there are warnings for us in the West here. It is almost impossible to look around and not feel the sense of hopelessness that young people in particular are experiencing.

Argentina's fate could easily become our own.

All the best, 13 August 2023

In a second email, he immediately adds:

I must point out that even though the United States and the European Union have high levels of debt, and a large portion of this debt is held by foreign countries, it is denominated in their own currencies. In Argentina, the currency is the problem; unlike, for example, the Brazilian real or the Mexican peso, it is only accepted outside Argentina by financial speculators. As with the Turkish currency, another example, Argentina is experiencing a collapse of civil society that reflects a lack of confidence in the country's government. For Argentina, Peronism has always been the greatest misfortune. The Peronists have built a cult around themselves, just like the cult around Stalin or Mao or Erdogan or Trump, even in the face of irrefutable evidence today, and political cults, once deeply rooted, are all the more difficult to remove the longer they exist as a political force. That is what Trump has tried and is trying to do; the people who support Trump are as fervent as the most fervent Peronists and cannot be dissuaded from their beliefs, even when presented with irrefutable evidence. They consist largely of what used to be called the working class, and for me, one of the most tragic things is seeing them at his rallies, cheering his speeches and waving his red MAGA (Make America Great Again) hats like Mao's little red book, while he secretly mocks and disparages them because he really doesn't like them.

One of the economic problems I see today is the lack of agency in all national currencies. Everyone is handed colourful pieces of paper with politicians' faces printed on them. Citizens have little idea where this paper comes from, what it has to do with their individual economic lives, and what it means for their future. I have argued in some financial forums that, if properly regulated, the new cryptocurrencies could offer a partial solution to the problem of agency because they would allow individual communities to issue their own currency to pay for

the goods and services produced within their borders.¹ Unfortunately, cryptocurrencies are mostly in the hands of criminals today. This is a very complicated issue, but before we start talking about new world orders that could easily turn into new world dictatorships, it would certainly be worth investigating further. None of this can help Argentina at the moment, but as long as there is no generation of politicians willing to take responsibility for their decisions and institutions, nothing will help.

It's all here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU5tGYDe9zk>

Civil societies can collapse, but in most cases they recover. Argentina has been in debt for over a century. You can't blame the IMF for that. All the talk of dollarisation distracts from the real problem. One of the most important aspects of Solanas's significant film² is that it exposes the last dollarisation programme under Carlos Menem. What did Menem do when the currency stabilised? He borrowed more money. The result: a national bankruptcy of 200 billion dollars, the largest in history.³

At a time when they could have implemented reforms, as Mexico did after the Latin American debt crisis in the 1980s and in 1995, they continued to borrow money. No one held a gun to their heads and forced them to do so.

Best regards, 14 August 2023

The outlook is bleak.

Politicians often blame the markets for their problems without realising that trying to eliminate market pricing does not eliminate the markets. It only shifts them. Regulated markets become black markets, prices are either inflated or shortages occur, and a shadow economy emerges which, if not curbed, eats away at the real economy. The result: a mafia-like economy that becomes the economy of a mafia-like political state.

Now Milei wants to administer “economic shock therapy” to Argentina if he is elected. People have short memories. It was the “shock therapy” developed by economists that enabled the Russian oligarchs to amass great wealth and bring Vladimir Putin to power. The abolition of the ministries of education, health and finance, which Milei boasts he will do, will only mean decades of political anarchy and perhaps even a return to dictatorship. This is very tragic. The right-wing media cannot praise him enough.

Best regards, 14 August 2023

You cannot introduce austerity measures or “shock therapy” in an economy as

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- 1 See the discussion between Professor Gary Gorton, Professor of Finance, Yale University School of Management, and Stefan Ingeves, Governor of The Sveriges Riksbank of Sweden at the Swedish House of Finance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UUXKBprVE4>).
 - 2 Pino Solanas, *Memoria del Saqueo*, 2004
 - 3 See the IMF, Argentina, <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/ARG>

weak and devastated as Argentina's, because that could easily trigger a depression and deal a fatal blow to the whole of Latin America. This is not a reasonable or normal economy. The London Financial Times interviewed him and was astonished by some of his statements. What kind of person names each of his four dogs after one of the "Chicago Boys"? That's not normal.⁴

Alex concludes:

In my opinion, what Argentina needs is the economic equivalent of the "Juicio a las Juntas" (the trial of the military juntas of the 1976–1983 dictatorship, WH), i.e. a judicial investigation involving all social groups to examine the economic mismanagement of recent decades, identify those responsible and create new institutions led by people with a sense of social and political responsibility.⁵ There is no law of nature that says Argentina cannot have a banking system like Brazil's, which, while not perfect, was strong enough that even Bolsonaro's government could not destroy it. It is not an economic law that Argentina's great wealth of natural resources should be secured in the form of government debt, which, when added to existing debt, leads to the destruction of the currency and then to further debt. If Western economists want to use Argentina as a laboratory for their experiments, then they should also bear the responsibility and the losses when these experiments fail and everything collapses. None of this is necessary.

All the best, 16 August 2023

But it happened and it is happening. Why?

The Enigma of Economic Policy Argentina has declined from being one of the ten richest countries in the world in 1913 to being an emerging economy. According to the first census, Argentina had 1.8 million inhabitants in 1869, 71% of whom were illiterate. With the development of a strong export economy (wheat, meat), the expansion of a railway network, the recruitment of migrants and the introduction of universal education, Argentina experienced a dreamlike upswing until 1930. Massive immigration brought 7 million people to the country between independence in 1810 and the outbreak of the First World War, 1.7 million of them between 1901 and 1910. In addition, many Southern Europeans came to Argentina for seasonal work. The beginnings of industrialisation and the construction of the Buenos Aires underground railway in 1913 (Paris 1900, Berlin 1902) accompanied the boom.

4 See <https://www.ft.com/content/782197c9-35dd-42e4-96f3-910cf60e9ecf>

5 This could be carried out as a formal legal investigation or as something like a truth commission, as described by Claudia Hilb <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC169558>).

However, the global economic crisis of 1929 caused industrialised countries to switch to import substitution, forcing Argentina to increase its own production of industrial goods. This in turn promoted the growth of a broad working class and the nationalist and socially oriented populism of Perón, accompanied by generous social programmes thanks to the increase in foreign exchange reserves. Nevertheless, economic growth between 1933 and 1943 averaged only one per cent due to a lack of economic strategy. With the agricultural sector severely disadvantaged and parts of the middle and upper classes despising Peronism, the military felt encouraged to overthrow Perón in 1955.

A period of economic and political instability began, with five military coups, the last and most brutal of which took place in 1976. In a constant economic paradigm shift, classical liberalism prevailed at times, followed by *desarrollismo* with stronger state intervention in the economy, and then nationalist policies. None of this was able to halt the decline. With the beginning of the last dictatorship in 1976, neoliberal policies were introduced, which lasted until 2001, plunging into a severe crisis and were replaced by an economic recovery that lasted until 2012, but then fell back into a crisis.

The list of economic ministers since the end of the dictatorship in 1983 contains 30 names for 30 years. One exception right at the beginning is the longest term of office of four years: many last only a few months, the shortest one day. As an example, Nicolás Dujovne, a member of the liberal UCR party, served under conservative President Mauricio Macri from 2017, and stepped down after two years, seven months and sixteen days in office. During his short tenure, unemployment rose to 10.1 per cent and poverty reached a record high of 32 per cent, affecting 14 million people. Monthly debt payments could only be met with the largest loan in the history of the International Monetary Fund.

Successors to the Successors No one wants to take responsibility for the debacle. The borrowing is controversial because of the link between loans and fiscal reforms. Even supposedly educated university professors, ignorant of the economic context, parrot the mantra that the IMF is to blame for all this – unemployment, poverty, price increases, inflation – and behind it stands the United States. If you can't get rid of it, at least you have the ideal scapegoat. Alternatively, you can blame the last military dictatorship.

Before the comparatively social democratic Peronist Alberto Fernández succeeded him, Macri appointed the conservative Hernán Lacunza from the "*Propuesta republicana*" (Republican Proposal). "I am confident that he is the right person for this new stage," Macri wrote on Twitter. But his term ends after only three months and twenty days. The capital controls he imposed led to crowds of people gathering in front of banks to withdraw their deposits.

His successor, Martin Guzmán, an independent, resigned after two years, six months and twenty-two days. The economist led Argentina's debt restructuring negotiations with the IMF and creditors. Their criticism pointed to a bloated state apparatus, low industrial productivity and a large shadow economy that did not pay taxes. The government enacts an emergency law to accommodate the IMF and other creditors. Among the many measures is the suspension of automatic pension adjustments for 180 days. Faced with currency problems, protests over diesel shortages and pressure from left-wing coalition partners, Guzmán finally resigned.

His successor, Silvina Batakis, a member of the *Partido Justicialista* (Justicialist Party), threw in the towel after only 24 days. After finishing her meeting in Washington with the heads of the IMF and the Fed, the presidents of multilateral banks and the heads of investment groups and rating agencies, she learned from the newspaper at the airport on her way back that President Alberto Fernández had been negotiating with Sergio Massa about her succession. Massa, a member of the Peronist *Frente Renovador* (Renewal Front), is to head three ministries (Economy, Productivity Development, and Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries) in order to reduce traditional conflicts of interest. Like her colleagues before her, Ms Batakis took on a lucrative post, in her case that of president of the Argentine National Bank.

One economy minister surpasses all others in terms of length of service: Domingo Carvallo served for five years from 1991 to 1996 under the Peronist but extremely market-liberal Carlos Menem. However, Menem first handed the economy ministry to three senior executives from the Bunge & Born conglomerate, who between them lasted just one and a half years. The first, Miguel Ángel Roig, an engineer and executive vice president, tragically died after five days. His successor, Néstor Mario Rapanelli, had to step down after five months in the face of renewed hyperinflation; he was also under investigation in Venezuela for excessive prices. The third, Antonio Erman González, finally resigned because of the *Swiftgate* scandal, involving corrupt behaviour of state employees towards the Swift company. President Menem was angry about the public reporting of the case and felt he had to retaliate by insulting the media as "journalistic criminals".

Bunge & Born, a wheat trading company founded in 1884, is now not only the largest Argentine company, but also one of the five largest agricultural corporations in the world. In 1974, the Montoneros kidnapped the two sons of the owner, Juan and Jorge Born, and released them six and nine months later after a ransom of 60 million US dollars was paid. After the end of the dictatorship, the kidnapped Born and kidnapper Galimberti met. The kidnapper asked for forgiveness and was given a job in Born's empire. In 1988, Menem, on behalf of the Peronist party, contacted the company to seek its help on economic policy issues. The company's representatives Roig and Rapanelli, who later became ministers of economy, and above all by Ferreres, a macroeconomist and later deputy minister of economy under Menem, recommended modelling the economic cycle with 150 variables in accordance with

the work of Nobel Prize winner Lawrence Klein. The company was persuaded to purchase two supercomputers, while Ferreres later recalled: “I had a book on hyperinflation in my office that I read every day.” (Clarín, 30 July 2022) Nothing is heard of the success of this project.

As expected, the trio from Bunge & Born failed, and the hour of the wait-and-see Cavallo arrived. As an orthodox Peronist, he succeeded in reducing hyperinflation from 2000% to 0% by pegging the peso 1:1 to the US dollar. In 1992, *Euromoney* named him Man of the Year, but just three years later, he was convicted of corruption along with Menem and the Minister of Justice (with sentences of four and a half, three and a half, and three and a quarter years, respectively). They had approved permanent extra salaries for themselves from the secret service budget, paid out in cash by the office of the cabinet chief. Cavallo cunningly explained: “I didn’t know that the bonuses could come from an illegal act. If I had known, I wouldn’t have declared them to the tax office.” (El Mundo, 1 December 2015) The verdicts were not confirmed by the Court of Justice until 2018. But Cavallo had already left office in 1996, due to internal party differences. His pegging of the peso to the dollar hurt exports, fuelled unemployment and was soon abandoned.

When Menem was placed under house arrest for at least six months in 2001 for illegal arms trading, Cavallo became Minister of Economy again under the new president, Fernando de la Rúa – but only for nine months. The suffering population was no longer willing to go along with the constantly changing attempts. Wages and pensions were cut, and just before the holidays, Christmas bonuses were also cancelled. The economic and social crisis, with unemployment, currency devaluation and corruption among the political class, was already weighing heavily, but then Cavallo imposed a general cash restriction (*corralito*). This fuelled fears about savings, which were already threatened by inflation. This led to mass protests, clashes with the police and looting of supermarkets. The number of demonstrators chanting “*Que se vayan todos – que no quede ni uno solo*” (They must all go – not a single one should remain), accompanied by drums and cooking pots, only grew with the imposition of a state of emergency. It was not long before the government fell and the president fled by helicopter from the grounds of the presidential palace.

The economic crisis even hindered the president’s travels. Nestor Kirchner, the popular president from 2003 to 2007, a social democratic Peronist who, with his wife and successor to the presidency, Cristina, is reminiscent of the couple Perón and Evita, wanted to travel to Berlin in his plane called Tango 01 to meet with the German Chancellor Schröder. But Argentina declared a national bankruptcy on Christmas Day 2001 and suspended debt repayments. Now it demanded debt relief of around 70 billion dollars from 70,000 private creditors. In response, German small investors filed seizure claims against Argentina. This made the president flinch. Perhaps his plane could be seized. So he preferred to stay in Buenos Aires.

Corruption Corruption is one of the main causes of the crisis: a staple food, a cultural custom, a phenomenon of little moral significance and low risk as long as the police and judiciary turn a blind eye. Jorge Born sees it very starkly: “Either you paid bribes or you left the country, and today corruption is still the same, or even worse [...] Everyone has skeletons in their closet, and no one dares to tell the truth. That’s why I believe that the problem in this country is more moral than economic.” (Noticias, 3 July 2015)

And the political class? That’s what this is all about. Menem’s and Cavallo’s extra salaries are clearly peanuts if you believe Born’s explanation that no one is left out. And indeed, the following case involves incredible sums of money.

In 2018, the wife of a chauffeur has had enough. She no longer wants to be mistreated, so she grabs eight spiral-bound notebooks containing 673 pages written by her husband and sends them to a journalist. Oscar Centeno is the driver of Roberto Barrata, a high-level employee in the planning ministry under Minister Julio De Vido. In the notebooks, Centeno had recorded all the trips he had made over the past ten years. When the police find out, it doesn’t take long before an employee of the Planning Ministry is arrested as he attempts to deliver 6 million dollars and an assault rifle to a rural monastery. The first entry ten years earlier reads:

08:00 from home to the ministry, 249 km, La Plata special trip
 14:10 From the ministry to the home of Lic. Barrata
 17:00 From Lic. Barrata’s house to the ministry
 18:00 From the ministry to meet President Chávez (Barrata) at the petrol station
 10:00 p.m. From the ministry to Quiroga’s house

A total of 200 million dollars is said to have been moved around. Based on the entries, proceedings are being opened against 43 entrepreneurs and more than a hundred people. Among them is Cristina Kirchner, who receives regular payments and has been able to increase her fortune to ten million dollars. She and her husband are “the richest and most powerful presidents in Argentine history”; they “amassed their enormous fortune illegally,” begins Luis Majul’s biography. That was apparently what the taxi driver meant when he spoke of millionaire politicians on my way from the airport to the city. What do you call what Kirchner has achieved after a year in office, when on the one hand he declares: “In Argentina, our guiding principle must be the fight for justice and against impunity. We want to do everything we can for a country of equal opportunities, social empathy, and the fight against unemployment and injustice,” and immediately after taking office receives the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and representatives of the unemployed, but on the other hand is open to everyday and “normal” corruption? Hypocrisy? Dishonesty?

The defendants included Ángel Calcatera, the cousin of former President Mauricio Macri. The former president of the Argentine Chamber of Construc-

tion Companies, Carlos Wagner, described a system of cartel formation in public construction projects in which companies that were awarded contracts agreed to make payments in the form of returns. The CEO of Techint, Luis Betnaza, was also charged, admitting to paying bribes estimated at one million dollars to three officials in Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government; finally, Manuel Abal Medina, former chief of staff to Cristina Kirchner, claimed that the money was not obtained by coercion (Infobae, 10 August 2018). His father belonged to a fascist faction within Peronism, and his uncle, together with others, founded the Montoneros and assassinated former General Aramburu, who had led the coup against Perón in 1955. A small Peronist family that represented the various wings of Peronism and wanted to play a more prominent role as a clan. All were charged with forming a criminal organisation or aiding and abetting a crime.

Some of the defendants were also charged with other offences and, in some cases, were even convicted. This included Cristina Kirchner, who was sentenced in 2022 to six years in prison for corruption in the awarding of state construction contracts in the province of Santa Cruz, combined with a ban on holding public office. The sole beneficiary was a bank teller, Lázaro Baez, who became the province's largest construction contractor and landowner thanks to contracts awarded to him. When the Kirchners' protective influence waned, he was investigated for corruption and money laundering in particularly serious cases. The accused was sentenced to 12 years in prison, and his four sons and 17 other people also received prison sentences.

Lazarus, the delinquent, is the patron saint of butchers, gravediggers, beggars, lepers and leper colonies, but not in this case. He has nothing to do with the poor, not even his name Lazarus, which means "God has helped" in Hebrew. It was not God who helped, but Nestor, the president, with his wife. Nestor is known in Homer, among other things, for his honesty. Not so in Argentina. The Bible is outdated and morals have gone to the dogs. Just as there is a lack of direction in economic policy, so too is there a lack of direction in social policy. Does the political class still ask itself what politics actually is, what its purpose is, and what the political class is actually there for? Yes, occasionally. And the answer is a complete lie. We have already heard it from Nestor's mouth.

Cristina Kirchner is under investigation in ten other cases, including offences related to liquefied gas imports, of which the former Secretary of State for Planning, Roberto Baratta, is also accused. He has been imprisoned for five months.

"4,161 days. That's 594 weeks, 137 months or 11.4 years. That's how long a corruption trial lasts on average in Argentina. It is not uncommon for these cases to come to nothing," writes Friederike Elias in the OCS Blog of the Max Weber Institute for Sociology at the University of Heidelberg. OCS – Organisational Crime Stories. We are in good company there. What crime story does the Argentine justice system have to tell? One of powerlessness. Thanks to the presidential system, the highest judges

are appointed by the new president. It is impossible to oppose this. In cases of doubt, fear prevails, because they are not only powerless, but also afraid of conflict.

As a result, in cases of doubt, the opening of proceedings is delayed, official channels move at a snail's pace, or investigations are unnecessarily prolonged. If the interests of a president are at stake, proceedings are not opened before the end of his term of office if possible. The National Chamber for Criminal and Judicial Affairs, with 12 judges, 12 prosecutors and their respective secretariats, is also responsible for corruption cases. Human trafficking, drug-related crime and white-collar crime are also dealt with at the federal level. In all these cases, the public is more interested in the specific victims. But who are the victims of corruption? Everybody? Electricity customers? The poor? Pensioners? The victims, however, are not very specific and are more suited to political propaganda. All the more so, the perpetrator is perfect for a crime story, whose ingenuity and audacity are admirable and set him apart from the grey masses of the suffering and invisible.

And the police? Do they enforce the law when necessary or even when in doubt? Hardly likely with such a corrupt political class, i.e. a corrupt upper class, a passive middle class and, finally, an excluded lower class. Not all, but many want to share in the spoils and create similar structures. Isn't one conforming to the system if one exploits the weakness of another, and seizes the opportunity?

In 1991, Mauricio Macri was kidnapped and held captive for twelve days. At the time, he was not yet a politician, but one of six children of the well-known industrial magnate Franco Macri, who had emigrated from Italy and earned enormous sums from public contracts during the military dictatorship. Macri was released after a ransom of six million dollars was paid. One would hardly suspect that most of the kidnappers who were later arrested belonged to the federal police, which is why they were called "The Commissioner's Gang." They were sentenced to prison terms ranging from ten years to life. It is not surprising, however, that in 2017, two years before his death, Franco Macri was charged by the federal prosecutor's office, together with his son, President Mauricio Macri, the secretary general of the presidential office and the heads of the Colombian airline Avianca, among others, with forming a criminal organisation, defrauding the public administration and irregularities in connection with the use of Argentine airspace.

In April 2011, airport police arrested a Colombian businessman who had been living in Argentina since 2005 and had set up around 50 companies for money laundering and had invested heavily in real estate and agriculture in Santa Fe, the province with the second strongest economy in the country. In connection with this case, the police chief of Santa Fe, and former head of the drug squad, was arrested on suspicion of maintaining a vast network of connections between drug traffickers, football hooligans and at least 200 police officers. Federal Highway 34 runs north-south through the province of Santa Fe, connecting hundreds of illegal landing strips in

the north with the river ports of Rosario and San Lorenzo, where ships depart for Europe. (*Die Presse*, 5 November 2012)

It is hardly a coincidence that brand new pistols belonging to the Buenos Aires police have turned up in a favela in Rio de Janeiro.

In order to curb widespread crime among the 93,000 police officers in Buenos Aires, the provincial government launched 12,395 internal investigations at the end of 2015, dismissing 4,747 officers and imprisoning 390. Half of the cases involved corruption and 15 per cent involved domestic violence by police officers against their wives. Nearly 900 uniformed officers are under investigation for illicit enrichment, and 73 of them are already facing criminal proceedings. Seven police officers, including two high-ranking ones, are accused of protecting a human trafficking ring. The most serious case came to light in 2022, when eight police chiefs were arrested on suspicion of setting up a network that paid drug dealers and pimps for their protection. The Interior Ministry found 36 numbered envelopes containing more than \$10,000 each at the department's headquarters.

Once again, there are calls for structural reforms of the police. Without result.

4 State and Anarchy

Military Dictatorship | Testimonies | The Death Flights

In 2004, one of the few survivors of the Argentine urban guerrilla group Montoneros, Roberto Galimberti, better known as Galimba or El Loco (the Madman), died of natural causes. The conservative newspaper *La Nación* wrote: “He embodied many of the evils that have plagued Argentina over the past three decades: the end of utopias, the celebration of violence, the justification of torture, incoherence, careerism, sham pacts, culture light, hunger for power, egocentricity, and a complete lack of self-criticism.” (13 February 2002)

The Montoneros, founded in 1970 as the armed left-wing Catholic arm of Peronism, had around 30,000 supporters and 5,000 armed members in the mid-1970s. Their demonstrations, accompanied by singing and heavy drumming, shook the city. When Perón returned from exile in 1973 and a brief period of democracy prevailed until 1976, he made it clear that his Peronism, which had since shifted to the right and was hardly centrist anymore, had nothing to do with the left and certainly not with the Montoneros. At first, he wanted to use them as pawns on his chessboard of power. For example, as Minister of Social Welfare. But they did not play along. Perón gave the ministry to his loyal secretary in exile in Spain, the mystic Lopez Rega, known as the Wizard. He became the organiser of right-wing terror.

When Perón landed at Ezeiza airport in 1973 and was greeted by hundreds of thousands of people celebrating his return, Lopez Rega, as a member of the organising committee, had grouped the right-wing Peronist groups in such a way that they blocked the exit and the route to Perón for the Montoneros. When they opened fire, the Montoneros and bystanders fled, 38 were left dead. This was a clear signal, followed by further attacks. These were carried out by the newly founded terrorist group “Triple A” (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina). It targeted key figures in public life, universities and trade unions. It is well known that Lopez Rega led the group and that two leading police officers, Vilar and Margaride, supervised its operations. The Montoneros chant at their demonstrations: “Montonero, el pueblo te lo pide, queremos la cabeza de Villar y Margaride” (Montonero, the people ask you, we want the heads of Villar and Margaride). It was only much later proven that Perón founded the terrorist group. In gratitude, in 1974 he promoted Lopez Rega, a simple retired police

officer, to general commissioner with a decree issued especially for him, skipping 12 ranks.

"Triple A" also has an ideological media presence in the form of the weekly right-wing extremist magazine "*El Caudillo*" (The Leader). In 1973, shortly after Perón's election as president, it declared leftists and liberals to be its main enemies in the press. Its worldview is strictly conservative, more oriented towards clerical fascism than the disruptive movement of National Socialism. Its humour is often anti-Semitic. It would be wrong to think that this magazine would be a good fit for the coup-plotting military. The military are not automatically fascists. Some are technocratic modernisers, others are primarily interested in pacifying the country.

They fail in economic matters just as much as their civilian colleagues. Even Economy Minister Celestino Rodrigo, a protégé of Lopez Rega, fails. In 1975, less than a year before the military coup, he announces a particularly original measure to curb uncontrolled inflation: a sudden and significant price increase, especially for consumer goods. Of course, no one finds this acceptable. The protests are so violent that Rodrigo not only has to reverse the measures immediately, but he and Lopez Rega also have to resign. The "wizard" leaves the country and is given the post of ambassador to Spain. But "*El Caudillo*" also falls from grace, and the editor Felipe Romero closes the magazine and flees abroad.

Ten years later, Lopez Rega was arrested in the United States and extradited to Argentina. There he was convicted of forming a criminal organisation, kidnapping and murder in connection with the trials of those responsible for state crimes. He died while awaiting sentencing. We will see how the caudillos shaped the political culture after the independence of what are now the Argentine provinces and led the country into a long civil war. The title "caudillo" therefore goes back much further than just the last caudillo in Spain, Francisco Franco. The caudillos ruled their provinces like warlords, were anti-Enlightenment and rejected modernisation through the global market. This spirit is reflected in pompous programmatic statements such as this one:

The country is tired of the trials and tribulations of eternal politicians without votes, of old traditions, of those who wield synarchic power, of the tabloid press and of those who serve anti-patriotism. Tired of those who persecuted San Martin (the liberator of South America, WH) when he was ill and returned to his homeland to find the peace he deserved as the hero of a hundred battles [...] self-appointed defenders of freedom and democracy overthrew the 'tyrant' Perón for the crime of saving the great men of our history from the shadow of oblivion and building on their shoulders the great Argentina, which is just, free and sovereign. [...] Eighteen years of struggle, full of martyrs who gave everything without asking for anything in return, years of misery, persecution and imprisonment, crucibles in which the people proved themselves as soldiers and citizens, years in which they

learned to love their fatherland with a vocation to serve, sacrificing the lives of their children, brothers and fathers in the Holocaust of sacred goals: to give us, not so long ago, the final return of the leader of this new Argentina.” (“El Caudillo,” 1975)

Military Dictatorship After Perón’s death, his wife Isabel took over the reins of government. But it was Lopez Rega who pulled the strings, escalating the violence and the confrontations between the Montoneros and the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers’ Party (PRT) with its Revolutionary People’s Army (ERP) on the one hand and the police and army on the other. Since 1930, there have been six coups, each followed by the restoration of democracy. The most recent coup in 1976 was the most brutal and aimed at a “national reorganisation.”

Whereas in the past such words meant the elimination of Peronism in favour of large rural landowners, now the aim was primarily to eliminate rebellious young people, students, intellectuals and trade unionists. An estimated 30,000 people were kidnapped and tortured to reveal the names of friends or comrades, and then murdered. Or they were killed outright without interrogation. Their bodies disappeared without a trace.

There were 700 secret detention, torture and extermination centres, including ESMA, Campo de Mayo, El Olimpo and Automotores Orletti in Buenos Aires and the notorious La Perla torture centre in the province of Córdoba. 400 children were born in these centres under prison conditions and put up for adoption. They grew up with false names in foreign families, often military families. Their mothers were murdered after giving birth. 10,000 people were imprisoned for political reasons, 340,000 went into exile, and 20,000 factories closed. (Clarín, 10 December 2021) Crimes of the state, rightly described as state terrorism.

Four thousand people were murdered in the rooms of the ESMA (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada, Higher School of Mechanics of the Navy) in Buenos Aires. An idyllic park between the sea and the urban avenue, Avenida del Libertador 8151, with several low houses in a pleasant style, an officers’ area, a canteen, an infirmary and accommodation, with the forgery workshop in the basement. Under the roof, the detainees waited for their end in the summer heat or freezing cold when names were called out in the morning.

Today, the ESMA is a memorial and museum with 17 exhibition rooms. Videos with testimonies from survivors are shown where they were held captive, decades later, grey-haired, aged, thoughtful. Unlike at the time of their imprisonment. There are well over 700 testimonies of crimes against humanity in trials for the disappearance of arrested and kidnapped persons in 1984, the trial against the juntas in 1985 and the trials for the reopening of proceedings. In 2024, President Milei ordered the at least partial closure of this crime and memorial site.

Testimonies The disappeared are occasionally able to leave messages. Elisabeth Patricia Marcuzzo was abducted in Mar del Plata in October 1977 and taken to the ESMA while three months pregnant. She gave birth to her son Sebastian there in April 1978. Before her disappearance, she managed to write a “Letter to Sebastian” and send it to her mother.

“Dear Mum,

Today, after such a long time without hearing from me, you receive a message. I am very sorry that I did not write to you sooner, but it was not possible because I was out of the country on business. This is my little boy. His name is SEBASTIAN, and I had him at a clinic in Buenos Aires. He weighed 3,800 kilos and was born with forceps. I am very well and in perfect health. The person who brought me the child is a friend of mine. He is doing me a favour because I can't do it at the moment, but I want you to stay calm because I am very well and I will be in touch again.

The child was born on 15 April. I want you to write that down. I'm sending you his clothes and his milk. I've been breastfeeding him until now, giving him Bifilac milk in addition during the first few days. Now he'll probably take 150 grams or more, because he's a big eater. He's quite calm and only wakes up once in the morning. The bottles are not boiled. And there is only one teat with a hole in it. I am sending some gifts for the babies. Big kisses to everyone. And especially to Sebastian. I don't want you to worry about me. I repeat that I am very well and that I will see you again. At the moment, it is not possible for me to come home. Mum, I hope the baby will comfort you in the face of uncertainty. Love him very much, he's a treasure. Give my love to Dad, who shouldn't worry about me either. A kiss to all my loved ones, please take care of yourselves. I hope to be there very soon and will do my best to make it happen. All that remains is for me to send you all four a big kiss. And one to Sebastian. I know it sounds incomprehensible, but you know how I think, and I also know that you don't agree with what I'm doing.

Everything will turn out for the best.

Paty

(Clarín, 27 June 2016)

A newspaper report looks back on the incident:

“They arrive at your front door in the morning, walk behind you in the park, follow you into the botanical garden, stand at the door of the café, stop you on the street. They take you to a green mid-range Ford Falcon. You know who they are and where you're going. When several of them come into your flat, they take everything they can carry. “They took televisions, bicycles, furniture, bookshelves, refrigerators, washing machines, fans, stoves, carpets [...] everything you can imagine. Everything was taken from the homes of those who were kidnapped,” says a

female survivor. Her statement is part of the trial against the military. (Clarín, 10 December 2021)

In September 1976, five Montoneros from the national secretariat, Alberto José Molina Benuzzi, Ignacio José Bertrán, Ismael Salame, José Carlos Coronel and Victoria Walsh, gathered for a secret meeting in the Floresta district of Buenos Aires. The military, police and gendarmerie knew about this and arrived with 200 armed men from Army Battalion 601, two armoured vehicles, three military trucks and a helicopter. Soldiers were stationed on the surrounding rooftops. Due to the resistance of the Montoneros, the battle lasts two hours, until four of those present are shot dead, while Victoria Walsh, the daughter of the well-known writer and journalist Rodolfo Walsh, takes her own life in the face of the hopeless situation. Her one-year-old daughter, who was present, is taken away by the military and later handed over to family members. In deep mourning, her father writes in a “Letter to Friends”:

My daughter was determined not to surrender alive. [...] Vicki could have chosen other paths that would not have been dishonourable. But the one she chose was the most just, the most generous, the most reasonable. Her bright death sums up her short, wonderful life. She did not live for herself, but for others, and those others are millions. Her death, however, belongs gloriously to her alone. I draw strength from this pride, and I will be reborn from her.

He too is a Montonero, lured into an ambush by the military in 1977 and shot dead. Four members of the family who owned the apartment were arrested and tortured. Forty-five years later, ten soldiers were charged with murder. (télam, 29 September 2023).

Stolen children are outlaws, some go through hell, like María Ramírez:

My life is like an odyssey, a life full of trials [...] In 1974, when I was two years old, my father and another friend were kidnapped one morning from our home in Quilmes. [...] In the early morning of 14 March 1977, we hugged my mother for the last time as we were surrounded by soldiers and bullets were flying everywhere. The operation was terrible, the bullets wouldn't stop. I was four years old, Carlos was five and Mariano was two. They shot my mother and two other comrades. Why did all this have to happen? Why did my brothers and I have to go out through the back window? And without my mother. Before he let us jump, he hugged us long and hard. It wasn't a normal hug. It was a goodbye hug. I remember his last words: “Maria, I love you” [...], just like my two brothers [...] The three of us were taken to the Casa de Belén home, which belongs to the municipality of Banfield. When we got there, we were baptised again and our surname, Ramírez, was changed to

Maciel. We were given the surname of the militiaman who owned the home. Our new parents demanded that we call them Mum and Dad, which was impossible. But when I could no longer bear the beatings, I gave in and called Dominga and Manuel Maciel by those names.

They gave us military godparents; my new godfather took me to work with him in secret centres where the walls were covered in blood rather than paint. Once I wasn't allowed in because people were 'working' inside; you could hear the music very loudly, the windows were closed. But as I waited there for my godfather, I could hear people screaming in the background. Screams of pain.

That home was hell. [...] It was a prison for children who had been kidnapped and kept as NN. We were there for almost seven years, yes, there were eight of us children. I felt like I was buried alive because the treatment was inhumane. There was no affection and no life. It was completely forbidden to talk to each other. We were always silent. We couldn't play, read, paint or have friends. I suffered greatly when they took Carlos, my brother, as their own son because he was very intelligent. Manuel's wish was to make him a soldier. Carlos also had to survive, and he did things that he suffers greatly from today. My own brother made us suffer because Manuel and the military gave him instructions on how to put pressure on us.

Night was another terrible time. [...] To this day, I still find it difficult to sleep. Why? Because the Casa de Belén served as an operations base at night. The military held their meetings in the dining room and then went to the girls' dormitory. I couldn't sleep because of the sexual abuse and the fear that they would separate the three of us. There was daily physical and psychological violence and sexual abuse of girls and boys. Yes, this was to force us to forget our parents and everything we had received from our families. Every time we complained about our parents, the punishments were intensified. In order to survive, I had a strategy: I told myself that they could break my body, but not my soul. Because that's where I had my mother. She was my secret and my angel. It wasn't just Manuel, there were other soldiers who abused me. I had no one. I asked the priest in Banfield for help, and he gave me Manuel and Dominga. And death was always close. All of this was meant to break us forever. They told us, "We don't want you to become like your criminal parents, drunks and prostitutes." That's why we were punished. My mother always appeared like an angel in the darkness. She gave me love and reminded me how much she loved me. And I still thank her today for the love she gave me during the four years we were together. Without her, it would be difficult to find the strength to survive.

My father suffered seven years in prison and searched for us from there. The search was very long, and with a lot of help, he was able to find us. When we were released in 1983, we had to go to Sweden to meet our father, who had gone into exile when he was released from prison. That is where we are now at home. And I felt another crisis because I couldn't understand my freedom. I couldn't remember my dad, I couldn't remember his face, no matter how hard I tried, but I was sure we had visited him in prison. I lacked confidence, I didn't trust anyone. And I didn't trust him either, I didn't know if he was really my father. Judge Pons and Manuel

and Dominga had told me many things against my father, that he was the devil himself. For a long time, I slept with a knife under my pillow because I was afraid of him.

For years I was lost, like a blind woman without a cane. And not only blind, but also with a conviction that prevented me from breathing. The identity crisis and the bitterness of having lost so many things: my childhood, my toys, my family, my country and my opportunities. My salvation was the support of my family, but at the same time I was afraid of dying. Then I started studying, painting and seeking professional help. Without this help, I would still be a person without an identity and a prisoner on the loose. Today, I have regained the affection of my father and my family, and I can see the puzzle in large pieces. But I am aware that pieces are missing; I was very broken. Painting helps me to live. I also became a nurse to hold on to life, despite everything. That is my task in order to live, not just to survive. My mother is a heroine, like many of my classmates from those years. I am proud and share with my parents the struggle for freedom and against all injustice. This struggle continues today in various forms. Today, we want those responsible for the Casa de Belén to be brought to justice and punished, and we want what was done to those of us who were there to be recognised as a crime against humanity.

In her novel "My Name is Luz," Elsa Osorio describes the fate of an adolescent adoptee. After extensive research, writer Juan Gelman was able to locate his granddaughter Macarena Gelman in Uruguay in 2000, where she had been adopted by a member of the military. In February 2011, a trial was held against former dictators Jorge Rafael Videla and Reynaldo Bignone for multiple child abductions and handing children over to government supporters. Videla, then 86, was sentenced to 50 years in prison, and Bignone, 84, to 15 years. (*Die Zeit*, 6 July 2012)

Almost 30 years after the dictatorship, former Argentine dictator Jorge Rafael Videla has admitted for the first time that he ordered the murder and disappearance of thousands of government opponents during what he called the "Dirty War." "Let's say there were about 7,000 or 8,000 people who had to die to win the war against subversion," he said. We couldn't execute them, but we couldn't bring them to trial either. A feigned dilemma to somehow save his own skin. He admitted that his government had political opponents abducted and, in some cases, had babies stolen, which he again tried to excuse with unfavourable circumstances, namely the demands of war. "There was no other solution," he explained. "We agreed that there was a price to pay to win the war, and we had to keep it secret so that the country wouldn't see what was happening." Then he finally confessed to the constant abduction of babies.

While Videla acknowledged the targeted killing of thousands of opposition members, he rejected the use of the term "disappeared" because it falsely implied something mysterious. The correct term, he said, was that "in every war [...] there

is a list of victims, murdered and disappeared people, whose whereabouts are unknown." Here, too, the excuse applies: "It is a regrettable consequence of war."

An even more brazen lie is the claim that placing the children of killed opposition members in the care of supporters of the military government was an act of charity.

Videla's sudden decision to speak out had nothing to do with remorse. He and other military personnel convicted of human rights crimes believed that Eduardo Duhalde would grant them amnesty if he were elected. They were mistaken. (Reuter, 14 April 2012) Stupidity and a lack of foresight are the qualities that sooner or later cause a military man to fail in his thinking and actions.

"I regret nothing and sleep very well every night," said Videla. "I carry a burden on my soul and want to make a contribution, take responsibility to help society understand what happened and make it easier for officers who are lower in rank than me." He wanted to justify the crimes and remove moral doubts from his subordinates. A military dictatorship does not only mean the suspension of democracy as a form of government, but above all the violation of human rights and complete arbitrariness towards the constitution and laws. (Reuter, 14 April 2012)

The Death Flights Organised disappearances. First there are rumours and speculation, then assumptions based on bodies washed up on the coast of Uruguay; later someone has the idea of looking for logbooks. And finds them. And finds entries from flights that take off for a short time and soon return. Entries made in the naive belief that bureaucratic order must prevail and that no charges would ever be brought against anyone in the military. "Get ready, you're going to La Plata," is the announcement of death, either by pistol or by SC-7 Skyvan turboprop transporter. Before the flight, the victims were injected with the sedative sodium thiopental, supposedly a vaccination. They are told they are being flown to freedom, music is played, and the prisoners are asked to dance. Then they have to undress, and the large hatch is opened. This pretence of a different reality is reminiscent of the fate of the victims before entering the Nazi gas chambers.

Three founding members of the human rights organisation "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" and two French nuns were also flown to their deaths. Between 180 and 200 flights, each carrying 13 to 17 victims, were made in 1977 and 1978, always on Wednesdays, according to the defendant Adolfo Scilingo, who claims to have flown only twice. In Spain, he is sentenced to more than 1,000 years in prison for 30 murders during death flights. Another pilot, who is arrested in Spain in 2009 and extradited to Argentina a year later, works as a pilot for a Dutch airline. The aircraft still exists; it is found in Florida and returns to the ESMA as an exhibit.

The practice of "disappearing" people by plane did not originate in Argentina, but dates back to French experiences in the Algerian War (1954–1962) and the suppression of the uprising in Madagascar in 1947. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, South America was rocked by widespread social unrest and guerrilla movements. In

response, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil cooperated with the United States in Operation Condor – a cross-border counterinsurgency strategy that reportedly claimed the lives of around 400,000 civilians in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s

French veterans of the Algerian War acted as key advisors and imparted the so-called “French doctrine,” which relied on secret arrests, torture, illegal killings and the disappearance of suspects. This strategy was applied already under President Isabel Perón, who in 1975 authorised the armed forces to wipe out “subversion” in the province of Tucumán. There, General Antonio Bussi, a student of French General Aussaresses, led the crackdown on the ERP guerrilla group. Aussaresses had previously been active in several wars and was an expert in torture. Colonel Robert Servant, who arrived in Argentina in 1974 as head of the French military mission, also taught in this matter. At the same time, former members of the French secret group OAS influenced the right-wing extremist Argentine organisation Triple A. In the same year, eleven marine special forces units were formed to combat “subversion”, which were directly subordinate to the secret service.

The secret “Plan de Capacidades de la Armada,” of which only 20 copies existed, gave the navy sovereignty over rivers and ports and obliged it to track down and destroy subversive groups with the help of other armed forces – with the aim of securing order, property and state authority. However, these methods had already been used before.

In 1958, three years after Perón's overthrow, the Conintes Plan was introduced. Decree 9.880 allowed the Frondizi government to ban strikes and order military intervention in the event of internal unrest. Demonstrators were convicted as terrorists by military courts. The country was divided into military zones based on industrial areas in order to suppress worker protests, student movements and the first guerrilla actions of the United Revolutionary Front. The aim was to combat “terrorism” in order to prevent anarchy and coup attempts. During the plan's two-year run, thousands were arrested, at least 111 were convicted in summary trials, and tens of thousands of public sector employees were conscripted into military service. In 1960, even tougher laws replaced the plan.

At one point, ESMA prisoners were transported to the island of “El Silencio,” which was used by Task Force 3.3 in 1979. They were to be hidden from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which was conducting an inspection visit in response to more than a thousand complaints from the island. The island belongs to the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires. The name of the island is fitting not only for the disappearance of the victims, but also for the silence surrounding them, their invisibility and their voicelessness. The Catholic Church collaborated extensively with the military dictatorship. But when the IACHR arrived, the families went to the office of the Organisation of American States (OAS). “I had mixed feelings,” recalls Gustavo Bellingerini, whose father had disappeared two years earlier.

But there they saw an endless queue of people. “It was very encouraging to know that we were not alone and to see all the dignity of those who lined up to denounce them, but on the other hand, it was heartbreaking to see the extent of the human rights violations for the first time.” The rooms at the ESMA were refurbished, but it did not help. The IACHR stayed for two weeks and received 5,580 complaints of kidnapping and enforced disappearance. It writes a damning report, which finds its way back into the country via a roundabout route. The deception had been of no use. You could sense that this was the beginning of the end. (*El País*, 6 September 2019).

But the restored democracy is flawed. “Contradiction has been our hallmark since we were conquered by the Spanish,” writes author Marcelo Figueras.

That is why our darkest times are often the most culturally fruitful. The still tentative boom in young Argentine literature has not come out of nowhere, but from the context of a country that is rapidly falling into debt; from a country where the press and television are in the hands of a few corporations and freedom of expression is a chimera; where the police kill young people and children with impunity and demonstrations are suppressed with tear gas and rubber bullets; where the judiciary obediently fulfils the demands of the economic powers (for the first time since the dictatorship, there are over twenty political prisoners) and where entrepreneurs and speculators are allowed to transfer their billions abroad unhindered. (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 April 2018)

5 Caudillos and Gauchos

The Indigenous Peoples | Britain | The Sweet Dream of Independence | The Caudillos | Fame and Death | Politics of Violence | Culture of Cruelty | The Gauchos | Barbarism and Civilisation | Dictator Rosas | Revisionism | Alberdi | Sarmiento | "Facundo" | The Commerce of Violence

Rarely has there been such a long period of stagnation, anarchy in the sense of powerlessness and, consequently, violence in the founding of a state as in Argentina after its independence from Spain.

This in itself is less problematic. With the occupation of Spain by Napoleon from 1807 to 1814, the members of the upper class, merchants and large landowners felt encouraged in 1810 to shake off Spanish control and declare independence for the Viceroyalty of La Plata. In the absence of alternative plans, the colonial administrative structures were only slightly modified. The economy stagnated, as did population growth, both legacies of colonial policy. Under these conditions, some independence activists even considered a return to feudal administrative and ruling structures. Envoys were sent to Rio de Janeiro to negotiate with the Brazilian emperor about the incorporation of the United Provinces into the empire, but also with France about the enthronement of a European prince in Río de La Plata. These plans came to nothing, but they show that the independence activists were less concerned with democracy and enlightenment than with economic self-determination.

In 1816, the provinces united to form a federation, the United Provinces of the Río de La Plata, including Uruguay and the present-day Bolivian province of Tarija. The federation was not founded on Montesquieu's enlightened recognition of the strengthening of power through the division of power, but rather as an organised opposition to Buenos Aires, the city that controlled the entrance to the La Plata, levied customs duties and thereby acquired wealth, while the provinces stretching west and north-west to the Andes had only meagre incomes and were occasionally even cut off from foreign trade. They opposed Buenos Aires, but at the same time fought among themselves for supremacy.

Thus began a decades-long struggle between the federalists in the hinterland and the Unitarians on the Rio de la Plata, who sought a centralised state led by Buenos Aires. Rival caudillos took power in the provinces. They were mainly military leaders of provincial armies and, to a lesser extent, leaders in politics and administration. Alliances were formed and broken, and wars were waged against each other. Due to the small population, their armies numbered no more than about 6,000 men, poorly trained landless peasants, former slaves and cattle herders. They were the legendary gauchos. The caudillos were all born in the 1780s and took part in the liberation struggles at the age of 30 or 40. A generation of warriors for whom politics meant violence and the constant alternative of life or death.

As has been known since the political theories of antiquity, stagnant anarchy and powerlessness provide the conditions for the establishment of a dictatorship. In his "Anthropology," Kant sorts freedom, law and power in an original way, whereby power can mean the enforcement of law and freedom, but also, in their absence, mere arbitrariness. Thus, freedom and law, together with power, form the desirable republic. Freedom and law without power constitute anarchy, law and power without freedom constitute despotism, and finally, power without freedom and law constitutes barbarism.

The 19th-century Argentine writer Eduardo Gutiérrez speaks of "a country completely out of balance and anarchised". It is therefore not surprising that in Argentina, Juan Manuel de Rosas, the governor of Buenos Aires (1829–32), was granted dictatorial powers by parliament in 1835 and ruled until 1852; brutally suppressing any opposition. This regime did not need to acquire a new aristocratic title like Napoleon I or legitimise itself with worldviews such as romanticism or utopian socialism like Napoleon III. One sentence was enough to characterise the person, justify the dictatorship and serve as the title of the government programme: "Restorer of the Laws". An undoubtedly modern dictatorship.

Even after the rule of Rosas and the eventual adoption of the constitution in 1853 and the formal formation of the nation state of Argentina, provincial conflicts continued for several years. The compromise between the camps, which was finally reflected in the constitution, is reflected in the name of the state, which unites the various federal organisations from different periods in a voluminous name: "Argentine Nation, United Provinces of South America, United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata, Argentine Confederation".

The Indigenous Peoples Violence was a constant feature of everyday life in the 18th and 19th centuries. It occurred in three areas: the constant conflicts with the indigenous peoples, the imperial attacks by Britain and, to a lesser extent, France, as well as the armed conflicts with Brazil, and finally the violence of the caudillos and gauchos.

As for the first lasting conflict, there were periodic violent confrontations between Spanish immigrants and those born there (Creoles) and the various indigenous peoples. Their respective legal views on the question of who owned free-range animals were diametrically opposed. For the colonists, the large herds were private property, while for the indigenous peoples they were traditional common property. This led to armed conflicts, which occasionally escalated. The indigenous peoples repeatedly carried out well-prepared, short surprise attacks. Cattle farms were attacked, cattle and horses were stolen in large numbers, houses and stables were destroyed, and women and children were kidnapped.

The American traveller John Anthony King, who lived in Argentina for many years from 1817 to 1841, describes his encounter with a man and a woman on his way to Córdoba:

Misery was written all over the man's face – *despair* on his wife's. Constantly bathed in tears, whether she was moving, sitting or standing, this one image was constantly before me [...] To make myself useful, if possible, and to calm their spirits, I took the opportunity to speak to her alone.

- "Señora," I said, "you have been through terrible things recently. I have just come from Buenos Ayres, and in almost every village, in almost every house, I have seen the terrible effects of our civil war.

- "And you dared to cross the pampas, señor?" she exclaimed.

- "What have I to fear?"

- "The Indians, señor, the Indians!"

- "The Indians?" I said, trying to get her to continue talking about the subject that was obviously the cause of her despair.

- "Yes, señor," she exclaimed, "they ruined everything. Before they came, we were happy they tore me from my home, and for six long months I was a miserable prisoner. [...] I could have endured the captivity with all its suffering without complaint, in the sweet hope of an eventual end; but señor, their leader made me his prey! He bound my hands and forced me to endure his terrible caresses during my long captivity. My husband fears them, and he fears exposure. I have not dared to mention them.

Occasionally, indigenous people also carried out attacks on Buenos Aires and attacked the fortresses. Often, they came from Chile and took the stolen goods back to the Chilean markets. These attacks had once served military purposes, such as resistance against the Spanish colonists. Over time, however, commercial interests replaced military ones. The attacks served personal enrichment and thus increased power within the community. Spain's attempt to end border tensions and invasions with a peace treaty in 1726 failed in 1737; although the treaty remained in force until the 1930s, it had lost all significance. The conflicts intensified, leading to heavy casualties on both sides, but also to improved forms of armed organisation. The warriors of the Fehuelhets, Huilliches, Peheunches, Araucanos and Pampas formed a

large indigenous confederation with more than 4,000 partisans. Their actions were directed against Córdoba, Santa Fe, Arrecifes, Lujan and, above all, Pago de Magdalena, where they killed a large number of Spaniards and escaped with captured women and children and 20,000 head of cattle. In 1750, indigenous people reduced the *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados* mission to rubble.

Britain The second form of violence during those years concerned the daily threat to Argentina from foreign powers. The anarchy attracted Britain, the world power that had been raiding merchant ships for decades with the help of pirates, establishing bases and, when necessary, supporting liberation movements such as that of Francisco Miranda in Venezuela.

Buenos Aires had been in the spotlight for some time. Immediately after the victory over the combined Spanish and French fleets at Trafalgar in 1805, naval officer Home Riggs Popham persuaded Prime Minister Pitt to send him to the Cape of Good Hope to conquer the Dutch colony there. According to Popham, the Cape could be used by enemies to block Britain's western sea route to the Orient. Popham's arguments were convincing. He was given the order and easily captured the Cape of Good Hope in 1806. After the Dutch surrender, the restless Popham allegedly found his ships idle in Table Bay and thought back to his conversations with Pitt and the plans for an invasion he had worked out with the Venezuelan revolutionary Miranda. But Miranda failed, as did Popham, because although they recognised the anti-Spanish sentiment among the Creoles, they failed to appreciate the simultaneous rejection of the alternative of British dependence.

Then Popham learned of the defenceless state of Buenos Aires. He liked the idea of a sudden – albeit unauthorised – strike. He easily persuaded General Baird, the commanding officer at the Cape, to lend him the 71st Regiment under General William Carr Beresford.

He wrote to Lord Castlereagh that Buenos Aires was an ideal place for colonial barter, raw materials for finished goods. “The great centre of trade in all its provinces is the river, over which a large part of the wealth of the kingdoms of Chile and Peru flows every year,” including “silver and precious stones, [...] cocoa, indigo, cochineal, cobra, wool, hemp, horsehair, wheat, resins, pharmaceuticals, horns, as well as hides and tallow.” Processed products from Great Britain were imported. As for the chances of an invasion of Buenos Aires, there was “much evidence” from British traders in Buenos Aires. They reported “military weakness and political discontent. Therefore, in view of such reports, we can assume that the venture will be successful.” They then set sail for Rio de la Plata. It was not until a stopover on St. Helena that Popham reported his intentions to London and arranged for the governor of the island to lend him four hundred men.

On 8 June 1806, Popham finally reached the Rio de la Plata and launched a surprise attack on Buenos Aires. The city lacked any defences, allowing a column of 1,560 British soldiers to easily capture the city with its 55,000 inhabitants.

However, when the citizens of Buenos Aires realised that they had been conquered by a relatively insignificant number of people, they were outraged by this easy victory and mobilised support from Montevideo and surrounding areas. With their help, they surprised the invaders and emerged victorious. 300 of the 1,560 attackers died in the operation.

However, Britain did not give up and launched a second invasion the following year. But this ended even more disastrously with the death of half of the 15,000 soldiers. During the three days that the English gave the population to surrender, the inhabitants of Buenos Aires raised an army of 9,000 militiamen, distributed weapons and fortified the city with barricades and trenches. "I advanced with the riflemen to the west side of the Jesuit college building," reported Lieutenant Colonel

Henry Cadogan, "without suffering considerable losses, when, as we advanced with the light cannon to breach the main entrance of the building, the enemy suddenly appeared in large numbers at some windows, on the roof of this building, from the barracks across the street and from the end of the street. In an instant, the entire vanguard company of my column, as well as some gunners and horses, were killed or wounded."

The inhabitants of Buenos Aires are proud of their defensive capabilities and their mayor, Martín de Álzaga. He is not necessarily popular, but he is a brilliant organiser. However, pride soon gives way to violence: "The revolution devours its children." Álzaga is accused of conspiracy, convicted and executed.

The Sweet Dream of Independence Before turning to the third form of violence that shaped the country, that of the caudillos and gauchos, let us take a moment to rejoice in a promising future, namely the hard-won independence from Spain. A British citizen named Love, who had been living in Buenos Aires since 1820, noted in anonymous writings he left behind:

On 21 January 1825, an express train arrived in Buenos Aires at eight o'clock in the evening with news of the Battle of Ayacucho in Peru. Such a decisive and unexpected victory (over the Spanish, WH) sparked wild celebrations: people crowded into coffee houses and listened to various speakers describing the victory; it was reminiscent of the crowds in front of newspaper offices in London on similar occasions. At ten o'clock in the evening, a triple salute was fired from the fort, which was answered by the war brig Aranzazu anchored in the inner streets and a Brazilian war brig. That same evening, there were partial illuminations and fireworks. On 22 January, a performance was held in the theatre, during which the national anthem was sung and Bolívar, Sucre, etc. were loudly cheered (the army comman-

ders, WH), and Colonel Ramirez read the official details to the audience from the boxes. The theatre was decorated with silk fabrics and national emblems and illuminated with additional lamps; an ode to victory was sold at the doors and a military band was stationed there.

The celebrations lasted for three nights, with bonfires, illuminations and military music on the gallery of the town hall; the pyramid in the square was illuminated and surrounded by banners, etc. The people seemed to be mad with joy; I would hardly have thought them capable of such enthusiasm; and although this exuberance should perhaps not always be regarded as proof of patriotism, I am nevertheless convinced that the mass of the people were sincerely rejoicing.

The Coffee-house de la Victoria was well attended both inside and outside, and wine and beer were drunk in abundance. Various toasts were proposed, including one to "Religious Toleration". Many speeches were made describing the past and the future, with the happiness of the inhabitants of the province of Rio de la Plata being the main focus. Several hundred people formed a military formation and marched through the streets with flags and music, singing the national anthem and shouting in front of the houses of well-known patriots. In front of the residence of the British consul, they cheered for England, the King of England and freedom. Similar cheers for North America could be heard in front of the house of the American pastor. Colonel Forbes invited them into his house and pledged them in bumpers of wine. The gathering in the streets continued throughout the night with music and singing, but there were only a few incidents of disorder. Some violent spirits declaimed against the Brazilians, and it is said, windows were broken at the Brazilian Consul's house; but this act was quickly dismissed by the others. In fact, there is nothing here which can put one in mind of a mob, especially an English mob. The groups that marched through the streets were made up of the most genteel young men in the city. A young man named Saravia was regarded as a kind of leader and manager of these popular events; with a great deal of wit, energy, a tolerable amount of oratory skill and steadfast patriotism, Saravia plays not an insignificant role in the politics of Buenos Ayres.

Public dinners were held at Faunch's Hotel. Eighty Creolian gentlemen attended. The dining room was decorated with flags of all nations, portraits of Bolivar, Sucre, etc., and a military band played "God save the King!" upon the King of England's health being proposed. [...]

A subscription ball and supper was also held by some Buenos Ayrean gentlemen at the Consulado. English and other foreigners attended in considerable numbers. Dancing took place in the courtyard, which was covered by a canopy and magnificently decorated: the ladies had turned out in large numbers and, with their dancing style and enchanting dresses, made the scene an extremely fascinating event that could rival any other entertainment of its kind in Europe. The dancing lasted all night and until almost seven o'clock on Sunday morning, without any intervention from a bishop of London or a member of the nobility. Unfortunately, the night proved to be very hot. The supper table was set in the large saloon.

On 23 February 1825, the North American gentlemen resident in Buenos Ayres or-

ganised a similar event in the same building, the Consulado, in honour of the victory of Ayacucho and of Washington's birthday. Having more time for preparation and the evening being cool, it was the most magnificent event ever seen in this country; and as for its effect, it could hardly be surpassed. The awning was arranged in the shape of a dome, and the walls of the courtyard in which the dance was held were covered with flags: the Buenos Ayrean, Peru, Chilian, British, and American were the most conspicuous. The bright light that fell on these colours and the sylph-like movements of the ladies mingling in the dance made everything seem like a spell that brought the fairy tales of Eastern Romanticism to life. "London cannot surpass this," exclaimed John Bull, who had just arrived from England, as he entered the scene of the festivities: the graceful bearing and appearance of the female members of society obviously surprised him. The music was of the finest quality; Masoni and other professors presided. It was the first entertainment offered by North Americans to the public of Buenos Ayres in that country, and they were undoubtedly very successful, which brought the highest honour to their generosity and patriotism. It can be said that 'the whole world' of Buenos Aires was present, and they did not disperse until seven o'clock the next morning. The exterior of the Consulate was illuminated with the names of Washington, Bolivar and Sucre.

[...]

The theatre was open on all three evenings; the national anthem was sung, the house decorated, etc. The British consul, with his suite, attended on one of the nights of Carnival, and on the Sunday went in state from the Fort to the Cathedral church. All the government officials were in the procession, including the foreign consuls. It was a walking procession, and Mr. Pousett, the British vice-consul, walked with Mr. Slacum, the North-American consul. [...]

On 24 February, a triumphal car was paraded through the streets, followed by a piece of artillery and another car containing arms of all descriptions, preceded by torchbearers and military music. The large carriage was decorated with flags: I did not see the British flag.

But suddenly, the lift stops abruptly, and the cheerfulness of the three-day celebration disappears like a sweet dream.

For "when the cavalcade reached the plaza, it was overtaken by a Pampero wind, with the usual accompaniment of dust, obscuring the atmosphere and obliging shops and windows to be instantly closed. The London pickpockets during these squalls would find ample field for their talents."

Liberation has been achieved, and the feelings of freedom have been savoured. Everyday life continues, and the question that hangs silently over the protagonists is: How will freedom be shaped, and how many old burdens will continue to weigh on the people?

One of the hopes is pinned on the Latin American economy, on greater economic participation, on a wave of new prosperity, on the gains of independence. With the

final liberation in the 1820s, when the former Viceroyalty of La Plata finally becomes independent, hope fades. The region's economies are even poorer and more isolated than in the late colonial period. Political unrest is both a cause and a consequence of this situation. Tax revenues decline and military and administrative spending rises above that of the colonial regime. In 1819, the province of Buenos Aires had 125,000 inhabitants, Córdoba 75,000, Santiago 60,000 and Salta 50,000. There was a sharp divide between Buenos Aires and the other provinces, clearly visible in the differences in tax revenues: In 1824, Buenos Aires collected 2.5 million dollars, of which 2.0 million dollars came from customs duties, Córdoba 0.7 million dollars, of which 0.3 million dollars came from customs revenues, and San Juan 20,000 dollars, of which 3,800 dollars came from customs revenues. Decades of confrontation between federalists and unitarians had not led to a federal compromise, but had instead perpetuated and, if anything, deepened the inequality.

The dust storms that abruptly swallow up all the festivities and exuberance are harbingers of a time when hopes for a new beginning in freedom and happiness prove illusory from the outset. The republicanism practised in the United States at that time has no place in overcoming a colonial, feudal past. The statement made by philosopher William James at the unveiling of a monument in Boston in 1897 in honour of Robert Gould Shaw, who led a brigade of African Americans in the American Civil War, would be unthinkable in Buenos Aires:

The nation blest above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks.

Such blessings of the political sphere do not exist in Argentina at that time, and many people wait in vain for them. In Argentina, they have the character of utopian songs, not only for the economy and politics, but also with regard to the founding and beginnings of the independent state. These beginnings last an endless, incredible 70 years. Two generations, which is enough to shape their habits. The habits of a life in a politically weak community, of everyone fighting against everyone else, of the unity of war and politics.

The Caudillos In 14 competing provinces with recurring civil wars, a founding history emerges whose defining elements are anarchy and violence. Anarchy of lawlessness in loyalty and allegiance to those who are their leaders, the caudillos. They are mostly rich landowners who can finance a mostly untrained provincial army of poor gauchos and indigenous people, and who have received a good classical education for those times. Almost all of them were born around the time of the French

and American Revolutions and are now between twenty and thirty years old during the struggles for independence from Spain. Violence is the basis of their actions and their fundamental experience of rule; politics is the right of the strongest, who keep the weakness of institutions and the anarchy of lawlessness in check. Wars between the provinces are a continuation of the wars with Spain. This time, it is not only a question of independence, namely of the provinces from each other, but also of dominance, especially that of Buenos Aires.

The writer Martínez Estrada quotes the constitutional lawyer Carlos Sánchez Viámonte:

The caudillo is the rudimentary form of the leader, just as the mob is the rudimentary form of the political party. The true caudillo is neither a leader nor a guide. He is a boss. His prestige may have various causes, but it must be reflected in authority: authority of the person, far removed from public office and institutions; authority based on the voluntary consent of the people and always expected as homage, respect and admiration, without control and without limits. The caudillo shares his authority with no one. The caudillo is unique and almost always the organ of a collective will for life; he identifies with it and can replace it at will and with absolute self-evidence. This is the type of Latin American caudillo, the caudillo criollo.

Anarchy and violence are the counterpart to the successful and, in terms of state theory, impressive founding of the United States of America in its republican and federal guise. Many of the caudillos had military careers during the struggle for independence. While the founding fathers of the USA studied the classics of political theory, especially Cicero and Machiavelli, and acquired experience of the separation of powers and checks and balances, the caudillos were far removed from any critical, conceptual understanding of their experiences and the world of the classics. The reason for this is their completely different way of life. In the English colonies on the east coast of North America, European immigrants organised themselves into local self-governing councils, which were unthinkable in the Spanish colonies with their feudal structures. The experience of practice as a school of politics teaches republican action in the former case and oppression and exclusion in the latter.

In a conversation with Uruguayan general José Artigas, General José María Paz explains his experiences with the hostility of the Porteños, the inhabitants of Buenos Aires, towards him:

I did nothing but respond with war to the shady machinations of the Directorate and the war it waged against me. For I considered myself an enemy of centralism, which at that time was only a step away from the Spanish colonial order. Following the example of the United States, I wanted autonomy for the provinces, giving each state its own government, its own constitution, its own flag and the

right to elect its representatives, judges and governors from among the citizens of that state. That was what I intended for my province and for those who had appointed me their protector. To do so would be to give everyone their due. But the Pueyrredóns and their followers wanted to turn Buenos Aires into a new imperial Rome by sending their proconsuls to rule the provinces militarily and deprive them of any political representation. They did this by rejecting the members of Congress appointed by the people of the Banda Oriental and putting a bounty on my head.

In the years of civil war following independence from 1810 to 1826, 12 presidents and two triumvirates succeeded one another in the presidency of the fragile state.

Those who suffered under Rosas' dictatorship, dissidents, democrats and exiles, are paralysed. Independence brings unexpected anarchy and civil wars, militarisation and dictatorship. Phenomena that can be understood through reflection, and events that have been suffered through experience. The complete loss of power and the excesses of violence are everyday occurrences. No one rebels; silence or even conformism is the virtue of the hour. Only a few resist the barbarism, mainly Republicans such as Mariano Moreno, Juan José Castelli, Bernardo Monteagudo, and the Uruguayan caudillo Artigas. The latter advocates a consensual, democratic and popular government with the introduction of universal suffrage; for agrarian reform, extensive freedom of conscience and a confederative government of the United Provinces of South America. Manuel Belgrano suspended the tribute payments of the Paraguayan indigenous people and, at the Congress of Tucumán on 18 June 1818, proposed a government for the United Provinces headed by a direct descendant of the Incas. In vain.

"Caudillismo," writes the Enlightenment thinker Juan Alberdi in his treatise on anarchy,

under which the provinces suffer, is nothing more than the direct consequence of Buenos Aires' confiscation of the means necessary for governing. In fact, the *caudillo* is none other than the provincial governor in the Argentine Republic, with a form of existence imposed on him by the circumstances in this country. Who is the Argentine provincial governor? He is the head of a local government who has no income and recognises no supreme authority that could prevent him from doing as he pleases; he is a power that has needs and duties to fulfil and has no qualms about obtaining the necessary means to do so. Put an angel in this position and he will have to turn into a devil. That is the *caudillo*.

Fame and Death Most caudillos do not lead peaceful lives, but meet a violent death or are forced to flee. The list of their failures is long. The Uruguayan José Artigas goes into exile after his former subordinate Fructuoso Rivera conspires against him and attempts to assassinate him.

The names and fates of this historical era are confusing; they have no lasting memory value, let alone serve as role models, but are merely witnesses to senseless battles in a sea of lawlessness. A few are mentioned here in brief:

Ramón Rojas and his nephew Manuel Rojas, caudillos of the Republic of Tarija, die fighting the royalists.

Manuel Dorrego, federalist governor and caudillo of Buenos Aires, is overthrown by Unitarians, including Juan Lavalle, and shot without trial. He expresses his last, strange wish: he wants to die in a Unitarian jacket – the jacket of his executioners, which the Unitarian firing squad must then shoot at. Apart from that, his death triggers uprisings and political unrest in Argentina.

Juan Lavalle, a Unitarian from Buenos Aires, joined the independence movement in Argentina at an early age, fought in the wars of liberation against Spanish colonial rule and led several campaigns against the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. These were marked by extreme violence and had devastating effects on the population. After a defeat against the troops of Juan Manuel de Rosas, Lavalle committed suicide in 1841.

Juan Bautista Bustos, a federalist from Córdoba and a figure of great national importance, defeated the caudillo Estanislao López, but was in turn defeated by the Unitarian José María Paz and exiled to La Rioja. He failed in his attempt to drive Paz out and drowned in a river while trying to escape his enemies.

Facundo Quiroga, ran away from school and killed a puma during his wanderings through the desert, earning him the nickname “Tiger of the Prairie”. Quiroga came from the province of La Rioja and attempted to conquer the six allied provinces in the north-west (NOA) and the adjacent region of Cuyo, where the wine-growing region of Mendoza is located today. However, he was defeated and subsequently murdered.

Quiroga is notorious for his cruelty, which is described by eyewitness John Anthony King from the USA:

He had taken off all his clothes except for his drawers, which were rolled up and tied around his thighs. Both he and his horse were covered in blood and altogether they presented an appearance that could be compared to nothing human. Goaded with the prospect of defeat, dashing from place to place, cutting down with his own sword such of his troops as quailed or turned for their lives [...] naked as he was and streaming with gore [...] he seemed a very devil presiding over carnage [...]. ... but at sunset, the battle was decided. Paz was victorious and Quiroga turned away and, without a signal for retreat, fled the field.

His advisor is the Argentine royalist politician and priest Pedro Ignacio de Castro Barros, rector of the University of Córdoba, who incites Quiroga against the relaxation of religious morals in Buenos Aires. Quiroga, who is said to have memorised

the Bible, declares a religious war on Buenos Aires under the banner “Religion or Death”.

The newspaper *La Nación* recalls on 16 February 2020:

The cruel murder of Facundo Quiroga and the fatal fate of those responsible. At the end of 1834, a civil war broke out between the governors of Salta and Tucumán over the autonomy of Jujuy. The governor of Buenos Aires, Manuel Vicente Maza, sent General Facundo Quiroga as a mediator. After Quiroga ignored warnings that he was going to be killed, he learned halfway there that the war was over. On 16 February, a group ambushed his carriage in Barranca Yaco, north of Córdoba, and when Quiroga leaned out of the window, he was shot in the eye. He was then slashed and impaled, and all the other members of the group were also killed.

The leader of the group was Captain Santos Pérez, a confidant of the Reinafé brothers, the lords and masters of the province of Córdoba. It is also known that Juan Manuel de Rosas, with the consent of Ibarra and López, ordered the arrest of Santos Pérez, three of the Reinafé brothers and the main participants in the assassination.

After a twenty-month trial, Santos Pérez and two of the Reinafé brothers were shot in the Plaza de La Victoria. Another of the brothers died in prison, and the only one who managed to escape drowned two years later in the Carcarañá River. In short, those primarily responsible for the crime paid with their lives, the Reinafé brothers disappeared from the political scene in Córdoba, and Rosas gained extraordinary powers and the sum of public power thanks to Quiroga's sacrifice.

Quiroga's body was buried in Córdoba Cathedral. In 1946, it was transferred to the Quiroga crypt in La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires. In 2007, a multi-disciplinary group entered the crypt and found the bronze coffin containing his skeleton in a side wall. The relatives did not allow the coffin to be opened to check whether the bones of his wife lay at his feet, as oral tradition has it.

Another notorious caudillo is Justo José de Urquiza, a military man and politician, several times governor of Entre Ríos, commander of the coastal troops in Uruguay, one of the richest farmers and merchants with a strong clientele. He came to power during a period of intensified civil war under Rosas, became president of the Argentine Federation and was involved in the drafting of the constitution. It remains unclear who ultimately murdered him, or who was responsible for the murder of several hundred prisoners. Urquiza had eleven legitimate children and 23 illegitimate children who were legally recognised. Rumour has it that he had between 105 and 114 children in total.

José Félix Aldao recaptured his province of Mendoza for the federalists in a battle against the Unitarians. He then had 100 Unitarians executed for the death of his brother in battle. His ruthlessness was well known.

Pedro Castelli from Buenos Aires, son of a Jacobin hero, led a revolt against Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas, was defeated in the Battle of Chascomús and murdered shortly afterwards.

Martín Miguel de Güemes, governor of the province of Salta, commanded the legendary gaucho army “Infernales” (the Hellish) against the Spanish and royalist troops and was shot in battle. His sister Macacha is considered a heroine of the struggle for independence.

Francisco Ramírez, a federalist from the province of Entre Ríos who sided with José Artigas and Estanislao López, overthrew the national government in Buenos Aires, fell out with both of his intellectual companions and died in battle against López’s troops. The last minutes of his life remain romanticised in memory, when, after complete defeat, only a few soldiers and his wife Delfina remained with Ramírez. They fled when a group of enemy soldiers appeared. The soldiers seized Delfina, who was impossible to miss in her red and blue riding outfit, wearing a hat with ostrich feathers and riding a horse. The caudillo stood in the way of his pursuers. While they shot him, Delfina managed to escape. His death saved her life.

Not content with Ramírez lying dead in the dust, the soldier Pedraza cut off his head and sent it wrapped in a sheepskin to Estanislao López’s camp. López sent it to Santa Fé so that it could be displayed in an iron cage in the atrium of the main church. But the priest protested against associating the saint with such a macabre act and the head was hung for three days in the arcades of the town hall. Finally, the head was embalmed by Manuel Rodríguez and kept by López for a long time.

After the death of Francisco Ramírez, Estanislao López from the province of Santa Fé, a confidant of Rosas, exercised a strong influence in the Argentine Littoral, and after the death of Juan Bautista Bustos, also in Córdoba. He ruled as governor of Santa Fé for twenty years on the basis of a broad consensus.

Marco Manuel Avellaneda, governor of the province of Tucumán and father of Argentine President Nicolás Avellaneda, was executed after an unsuccessful uprising against the federal government. His head was impaled and displayed.

With great admiration, writer Eduardo Gutiérrez describes one of the last caudillos, Ángel “Chacho” Peñaloza from La Rioja, who fought against the army of dictator Rosas, was promoted to general by Urquiza, lost his last battle and was murdered:

“El Chacho” was the only truly respected caudillo the Argentine Republic ever had. That astonishing child prodigy, who rallied ten thousand men around him without ever asking where he was leading them or against whom, had made “Chacho” a formidable personality who kept the entire power of the nation on its toes for years without anyone managing to break his influence or intimidate the brave caudillo. [...] The people of La Rioja, Catamarca, Santiago and Mendoza itself surrounded him with true adoration, and it was precisely the men of some impor-

tance and intelligence who accompanied him and helped him in all his difficult and rough undertakings.

"El Chacho" did not have enough money to keep a company at war. And yet he raised powerful armies, poorly armed and poorly fed, whose only concern was to please this extraordinary man. "El Chacho" had no artillery, but his soldiers built leather and wooden cannons loaded with stones instead of shrapnel, but with stones that wreaked barbaric devastation among the troops pursuing him. He had no spears, but even with nails tied to the ends of sticks, his soldiers improvised and considered themselves invincible. [...] an army with which he fought the national government without a single soldier deserting, for all his soldiers were volunteers and followers of Peñaloza to the point of fanaticism. [...] "El Chacho" fought for the people, for their freedoms and for the rights that he believed had been violated. He wanted nothing for himself and never demanded anything, even at a time when the government would have given him everything to make peace. This was the main reason for the great respect enjoyed by "El Chacho" and for the many men who surrounded him.

His speeches were powerful and compelling:

The freedom of men is limited to the right to choose the battalion to which they will be assigned as veterans; women, girls and ladies are the property of the chiefs and officers themselves, to be shared with them as spoils of war. [...] If they are powerful in numbers and weapons, if we cannot fight them in open battle, we will fight them with the steadfastness and cunning that characterise my troops. And if we surprise them today, take them by surprise tomorrow, give them no time to eat or sleep, attack them when they least expect it, then we will wear them down and force them to leave the territory of La Rioja and regret ever coming here. What is the goal of these leaders and this government? They have made it clear in every province they have occupied: they want to recruit our men into the regular army and treat our women like slaves. And can we accept that just because they are so numerous and so well armed? No, by the living God, we will fight, and in the long run we will be victorious. And as he said this, Chachos' voice trembled with indignation and courage, for he was deeply aware of his words.

Politics of Violence Violence as a means of defending the interests of the respective province is considered legitimate and forms the necessary power base of the caudillos. The decision for or against the federalists or the unitarians is also subject to personal considerations of expediency. Thus, the federalist Rosas, as governor of Buenos Aires and dictator, represents unitarian interests. The monstrous dimension of the violence practised can only be fully understood when the individual cases are reported, at least in brief.

Violence is also part of everyday life. In the city of Jujuy, John Anthony King experiences the typical arbitrary rule of the church. Deep in conversation with a

friend, he fails to kneel down on the street before members of a religious order carrying a consecrated host. A soldier beats him with a stick and the priest rebukes him severely. King is then arrested and thrown into a dungeon. The offence of sacrilege is punishable by death. He spends three months in prison and is then released on condition that he leave the town within 24 hours. The Church confiscates his belongings.

The aforementioned Reinafé brothers, politicians and military men in Córdoba, are suspected of conspiracy by President Rosas and found guilty of the death of Facundo Quiroga. In Buenos Aires, they are sentenced to death along with twelve others and executed in the Plaza de la Victoria, today Plaza 25 de Mayo. Their bodies are hung from a gallows for several days.

Two years after the declaration of independence in 1810, a plot by Spaniards against the First Triumvirate is uncovered. Within a week, Álzaga, who, as we have seen, had successfully defended Buenos Aires against the British invasion, and his co-conspirators are arrested, tried and sentenced to death in a dubious trial. More than 30 men were executed, including military commanders, merchants and clergymen. Their bodies were displayed for three days in the Plaza de La Victoria.

The anonymous diarist from the United States reports:

In October 1820, two people were shot in the plaza near the fort for treason in connection with the revolution at that time – an officer and a drum major. The former was executed in a poncho he had used to disguise himself. They were led out of the fort in heavy chains, [...] From the neighbouring balconies, several women watched the terrible event.

A year later, another coup attempt was made on the grounds that “the religion of the country was in danger. [...] Several hundred gauchos galloped from the countryside into the city shouting ‘Viva la religión’. Soldiers put them to flight, and a few days later a colonel involved in the plot was shot dead.”

This execution was followed by two more, namely those of officers Peralta and Urien, who were convicted of participating in a conspiracy and a murder committed several years earlier. Because of his good looks, Urien is very popular with the ladies and an absolute “man of the cafés”.

“The sentence is read out to the prisoners several times,” it continues,

and because of the slow pace of the procession, it takes some time for them to reach the terrible place of execution. [...] The soldiers fire: Peralta is killed, but Urien remains seated and appears to be only slightly wounded. The drums that begin to beat are stopped, and a terrible scene ensues. Several soldiers aim their muskets at Urien: But they do not fire, then one after the other, and finally one explodes, which, judging by the sound, can only have been lightly loaded. The poor

man falls to the ground, but is not dead and tries to raise himself up on one elbow. More muskets are fired, and Urien no longer moves. One can well imagine the feelings of the spectators at this horrific spectacle.

In 1821, José Miguel Carrera, who had made a very positive impression in the revolutions in this part of South America, was shot dead in Mendoza. He was a native of Chile, belonged to one of the country's leading families and possessed considerable abilities. "The execution of his two brothers, Antonio and Luis, who lived in the same city but pursued different political goals, had led him to swear eternal enmity to the government of Buenos Ayres, especially to (liberation hero WH) San Martín, whom he detested. In his quest for revenge, he had enlisted the support of the indigenous population. This act cost him many of his friends, who now regarded him with a kind of horror as the leader of barbarians.

And the notebook has even more to report. "Carrera was in the prime of life, tall and elegantly built: his despair and courage make him one of Lord Byron's heroes, though not exactly "with one virtue and a thousand crimes".

The years of anarchy and fratricidal wars continued, filling much of the 19th century and were extremely cruel. Unitarians and federalists pillaged, tortured, beheaded and impaled. No prisoners were taken on either side. Domingo Arrieta reports in his memoirs of a soldier: "Kill here, kill there, kill everywhere. We were not allowed to let any of those we captured live, and after two months everything was quiet." It is estimated that 2,500 people died or disappeared during this "civilised" repression. Lavalle did not leave behind a reputation for bloodthirstiness, but his battle cry against Estanislao López is clear: "The hour of revenge has come! Let us humiliate the pride of these cowardly murderers! The barbarians would be deceiving themselves if they begged for our mercy in their desperation. We must cut their throats. Let us rid society of these monsters. Death, merciless death." And: "Shed the inhuman blood in streams, so that this race cursed by God and man has no successor." (O'Donnell 2014)

Even the enlightened Sarmiento could find no other words: "Terror must be used to achieve victory. All prisoners and all enemies must be killed. All means are good and must be used without hesitation." Furthermore: "Those who do not recognise Paz (head of the United League, WH) should be hanged, not shot or beheaded. This is the means of imposing a greater sense of authority on the people."

He even considered the British invasion of the Malvinas useful for civilisation and progress (*El Progreso*, 28 December 1842). In volume 4, page 12 of his collected works, he therefore laments the failure of the British attack on Buenos Aires. (Maglio)

The punishments are draconian:

They seemed to strike him about a dozen times in quick succession with a piece of wood that looked like a scrubbing brush with a sharp strip attached to it [...]. Those sentenced to prison must work on the streets and are shackled with heavy iron chains [...] Sailors are punished with the pillory, and for criminal offences they must be severely shackled and paraded through the streets. (Love)

Towards the end of 1824, there was a sharp rise in crime in Buenos Aires. Two black men committed a gruesome murder of a Genoese man who ran a tin shop near the College Church. The murderers are arrested and shot in Retiro Park, their bodies then hung from a gallows. A boy who was involved in the crime (he had let the villains into the house) escapes the death penalty because he has not yet reached the legal age; however, he is present at the execution.

The first execution for forgery takes place in February 1825 and concerns Marcelo Valdivia, who is shot at the Retiro. Under the old Spanish law, a person convicted of forgery was sentenced to lose a hand. This young man had previously been sentenced to death for the same crime, but his sentence was commuted to exposure in the plaza, eight years' imprisonment and life exile. In July 1824, he serves the first part of his sentence by sitting in the plaza for four hours wearing the counterfeit banknotes on his chest. In prison, however, he continues to forge documents, including his own release order.

A black woman is shot for attempting to kill her lover. The execution of a woman is a rare event in this country.

Violence that does not serve to enforce law and freedom is senseless, violates human rights, knows no compromise, is the opposite of power and is based on a binary logic whose extreme opposites are life and death.

Culture of Cruelty Unlike the politics of violence, the culture of cruelty is not based on conscious acts of will, but on habitual behaviour that is deeply rooted and therefore largely unconscious. The world of animals and agriculture is cruel, not per se, but because of the subjugation and exploitation of animals and nature by humans. The daily tasks in cowsheds, slaughterhouses and salt works are schools of insensitivity and harshness, and often also of abuse. This is not necessarily intentional cruelty, but above all the wear and tear of farm animals as tools to make work easier.

The British traveller F.B. Head is appalled: "In England, you never see horses in such a condition; the spurs, heels and legs of the workers are literally bathed in blood, and the blood flows rather than drips from the horses' sides."

The poet and historian León Benarós explains in his foreword to Eduardo Gutiérrez's collection of stories "Los Montoneros":

Cruelty towards animals is transferred to humans without much violence. A well-known page from *La refalosa* by the poet and politician Ascasubí still provokes an

involuntary shudder. No one has ever portrayed the malicious cruelty with which a cutthroat threatens to revel in the martyrdom of others. The meticulous description anticipates all the victim's reactions [...] nothing is missing: the handcuffing of the Unitarian; the binding of his feet; the "fiddling" with his fingernails "on his neck" amid jokes of a bestial nature; the "grabbing of the curls", a measure carried out by one of the "executioner's assistants" while another holds him by the feet; the piercing of the veins in his neck with a sharp dagger, which the cutthroats call a "pain reliever"; finally slipping in his own blood [...] the final humiliation: the removal of a piece of human skin and the cutting off of the victim's ears, so that the head, without hair, beard or eyebrows, is left at the mercy of the vultures.

Simple thinking in terms of violence prevails, creating clarity through swift action. This is one of the core characteristics of the country's founding history that has left a lasting impression. It would take until 1912 for democratic institutions to be established, but democracy struggled throughout the 20th century against its opponents, the large landowners and the military, as well as against populist and revolutionary Peronism. After the founding of the Argentine nation in 1853, the violence of the civil war finally spilled over into the violent conquest of Patagonia, south of Buenos Aires, all the way to Antarctica. The internal enemy was seamlessly replaced by the external enemy.

This enemy, in its internal and external form, remains the adversary of the military, which needs it to justify its own existence. The experience of the militarisation of politics in the form of the caudillos to save the community is engraved in the collective memory. In the 20th century, the military claimed, through its coups, to be the ever-present force of order standing above all social forces. They continue the tradition of the caudillos, occasionally inviting civilian, conservative forces to participate in the adventurous, one-sided restoration of the nation's order and in a temporary undertaking similar to a punitive expedition, as carried out in the 19th century against an indigenous people in the countryside and now, in the 20th century, against a people of workers and trade unionists, class warriors and populists in the city.

Perón also takes part in a coup, but it fails. So he takes the path of elections and, after winning, tries to dominate the social order politically and control it through state interventionism. However, this is not done in the name of democracy, but of justice, of *Justicialismo*. This allows him to integrate the newly emerging working class, but not the large landowners. The military staged coups in their favour and in the name of their idea of order. Heroically and programmatically, the military called the overthrow of Perón in 1955 the "liberation revolution," the coup in 1966 the "Argentine revolution," and the coup in 1976 the "process of national reorganisation." Once order was restored, they withdrew to their role as guardians.

Looking at the structures of the game reveals the relationship between order and chaos in human action. The game is characterised by the establishment of an order that takes place after the enjoyment of a limited period of chaos as a phase of creativity. It is not played according to rules, like card games, but is initially rule-less and, as it unfolds it creates a structure of order and rejects previous bonds. Violence and cruelty without the establishment of a new order fall back on themselves. The civil war in Argentina shows a common order of merciless struggle and death, but at the same time a certain degree of emptiness, the loss of power that encourages opponents to attack and take creative action. The Argentine philosopher Graciela Scheines explained the relationship between chaos and order in play:

We Argentinians have a certain difficulty in respecting rules. We are always looking for a way around them. Perhaps the reason for this resistance can be found in the terrible repression we have suffered. We tend to identify "the" order with "order". An order is a command that must be obeyed; it means that there is a person who forces someone else to do something. Order, on the other hand, is the harmonious arrangement of a series of things. We unconsciously confuse the two meanings and consequently reject order. But order is inherent in human affairs. Even rebels and revolutionaries must organise themselves according to a certain order so as to effectively influence the reality they want to overthrow. Even in a revolution, order must prevail, as in any game. For without order, without an organic arrangement of things, one falls into fascism. I have seen this in game workshops, where a few people meet to play games under the guidance of coordinators. It is not difficult for them to forget the order that governs everyday life. They do it in a fantastic way: they leave behind prejudices, shame and moral concepts and enter freely and uninhibitedly. But this chaotic situation, which is necessary to start the game, inevitably leads to a terrifying and all-powerful gang if it lasts too long and is not replaced by a playful order (a new arrangement of relationships with creatively invented rules). The dominant group begins to violently attack the other participants who have invented a little game and prevent them from playing. [...] If this initial stage of chaos or emptiness lasts too long, it gives rise to fascist groups that do not respect the games of others, do what they want, and prevent anyone else from playing. In addition to the commonality of chaos and order, action and play tend to repeatedly create new disorder and new orders, which in the case of civil war revolve endlessly around themselves until a stable structure of power and power sharing is found.

The Gauchos Caudillos and gauchos shape the image of the provinces. Just as the caudillos link their own freedom and sovereignty to that of their province, the gauchos form a social group of nomads, free-spirited followers and cattle herders who distinguish themselves as fighters with great skill on horseback and in knife fights. They are considered the rulers of the supposedly wild areas of present-day

Argentina. Many gauchos have indigenous and European ancestors and are close to an indigenous subculture and the values of stoicism and a world order of mysticism and pantheism. The attachment to a hacienda or state institution, to private property, industry or land ownership is as foreign to the life of the gauchos as republican structures are to city dwellers.

The anonymous English traveller describes their appearance:

These gauchos are a peculiar race: some wear their hair long and braided in the Chinese style; and in addition to their clothing, they wear handkerchiefs tied under their chins and hanging loosely down their backs. A group of them are sitting in a field by a fire, just as we might imagine the witches of Macbeth.

With the formation of nations, increased efforts were made to settle the nomads and force the unlimited into defined orders. A group of idlers, deviating from the perspective of economic efficiency, is to be absorbed into the group of productive workers. To this end, the rural protectors introduce a system of laws that criminalise all activities associated with the gaucho lifestyle. All persons living in the rural provinces of Argentina are issued with an identity card regulating their residence in certain areas. No one is allowed to hunt wild animals or livestock in these areas. And all males must join the province's official land army to fight against the indigenous population at the country's borders. However, many gauchos are unable to make the transition for cultural reasons or due to a lack of jobs. The once free and independent gaucho becomes an impoverished, unemployed vagrant.

With his disappearance, he now becomes the myth that José Hernández created in his epic poem "Martín Fierro" twenty years after the constitution was adopted in 1852/79. It is not only considered a literary masterpiece, but is also an important contribution to Argentine culture and identity. It deals with freedom, justice and the confrontation between the gauchos and the social changes in Argentina in the 19th century. The anarchist newspaper "La Protesta" declared in 1904: "Martín Fierro is the symbol of a particular era in our history, the embodiment of our customs, institutions, beliefs, vices and virtues. He is the cry of a class fighting against the oppressive upper classes of society; he is the protest against injustice."

The first part of the poem describes the simple life of the gaucho, who is forcibly recruited by the Argentine army and then forced to fight for the cavalry. During an attack by indigenous people, whom he describes as beasts, he kills the chief's son. Because he experiences injustice in the military and is wrongfully convicted, he deserts after three years and returns home. But his hut is in ruins, his land is lost and his wife has died; his sons have disappeared, and Martín Fierro becomes an outlaw and violent. Drunk, he insults an Afro-Argentine woman at a folk festival and stabs her companions to death. When confronted by the police, he kills several officers and is saved by a stranger named Cruz, who tells him about Fierro's wife's

relationship with the commander. Cruz had also killed someone. They continue on their way together.

In the second part, about his return, Fierro is taken prisoner during a fight with indigenous people. There he meets a white woman who is forced into slave labour with her young son. Fierro kills one of the indigenous people so that they can escape. He finds his sons again; one was wrongfully convicted; the younger son grew up with an aunt until she died. A judge appoints a gangster as guardian. The son unsuccessfully courts a widow.

The poem ends with a message emphasising the importance of freedom and justice and underlining the need to respect the rights and dignity of the gauchos.

Cruelty and violence was an everyday occurrence and is at the heart of the poem. The hero repeatedly resorts to violence, which invariably has fatal consequences. It is unquestionably justified. As with Michael Kohlhaas in Heinrich von Kleist's novella, injustice justifies any means, although it is not explained in detail whether injustice is understood in a moral or legal sense. Contrary to the mood of the poem, the insult to a black woman cannot be justified, nor can the murder of her companion who intervenes in her defence. Violence is an everyday means of communication, and being drunk at the time of the act is considered an acceptable excuse.

The tone of the poem is concise and direct:

I threw myself off the horse in a flash / And kicked him hard in the neck / With my / chunky heels. / He gurgled in his throat, / then the pagan soul / had to pack its bags for hell...

(Ay no más me tiré al suelo / Y lo pisé en las paletas – / Empezó a hacer morisquetas / Y a / mesquinar la garganta ... / Pero yo hice la obra santa / De hacerlo estirar la geta....)

He kills a black man:

In my intoxication, I indulged in quarrelling and strife. A black man had arrived with his jet-black beauty...

(Como nunca, en la ocasión, / Por pelear me dio al tranca / Y la emprendí con un negro / Que trujo una negra en ancas ...)

I immediately stabbed him with my knife / And cut a hole in his side. / Like a sack full of bones / I threw him against the fence.

(Por fin, en una topada / En el cuchillo lo alcé / Y como un saco de güesos / contra el cerco lo largué...)

The poet Roberto Arlt shakes his head. In 1929, at the end of the economic miracle, Martin Fierro was “the most disturbing figure of the literary moment, Mariani had told us. And there we were,” reported the agents of a literary magazine.

The house of a great man, the room of a writer, a modest man. He is so modest that he would prefer to hide his integrity behind his tinted glasses.

When we asked him to talk to us about the intellectuals of the country, he replied: "But that would make the whole world look bad, sir!"

Then he adds with a smile:

If we understand culture to be a national and uniform psychology that arises from the absorption of foreign knowledge and is accompanied by its own characteristics, then this culture does not exist in Argentina. All we have here is a superficial knowledge of foreign books. And in the authors, a vague force that does not know in which direction it should develop.

He invites us to have a cigarette, but we decline." That's why," he continues, "there is no national culture. And the works we call national, such as those of Martín Fierro, can only interest an illiterate person. No reasonable person can enjoy this sophisticated parody of blind songs, which seems to delight the luminaries of the new sensibility."

He stuffs his hands into the pockets of his coat, sits down and stands up again repeatedly. (*La Literatura Argentina*, No. 12, August 1929)

In this world, murder has no ethical dimension, authority has no power, freedom has no self-restraint. For most people, this is not a problem; an undefined concept of injustice serves as an unrestricted justification for amorality, anarchy and irresponsibility. The writer Eduardo Gutiérrez set his crime stories, published since 1879, in the world of the gauchos, where heroic criminals are victims of police persecution.

In 1913, at the Odeón Theatre in Buenos Aires, the nationalist writer Leopoldo Lugones proclaimed the "Creoles" to representatives of the upper classes as the pillar of "Argentinity" in opposition to the gringos, the foreigners. Lugones is one of the great writers who, on the occasion of Argentina's centenary, brilliantly described the culture of the gauchos in "El Payador" and believed he recognised the "spirituality of the Argentine race" in "Martín Fierro".

The writer Ricardo Rojas believes that "Martín Fierro" should be to Argentinians what the medieval "Song of Roland" is to the French or the epic "El Cid" is to the Spanish. The fact that "Martín Fierro" disregards fundamental values and that the message of the epic lies in the justification of vigilante justice does not seem to be a problem.

Thus, despite the positive portrayal of violence, Juan Perón declared the poem by decree to be the "highest expression of Argentine identity." Accordingly, during his time in office from 1946 to 1955, cultural events were organised to disseminate the text, and dozens of books glorified the gaucho way of life. In the 1970, Peronists, Catholics and left-wing radicals founded the Montoneros guerrilla group, seeing the gaucho as a hero of the oppressed. They derived their name from the paramili-

tary groups during the wars of independence, which consisted mainly of gauchos. In 1993, Peronist President Carlos Menem introduced the "Day of the Gaucho" on 6 December.

Jorge Luis Borges, a declared opponent of Peronism, regrets that Sarmiento's book *Facundo* was not declared the national epic instead of *Martín Fierro*: "I maintain that our history would be different and better if we had canonised it as our exemplary book." Borges praises the aesthetic quality of the poem unreservedly, but not its content. He finds it sad that his compatriots read the famous episode in which Martín Fierro provokes a duel with a black gaucho and then kills him in a knife fight "with indulgence or admiration" rather than with horror. The indifference to the murders is a moral scandal. "In history," says Borges, "lies the true ethics of the Creole: that assumes that bloodshed is not memorable and that it occurs to people to kill [...] 'Who in my time has not been responsible for a death?' I heard an elderly gentleman lament quietly one afternoon." Even though Borges distances himself from violence, he considers it an essential part of human existence and the work a masterpiece of poetry. The common tradition that encompasses all of them therefore stretches from Hernández to Lugones to Borges.

The writer Alberto Manguel, former director of the National Library in Buenos Aires, agrees with Borges, provoking strong reactions from Peronists defending "their" national emblem.

Knife fighting is an art. Ezequiel Martínez Estrada devotes a chapter to it in his study of the Argentine mentality, *Radiografía de la pampa* (X-ray of the Pampa, 1933). There he observes

how it cuts bread and masters fruit, but that it is dangerous to learn the secret of its use and master its complete technique. Knowledge of [...] the art of cutting is as fatal as that of writing a good verse; it takes you as far as you don't want to go. It is used to kill, and especially to kill people, requiring a certain physical proximity and eliminating any advantage or impunity through distance. It is the synthesis of all the tools that humans have used since the beginning of time. Ameghino found five types of knives in our pampas, tiny and made of stone.

It is the only weapon with which one can earn one's bread in humility and which, through the trail of blood it leaves behind, indicates the crime. It is sometimes faster than insult and very difficult to measure or grade in terms of aggression, because when the soul can retreat, the hand has already carried out the first, unconscious impulse; which is why we would say that it is faster than thought and closer to the will than thought itself. It reaches as far as the fist; the index finger and thumb touch the body. This touch, which would be enough to forgive, indicates what has been done without remedy.

However, once we look beyond the hostile attitude towards the indigenous people and black people and the murders that dominate *Martín Fierro*, social misery also becomes apparent. In 1869, Senator Nicasio Oroño declared:

It seems that the despotism and cruelty with which we treat our poor countrymen is in our blood and in the education we have received. When they see the man in our fields, the humble peasant wrapped in his wool blanket or with his poncho on his back, it seems to them that they are seeing the Indian of our pampas, whom they believe they can treat with the same harshness and injustice as the conquerors treated the first inhabitants of America. When they want to send a contingent to the border or raise a battalion, they take the peasants and craftsmen by surprise and conscript them into the military despite their age.

The first liberal president of the republic, Bartolomé Mitre, is not satisfied with the portrayal of injustice, violence and hatred in "*Martín Fierro*". He believes that denying positive values can serve to fuel negative political mobilisation and radicalisation. Mitre writes to the author in 1879:

I think you have abused naturalism a little and exaggerated the local colour [...] with certain barbarities that were not essential to make the book accessible to everyone [...] I do not entirely agree with your social philosophy, which leaves a premature bitterness in the depths of the soul without the corrective of social solidarity. It is better to reconcile opposites through love and the necessity of living together and united than to allow hatred to fester.

Pope Francis writes to pilgrims in Germany that an Argentine proverb, referring to *Martín Fierro*, says: "Let the brothers be united, for that is the first law; let them preserve unity at all times, for if they fight among themselves, they will be devoured by outsiders."

After all, beyond the libraries, even agricultural entrepreneurs use the gaucho myth of the simple people for their own purposes, for example when they take to the streets in their name to protest against export restrictions.

Barbarism and Civilisation Domingo Faustino Sarmiento published a fundamental critique of the world of caudillos and gauchos, illustrated by the example of the life of Fernando Quiroga, whom the author considers the most cruel of all provincial leaders, and whom we have already heard about above.

Sarmiento is an outstanding figure in 19th-century Argentine history. Unlike many caudillos, he came from a humble background and received a modest education. He recognised the importance of education at an early age and was a passionate advocate of educational reform. He travelled abroad, particularly to the United

States and Europe, to study modern reforms and gather ideas for improving the education system in Argentina.

Sarmiento was a prolific writer and journalist. He wrote numerous books, with *Facundo* being his best-known and most influential work. His portrayal of the caudillo, the “Tiger of the Prairie,” reflects the political and social conditions in Argentina at the time.

Sarmiento was a supporter of the Unitarians, held various government positions and was finally president of Argentina from 1868 to 1874. In this office, he modernised Argentina’s education system and extended it to all social classes as a means of social improvement and progress.

His goal was education against violence. In addition, he saw the revolutionary experience of the struggle for independence as a starting point for an enlightenment as a way of thinking and living, not barbarism. This meant opposing the man of the plains and giving primacy to the man of the city, who rejected physical strength and spontaneous and habitual cruelty in the rustic environment of a peasant world.

Sarmiento is one of the few enlightened thinkers in the European sense. His criticism is scathing. The interior of the country, from Mendoza to Buenos Aires, is an endless expanse of plains, a symbolic desert, the crossing of which “requires an iron will, a character so bold as to be reckless “to keep in check the recklessness and rebelliousness of the mainland pirates, whom he alone has to guide and control in the desert, completely on his own.” The city dweller does not know the techniques of survival, does not know “how to subdue and kill a wild animal, how to get a horse on foot in open country without outside help, who has never faced a jaguar, dagger drawn in one hand and poncho wrapped around the other to stuff it into the beast’s mouth.” This habit of being superior to nature creates a sense of importance and superiority. Every Argentine, regardless of status or class, is very aware of this. The other Americans therefore accuse them of “this vanity and show themselves offended by this presumption and arrogance.”

The revolution of the War of Independence gave rise to a third force alongside the revolutionary patriots and conservative opponents: the anti-civilisation impulse of the caudillos. They were “a blind but vibrant tool of instinctive aversion to European civilisation and to any form of regulated coexistence.” And all this destroys those who asked them for help, and it also destroys “the city, its ideas, its literature, its schools, its courts, its civilisation.” As if anticipating the city of guerrilla of the Montoneros in the 1970s, Sarmiento writes that “the ‘Montonera’ as it appeared in the early days of the republic under Artigas [...] already showed this cruel ferocity and this evil spirit of terror.” Artigas’ Montonera sewed their defeated enemies into a “straitjacket”, a cover made of fresh leather, and left them lying in the fields. “Execution by knife, *slitting the throat* instead of shooting, is a butcher’s instinct” that the army commander “knew how to use to give death a gaucho-like twist and offer the murderer gruesome pleasures.”

Sarmiento documents the depopulation of the cities as a result of the civil wars on the basis of a survey conducted in La Rioja. There, the population halved to 1,500 during the civil war, including only 15 men. There are no doctors or judges, no schools, no new buildings. All the inhabitants are more or less impoverished and, out of fear of terror, do not dare to speak in public.

Enter the most controversial protagonist of the fate of the provinces, Facundo, the provincial caudillo. Sarmiento analyses the caudillo type against the backdrop of cultural influences and the struggles for the future of the country, based on reports and interviews, like 20th century qualitative sociology. It is a very modern, forward-looking study, without any nostalgic melancholy for a lost culture such as that of Martin Fierro, and without any racist elitist orientation towards a monarchy as a conciliatory alternative to federalists and unitarians, as proposed by José Mármol in his novel *Amalia*.

Sarmiento recounts how Facundo stabbed a judge from horseback and, after losing a game of chance, had the winner given 200 lashes.

However, his character and his unrestrained habits remained unchanged, and the horse races, gambling and raids through the pampas offered scenes full of violence, robberies and knife fights, until he finally became unbearable in the world and his own position became uncertain. Then a great idea seized his mind, and he announced it without further ado. The deserter of the *Arribeños*, the former soldier of the *cavalry grenadiers* who had spurned immortality at Chacabuco or Maipú, decided to join the Montonera of Ramírez, the scion of the Montonera of Artigas, whose reputation, due to crime, hatred and war against the cities, had spread as far as Los Llanos and filled the provincial governments with terror. Facundo set out to join those freebooters of the pampas, and it was perhaps the knowledge of his character and his abilities, as well as the idea of how much he would reinforce those destructive elements, that captivated his compatriots in La Rioja and prompted them to warn the authorities of the province of San Luis, which he had to cross, of the hellish intention that guided him.

Facundo seeks conflict, does not drink alcohol, wants not merely to instil fear but terror, and treats those around him like slaves. Life on horseback, full of danger and strong emotions, “has steeled his spirit and armoured his heart: he has an insurmountable, instinctive hatred for the laws that persecute him, for the judges who have condemned him, for this whole society and this order from which he has withdrawn since childhood, and which looks upon him with mistrust and contempt.” Everything that he cannot amass as wealth, and power, manners, education, and respectability, he pursued and destroyed in the people who possessed such things.” Any form of subordination is foreign to him, and he can become “as quick-tempered as the beasts.”

And he repeatedly plays cat and mouse with his victims. For example, he has his friend Gutiérrez, the former governor of Catamarca, arrested for a trifling matter and sent to death row. When several clergymen intervene and ask that the condemned man be given the time he needs to write his will, he has them thrown into prison with the announcement that they will be killed in Gutiérrez's place. Shortly afterwards, however, he releases them.

Sarmiento compares Facundo to Caesar, Tamerlane and Mohammed, as a "genius against his will" with the egoism characteristic of all great characters. He feels no attachment to any region, like the gauchos, but wanders around. In La Rioja, he overthrows the two most influential families and becomes governor of the province. But that is not enough for him; he also conquers the provinces of Tucumán and San Juan. He is a "gaucho on horseback without equal, ruling with violence and terror, knowing no power other than brute force, having no faith other than in his horse, expecting everything from courage, from his lance, from the terrifying force of his cavalry attacks." He embodies the ideal of the "*Gaucha malo*," the evil gaucho, in its purest form.

Facundo contributed to the economic ruin of a total of eight depopulated provinces. Where thousands of cattle once grazed, there was drought, the wells dried up, and wild cats roamed freely.

When Facundo loses a battle, he goes to Buenos Aires and joins the dictator Rosas. In 1835, while on his way back from mediating a conflict between two provinces for Rosas, he is ambushed near Cordoba and shot dead in his carriage. Rumours that Rosas ordered the murder remain unproven. In any case, the carriage was put on display in Buenos Aires and pictures of the hanged alleged murderers were distributed.

Just one year earlier, in 1834, before seizing dictatorial power, Rosas wrote flowerily to Quiroga that a national government and constitution, which the latter so desired, were impossible because a federation would be too loose and would leave the capital without power, and because there was currently too much unrest in the provinces. "Everyone is infected by Unitarists, political strategists, aspiring landowners, secret agents of other nations and Freemasons who are keeping the whole of Europe in turmoil," and there were no financial resources for a central administration and no skilled personnel available.

Dictator Rosas Anarchy and dictatorship are theoretically and irreconcilably opposed from the standpoint of freedom, but not when the freedom of anarchy turns into lawlessness and violence. Then dictatorship and anarchic violence are very close to each other. The caudillos are petty rulers who dream of almost unlimited power if they succeed in rising above the others. Their secret desire is to establish a dictatorship. The term "restorer of the laws" indicates that anarchy was a place of lawlessness and that the complete elimination of anarchic diversity is now possible through a

single law and a single dictatorship. This is not a democratic process, since violence reigns supreme with the caudillos until the very end, and only coercion can transform the anarchic space into a dictatorial one. Dictatorial power is therefore either seized or transferred to the ruler by means of a plebiscite, i.e. with the consent of the population.

As the bearer of the sabre of the liberator San Martín, which Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793–1877) received as a reward for his successful participation in the second war of independence against England and France, his qualifications as a leader are evident. His wealthy family background, owners of the largest cured meat production in the country, and a good education created the necessary trust among all those who longed for an alternative to anarchy. However, he grew up in a family environment of extreme strictness, domination and servitude. August Heinrich Pierer writes in his *Universal Lexicon of the Present and Past*, vol. 14, 1862, p. 355, that Rosas was born into an Asturian family and grew up among *gauchos*,

over whom he gained great influence. [...] As leader of the federalists, he became governor of Buenos Aires in 1829 and immediately began a campaign of destruction against the Unitarian party. When his term of office ended in 1832, he had one of his creatures, General Balcre, elected governor, but drove him out when he tried to betray him. [...] He had his position as governor renewed after each election period and was ultimately a complete dictator from 1849 onwards, with ministers merely executing his will and the chambers voting on his proposals. He lived in a state of constant war with neighbouring states.

The German author does not mention the oppression of the population.

Between the end of his term in 1832 and his return to the office of governor in 1835 after a coup by federalists in Buenos Aires, he led what was called “Rosas’ campaign in the desert” in the southern pampas and northern Patagonia. During his second term, he assumed dictatorial powers and established a highly centralised and authoritarian government with its special unit, the “Mazorca”, which was characterised by brutal suppression of political opposition and dissent. It is astonishing how strongly his surveillance, dress codes, personality cult and slogans resemble forms of dictatorship in the 20th century.

His government programme begins with the sentence: “Whoever is not my friend is my enemy.” His inauguration is drawn out, with all parishes celebrating festivals one after the other for over a year. There is a “systematic, administered, prescribed enthusiasm,” recalls Sarmiento. The red colour of the dictatorship emerges from these celebrations. The portrait of the dictator, displayed on all altars, found its way into homes and houses “as a sign of deep love for the man.” People were required to wear red scarves in public with the slogan “Long live the Federation! Death to the Unitarian hordes!” The same slogan was printed on official forms.

"Imagine a cultured city," says Sarmiento, "where adults and children dressed in European clothes have to wear uniforms with red trim on their hats for two years! Does that seem ridiculous to you? No, nothing is ridiculous when everyone, without exception, goes along with these excesses, especially when the lashes and pepper enemas are so real that they make you as serious as statues."

Every quarter of an hour, the night watchmen sing: 'Long live the illustrious reformer! Death to the godless Unitarians! Long live Doña Encarnación Ezcurra!' (wife of Juan Manuel de Rosas WH)

At the same time, total surveillance is put in place. The justice of the peace is ordered to keep a register of opinions with lists of all names, regardless of whether they are Unitarians or Federalists. In schools, the headmasters do the same. For seven years, these lists are used to deliver numerous Mazorca members to the tireless knife. The model for this is the *estancia*, where cattle are locked up and slaughtered. "His practices and administration as a landowner are frighteningly consistent with his practices and administration as governor." And since Rosas spent many years on a cattle farm, Sarmiento sees the parish festivals as imitations of the festive branding of cattle, to which all the neighbours flock. The red ribbon that everyone must wear corresponds to the branding of the animals. For Sarmiento, it is astonishing to determine the attitudes of an entire people, rank them according to importance, and then spend ten years murdering all those who think differently, that is, "to destroy enmity in the bud with the person in question."

"Where is the politician in Europe who would have the necessary foresight to understand the means by which such an idea of personal rule by the head of government can be created and the enduring tenacity required to hatch this idea for fifteen years?" Sarmiento asks.

In addition to ideological elements, the dictatorship was based on a terrorist organisation. The first executioners were butchers and knackers from Buenos Aires. "The terrible *mazorca*," writes Sarmiento, "is a fanatical federal police force whose official task is to first administer an enema of pepper and turpentine to the discontented and then, if this 'inflammatory' treatment proves insufficient, to cool them down."

Contemporary accounts such as those of Eduardo Gutierrez describe the horror of the population: "We all heard with horror from our parents' lips the stories of the carnage that reached dizzying heights in the 1840s." The writer Esteban Echeverría left behind an unpublished story written in 1838–40 set in a slaughterhouse in Buenos Aires. A bloody spectacle of killing and skinning takes place, accompanied by a sensationalist mob.

When a young man reveals himself to be a Unitarian, he is enthusiastically led to his slow execution. Matasiete (Seven-Killer) is the predestined villain, and a judge presides over the trial. [...] The sight of the slaughterhouse from a distance was grotesque and full of life. Forty-nine cattle lay on their skins, and about two hundred people entered the muddy ground, which was soaked with the blood from their veins. Around them stood groups of people of different skin colours and races. The most striking figure in each group was the butcher with a knife in his hand, his arm and chest bare, his hair long and dishevelled, his shirt and jacket bloodstained. Behind him, a crowd of boys and black and mulatto women, whose ugliness was reminiscent of the harpies of legend, bustled about, following his movements, and among them were a few huge mastiffs, sniffing, growling and snapping. [...]

But suddenly the hoarse voice of a butcher cried out: And at the sound of this meaningful word, the whole crowd stopped as if struck by a sublime impression. *Don't you see his U-shaped sideburns? He has no badge on his ruff and no black crepe on his hat.*

Unitarian dog.

He's a Cajetilla.

He rides in a saddle like the gringos.

He's one for the Mazorca.

[...]

Why don't you dare, Matasiete? Why don't you do it?

You won't do it?

Yes, I do.

Matasiete was a man of few words and many deeds. When it came to violence, agility, skill with an axe, a knife or a horse, he didn't talk, he acted. He had been provoked: he spurred his horse and rode towards the uniformed man with the reins loose.

He was a young man of about twenty-five, gallant and handsome, who, while the above exclamations poured from those wild mouths, rode towards Barracas without any fear of danger. However, when he noticed the meaningful glances of this group of slaughterhouse dogs, he mechanically threw his right hand onto the halter of his English saddle, just as a side kick from Matasiete's horse threw him from the back of his own and left him lying face up and motionless in the distance.

Long live Matasiete! shouted the whole crowd, which pounced on the victim like scavengers on the carcass of an ox.

[...]

He has a good neck for the violin.

Play him the fiddle.

It's better when it's slippery.

Let's try it, said Matasiete, and smiling, he began to run the blade of his dagger across the throat of the fallen man, while pressing his left knee against his chest and holding him by the hair with his sinister hand.

No, don't cut his throat, cried the commanding voice of the slaughterhouse judge from afar, approaching on horseback.

A bloodthirsty interrogation begins:

"Why are you not wearing your hat in mourning for the heroine?" (the late wife of the dictator Rosas, WH)

"Because I wear it in my heart for the fatherland, for the fatherland that you murdered, you villain!"

Don't you know that the Restorer (Rosas, WH) ordered it?

You slaves who flatter your master's pride and show him shameful vassal loyalty.

Insolent! You have become very angry. I will cut out your tongue if you scream.

Down with your trousers, and give him a cock, this pot-bellied fool with his bare arse tied to the table! [...]

In no time at all, his legs were tied diagonally to the four legs of the table so that his body was upside down. The same had to be done with his hands, for which they loosened the shackles that held them together behind his back. When the young man felt that they were free, he rose with a sudden movement that seemed to exhaust all his strength and vitality, first onto his arms, then onto his knees, and suddenly collapsed, muttering: "First you cut my throat, then you strip me naked, you shameful scoundrel."

He was at the end of his strength; he was immediately tied to the cross and they began to undress him. Then a stream of blood flowed from the young man's mouth and nostrils and began to run down both sides of the table. The Sayons stood motionless and the spectators were stunned."

The literary scholar Carilla remarks:

We do not know why there is a certain aversion to confirming the popular features of dictatorship in the long term and historically. We have gone through a veritable age of terrorism that has provoked admiration and scandal in America and Europe. But if we were asked to provide written evidence and explanations to lend authenticity to the facts that characterise this era, we would be unable to do so, not even methodological and anecdotal reports, even though we hear them every day from the mouths of eyewitnesses. If these no longer exist, there is a danger that we will believe that we were not victims of a particularly cruel barbarian, but of a nightmare in the slumber of a summer sleep.

Peoples who, for whatever reason, are indifferent to their history and allow the elements that make it up to pass away like autumn leaves without a hand to pick them up, are doomed to have no physiognomy of their own and to present themselves to the world as dull and colourless. And if this forgetfulness of duty is the deliberate result of a false patriotic love that silences mistakes or crimes, then it is all the more regrettable because such a way of serving the honour of the country

is more a crime to be paid dearly than a virtue, because it disqualifies one from setting an example and correcting others.

Forgetting goes hand in hand with general participation. First everyone took part, then they denied their complicity. Sarmiento wonders why “no one can explain how the city could have turned into a terrible massacre in the evening hours. Only the unbridled gangs of murderers roamed the streets, thirsty for blood and wine. There was no other sound than the wailing of the victims, the death cries and the clattering of broken glass and furniture thrown into the street.

From time to time, a volley of gunshots announced to the population that the Unitarians were not only sacrificing themselves in the streets with drawn daggers. They were also being killed in prisons and barracks, with the difference that in this case they were being killed *en masse* and without any selection of victims. From five o'clock in the afternoon, there was no authority left. Rosas was on his way to Palermo (a district of Buenos Aires, WH), and the police authorities believed they could shirk all responsibility. The population was thus left to the whims of the murderous gangs, who moved in all directions and chose the victims they burned.

Between 1835 and 1840, the entire city of Buenos Aires passed through the dungeons. At times, 150 citizens were imprisoned for two or three months, only to be replaced by 200 others who remained for six months. Why? What had they done [...]? What had they said? You fools! Can't you see that this is a method of keeping the city under control [...]? Don't you remember how Rosas used to say to Quiroga that you couldn't establish a republic because the people lacked the necessary habits? But he is accustoming the city to being ruled! He will complete the work and in 1844 he will present to the world a people that knows only one thought, one opinion, one voice, one boundless enthusiasm for the person and will of Rosas! Yes, now a republic can be established!

King records 3,765 beheadings, 1,393 shootings, 722 murders, plus 16,520 war dead and four poisonings. He adds to this the crimes of Quiroga: 1,500 prisoners shot, 250 murdered at night in Tablada and 441 publicly hanged.

Revisionism It was not until much later, in the 1920s, that the voices of those in favour of the dictatorship gained significance as historical revisionism. The view of Rosas and his reign changed permanently. The population sought orientation in the complex situation of contradictions: Unitarians and federalists, liberalism and authoritarianism, nation and imperialism, social conflicts and civil wars, masses and oligarchy. Since the 19th century, the liberal views of Argentina's political elites were supposed to shape and unite the nation. This view was accepted as long as the country prospered economically through the export of raw materials and the import of capital and could promise the growing influx of migrants the prospect of prosperity. The main economic partner was Great Britain, which built railway lines and re-

frigeration plants for beef exports. The corresponding system of government was an oligarchic regime that excluded the majority of the population from politics.

After universal suffrage for men over the age of 18 was introduced in 1912 and the radical Civic Union (UCR) took over the government in 1916, the liberal phase in Europe and Latin America soon came to an end in the 1920s and 1930s, with revolutions, coups and ideological worldviews. In 1930, General Uriburu staged a coup and sought to transform society according to a corporatist model based on Mussolini's state. When the Roca-Runciman Pact was signed with Great Britain in 1933, granting Britain far-reaching advantages, the social consensus began to crumble. The oligarchy was no longer primarily a socio-economic class, but an anti-national section of the elite. The economic decline from the 1940s to the present day is another reason to rewrite history. The Unitarians became the epitome of this oligarchy of "nation sellers." This transformed the image of the caudillos, who now became representatives and defenders of the common people, and of the dictator Rosas, who defended national sovereignty.

Revisionism claims to tell the true story and prefers "charismatic leaders to republican institutions" (von Thüngen). When Perón appeared on the political scene, many revisionists saw similarities between him and Rosas. But when Perón nationalised the railways, he named the lines after liberal heroes Urquiza, Mitre, Sarmiento and Roca. Perón's role is not that of an anti-imperialist nationalist, but rather that of a mediator between social classes. It is difficult to determine his orientation. But it is clear that the nation of the first revisionism is based on the defence of sovereignty, the primacy of the national and local over the foreign, and is supported by an authoritarian political order. It is also clear that the second revisionism locates the body of the nation in the "people" – meaning the Peronists and socialist population. This removes the sharp division between urban civilisation and rural barbarism.

With the Cuban Revolution, a form of neo-revisionism emerged that turned towards left-wing Peronism. History is now written not by historians, but by lawyers, politicians and journalists. They write bestsellers that do not dwell long on historical sources, but rather satisfy the need for orientation in the present. They organise television programmes and are, as historian Tulio Halperin Donghi called it, part of "historical common sense". (von Thüngen)

"We were taught to hate him," recalls neo-revisionist Pacho O'Donnell.

But who is Juan Manuel de Rosas in the context of Argentine history and the founding of the state? Why is his defence of national sovereignty against France and England systematically ignored? Why did San Martín bequeath him the sword that accompanied him in the fight for American independence in his will? Why did the popular sectors love him to the point of idolisation?

These revisionist views are used to make politics. In 2011, the liberal Peronist President Fernández de Kirchner established the Manuel Dorrego National Institute for Argentine and Ibero-American Historical Revisionism by decree. This institute is supposed to research figures from Argentina's past who, according to the decree, had not been given adequate consideration in academic institutions. Its first director is the well-known revisionist of the history of the caudillos, Pacho O'Donnell, and the annual prizes awarded by the institute were named after two central figures of revisionism, José María Rosa and Jorge Abelardo Ramos. In a divided society, it is not surprising that institutions of national identity are controversial. Thus, the conservative successor to the presidency and later supporter of the populist maverick Milei, Macri, closed the institute in 2015.

In 1989, Peronist President Menem had the remains of Rosas, who was buried in Southampton, reburied in the famous La Recoleta cemetery in Buenos Aires. He declared that the main task of his term in office was national reconciliation. He wanted to be the president of the Argentina of Rosas and Sarmiento, Mitre and Facundo, that is, of dictatorship and democracy, barbarism and civilisation. In 1992, he even had Rosas' image printed on the 20-peso banknote. In 2017, Macri replaced this with a guanaco from the camel family.

However, in 1975, Menem, a radical Peronist and governor of the province of La Rioja, described the liberal Bartolomé Mitre, Rosas' opponent Justo José de Urquiza and the enlightened Domingo Sarmiento as "traitors and sell-outs of the fatherland in the service of Anglo-French imperialism".

Even earlier, in 1970, an unholy alliance of Peronists and Marxists, nationalists and conservatives celebrated the successful collection of 300,000 signatures – not only for the return of his body, but also, somewhat macabrely, for the annulment of the death sentence imposed *in absentia* on Rosas in 1865 for multiple murders, because he had fled to England. At folklore events, Roberto Rimoldi Fraga sings sentimental songs about the dictator: "With Juan Manuel for the Fatherland," "The Caudillo in Love" or "To the Lord Restorer" ("Brigadier General of the Heights / because of you the quebracho wood has softened / and the desert sings to the beauty / of the unbowed man, the most beloved"). His political orientation is aligned with Macri, who would later take the maverick Milei under his wing.

The social debate about the direction the country should take continued.

Of the names of the many caudillos, some can be found on street signs in the centre of Buenos Aires: Lavalle, Viamonte, Dorrego, Peyrredón, Quiroga, Sarmiento thirteen times, but the names of military figures appear three hundred and fifty times. The name of Rosas, however, does not appear at all.

The Enlightenment Thinkers, I. Alberdi Less well known than the educated President Faustino Domingo Sarmiento is Juan Bautista Alberdi, who was not an expert in a narrow professional field, but rather a broadly educated man. Even today, one occa-

sionally encounters the trinity of remarkable leaders who are scientists, politicians and entrepreneurs all at once. Members of the upper class, a legacy of feudalism. Alberdi's place was not only at his desk, but also in the literary salon. He was born in 1810, the year of the first declaration of independence, and worked as a lawyer, politician, diplomat, writer and musician until his death in 1884. He expressed his ideas and criticism both in literature and in politics. To escape dictatorship, he emigrated with some of his literary salon to Montevideo and later to France, where he came into contact with Montesquieu's work on political theory, "The Spirit of Laws". He eventually moved to Chile, where he wrote "Fundamentals and Starting Points for a Political Organisation of Argentina," which inspired the republican and federal constitution of 1853. It is still largely valid today.

Alberdi expressed his sharp political criticism in his play "*El gigante Amapolas y sus formidables enemigos, o sea fastos dramáticos de una guerra memorable*" (The Giant Poppy and His Formidable Enemies, or the Dramatic Events of a Memorable War). The play is about a larger-than-life, immobile straw puppet who embodies a dictator and has only a drummer, his wife and three officers at his disposal. They are supposed to wage war for the dictator in his puppet form. They are called Mosquito, Guitarra and Mentirola and are an allusion to the three generals of Rosas. None of them wants to be commander-in-chief, so they prefer to be on an equal footing. Above all, they don't want to take any action, as that would only put them in danger. So they simply reverse action and inaction and declare the puppet's inaction to be a powerful weapon that will strike fear into the hearts of the enemy.

The play criticises the behaviour of the opposition and the military as the result of perfect self-deception: "No, gentlemen, I am neither great nor glorious, for there is no glory in defeating straw giants. I have used the common sense of the people. [...] Comrades! The fatherland has been liberated without the intervention of liberators." The play takes a surprising turn when a sergeant appears, commissioned by the mutinous army to take action, and destroys the poppy giant with a few blows. Alberdi presents responsible citizens, not heroes; common sense, not unusual thinking; and collective action, not historical determinism, as the ethical principles of a civil society.

He dedicates his play "with the greatest respect to the generals and presidents, so that they may be aware of the pitfalls and not fall into them."

And Alberdi puts it this way: "I'll be damned if I say it's not basically true. [...] The truth of what happened will teach us to despise the illusory power of oppression."

Alberdi has written a farce that has lost none of its style or content and fits well into the 20th century, and even into the 21st century. A hundred years have passed, and Ionesco and Brecht also come to mind when looking back. Or, to put it another way: Alberdi accompanies us to this day. He shows us what we should see.

Alberdi expresses his political views in numerous essays.

"Why do you write?" I ask him in an inner dialogue. He answers in the plural of emigrants:

"We always write for ideas, not for art: we want to be right, not graceful. If we have been understood, we have achieved everything we wanted. If we could do everything we write about, we would never write. For us, words are more than a means of action. On the other hand, we would not know how to serve an art whose form is still as uncertain and dubious as that of the society we are supposed to express."

"So you are committed to the Enlightenment, not to the Romanticism of your time?"

"We are not and do not want to be romantics. Nor is it any glory for Schlegel or anyone else to be romantic, because romanticism, which has its origins in feudalism, is characterised by antisocial instincts and absurdity. It is crazy, misanthropic and eccentric, and is eternally welcomed by the men of the ministry but rejected by those of the opposition. (It) appeared in Germany at a sad time, but in France at an even worse time. The alternative is to be national without being classical, free without being romantic, philosophical, moral, progressive, expressing public sentiment and not individual whims, speaking of the fatherland, of humanity, of equality, of progress, of freedom, of glory, of victories, of passions, of desires and of national hopes, and not of the pearl, tears, angels, the moon, the grave, punishment, poison, crime, death, hell, the devil, witches, goblins, owls, and also without all the nonsense whose ridiculous vocabulary constitutes romantic aesthetics."

In view of the numerous wars, whether civil wars or wars with other powers, Alberdi wrote numerous articles that were published posthumously in a book entitled "*El crimen de la guerra*" (The Crime of War). He vehemently condemns the assumptions that these wars are normal and serve progress, or at least the right of one side or the other, the Unitarians or the Federalists.

"The poetry of peace," Alberdi continues, "needs a South American Cervantes to cleanse it with laughter, in the manner of Quixote and Sancho. They are far from achieving freedom through violence, that is, through the tyranny of the sword, and doing nothing but plunging this part of the world into barbarism and depopulating it of its European inhabitants, deterring immigrants and, instead of a single freedom, giving rise to a stream of tyrannies [...] which clothe themselves in the beautiful colours of liberty in order to oppress it more effectively. There is no war in South America that does not invoke the great goals of civilisation, and no despotism that does not invoke the most sacred freedom. Rosa's dictatorship was based on the

freedom of the American continent. Quiroga ravaged Argentine soil in the name of freedom and covered it with blood, falling victim to his idea of proclaiming a constitution which demonstrably does not constitute freedom, because freedom is only possible through the self-government of the people.”

“What benefits do these wars bring?”

“One of the caudillos, Urquiza, undertook three campaigns that ended in three decisive battles: Caseros, Cepeda, Pavón. All three were, of course, fought for freedom, but in truth they rendered him the following services: the attainment of the presidency of the republic, secondly, a colossal fortune, and thirdly, the security of that fortune. I am not claiming that these were his goals. I am merely stating that this was the result. Had this not been the case, the Republic would not have rewarded with the presidency the man who liberated it in 1861 from its liberator of 1852. The victor of Pavón served the freedom of his country [...] through ten campaigns and ten battles, on his territory and also outside his borders, against his own people and foreigners. In the last of these campaigns, the Republic sacrificed twenty thousand men and sixty million pesos fuerte, and ruined its reputation as a healthy city through infection with Asian cholera. It has lost its archives, which were twice accidentally burned down, and all the wealth of some provinces; but its leader has preserved his life and received a popular reward of one hundred thousand francs and a ducal order from the emperor, his ally. As the president’s successor, the leader now busily denounced the government of his own successor as the bloodiest tyranny the country has seen since it came into existence. And yet everyone knows that his successor is using the same methods, for he is continuing his campaign for freedom.”

“Apart from everything else, that’s an enormous cost!”

“The freedom enjoyed by Presidents Mitre and Sarmiento in the war against Paraguay has cost the Argentine Republic ten times more blood and ten times more money than the entire war of independence against Spain.” All these wars, according to Alberdi, are “propaganda wars” that conceal the personal goals of their leaders behind ideological phrases. “Wars without any real and true goal, which only invoke the grand ideas of another era to conceal selfish and guilty motives, are propaganda wars, in South America more than anywhere else. They violate international law and constitute a real crime against the civilisation of the New World.” Therefore, without the involvement of the population, propaganda wars are far from freedom and much closer to militarism.

“The government of glory,” Alberdi continues, “the power of victory, is a government

without a country, that is, a government without freedom, for any government of a country in which the population does not participate negates all freedom in the sense that this word has in England, in the United States, in Belgium, in Switzerland. Thus, backwardness, barbarism and oppression in South America are represented by the sword and the military element, which in turn represents civil war, which is transformed into industry, into a way of life, into a permanent and normal order (if chaos can be normal)."

"But the term 'propaganda war' does not encompass the whole reality, does it?"

"The war in South America, whatever its goal and pretext may be," Alberdi replies, "the war itself, through its real and practical effects, is an anti-revolution, a reaction, a return to a state worse than the old colonial regime: that is, a crime against America and against civilisation." It is, Alberdi reminds us, a civil war, "which is plunging the country into anarchy, that is, into the worst kind of war: war of all against all."

"That sounds threatening, whereas the many civil wars in which Argentina was involved or which it itself sparked, seemed more like a comedy, or even like a farce that you staged."

"War leads to dictatorship and military rule and creates an abnormal and extraordinary state of affairs that is incompatible with any kind of political freedom" Alberdi remarks sharply. "Martial law, which becomes a permanent state of affairs, buries all freedom. War endangers the independence of the state because it weakens it and plunges it into alliances with powers interested in its destruction."

"So war also ruins the economy in general?"

"War is the death of agriculture and trade, and the consequences in South America are the impoverishment and misery of the peoples living there, i.e. it is the source of misery, poverty and weakness. War increases public debt, and its growing interest payments force the country to pay enormous taxes and prevent it from promoting the country's wealth and progress."

"War has become a permanent state of affairs in the country since independence. What is your final verdict?"

"It makes the republic a laughingstock and a mockery of the world. In a word, the civil or semi-civil war that is constantly present in South America and is part of the normality of our existence is the opposite of the war of independence and

revolution against Spain. Just as it is shabby in its aims, disastrous and reactionary in its effects, and paralysing in its inevitable consequences, the war of independence was magnificent, noble and glorious in its motives, aims and results. The heroes of the civil war are monstrous and abominable pygmies who are far from competing with (the freedom fighters) Bolívar, Sucre, Belgrano and San Martín."

"Thank you very much, Juan, see you tomorrow."

The next day, I wonder about the theoretical horizons of the two men. What do they understand by freedom, how much republicanism, how much liberalism guides them? It quickly becomes clear that Sarmiento understands the republic as an institutionally anchored possibility for political participation, as a civil society, while Alberdi welcomes its institutions as institutions for the protection of his own business interests. In one case, the freedom to act is in the foreground, in the other, freedom from external interference.

Juan is already at the agreed meeting place when we meet again. I ask him about the constitution, the state of Argentine society. Why has this society been unable to end its civil wars for 50 years or more? Is it because of politics or the constitution?

"Apart from a few brief interruptions, the history of the Argentine Republic is the history of a people belonging to one and the same territory," Alberdi begins. "It is war, nakedness, backwardness, crime and violence of all kinds. This, apart from brief interruptions, is the picture presented by the history of the Argentine Republic in the fifty years of its existence," he explains, naming the extent of the defects.

Failed states under the rule of warlords, it occurs to me.

The provinces, deprived of their wealth and capital, are unable to have a government and live in peace; not because their people are less good or less hard-working, but because they are deprived of all the institutional prerequisites for governing.

The problem is quickly identified. Buenos Aires controls access to the provinces and collects customs duties without sharing the revenue. In addition, the provinces and Buenos Aires are at loggerheads because the federation of provinces lacks a higher constitution.

"In France, that would be the prefect who had been stripped of all sovereign authority and had to administer his department without any resources." This is by no means mere absurdity, but the essential reason why the disastrous caudillismo exists in the first place. Alberdi explains:

The caudillismo under which the provinces suffer is nothing more than the direct consequence of Buenos Aires' confiscation of the means necessary for governing.

In fact, in the Argentine Republic, the caudillo is none other than the provincial governor, whose existence is imposed on him by the circumstances in that country. Who is the Argentine provincial governor? He is the head of a local government who has no income and recognises no supreme authority that could prevent him from doing as he pleases; he is a power that has needs and duties to fulfil and has no qualms about obtaining the necessary means to do so. Put an angel in this position and he will have to turn into a devil. That is the *caudillo*."

This brings us to the middle of the 19th century and a modern sociological and psychological explanation, which Alberdi also provides:

It is not man as such who is evil; it is the functionary who is placed in a position that makes him evil against his intentions and imposes duties on him that he cannot fulfil without the restrictions of an authority that prevents him from doing what he wants. Every governor starts out as a good person and ends up as an unbearable caudillo. Those who pursued careers as Argentine caudillos were outstanding officers in the War of Independence, in the glorious armies of Belgrano and San Martín. We do not excuse their later excesses, but explain them from the perspective of a political study in order to identify ways of preventing them from arising in the future. Attacking and destroying *caudillos* on the revolutionary path does not mean wiping them out, but merely curbing them as long as the causes that give rise to them remain intact.

Consequently, it is not only a question of the provinces' lack of resources, but of a mature federal constitution in which the powers of the federal government and the provinces and their interrelationships are determined in a balanced manner. On this issue, Alberdi clearly advocates strengthening the power of the federal government, while Sarmiento insists more on balance. For the problem is this, says Alberdi: "By saying that the country is not *constituted*, one has avoided admitting a terrible truth, namely that the nation has no government, that its inhabitants live in isolation, in a kind of state of nature." It is therefore not just a legal and formal problem, but also the resulting political problem of anarchy and lawlessness. This "state of nature" opens the door to violence.

A look at the constitutional debate in the Federalist Papers of the American founding fathers would have underlined the unquestionable importance of a constitution based on the rule of law, the separation of powers and federation as the foundation of a strong republic. The Federalist Papers contain the publicly aired controversies of the founding fathers Madison, Jay and Hamilton about the individual elements of a republican community. In Alberdi's writings, one senses the efforts to solve the problem of the constitution. However, it can be assumed that most caudillos have no interest in eliminating anarchy and violence if this would diminish their power.

The Enlightenment Thinkers, II. Sarmiento The “real republic” and the “possible republic,” to borrow the famous phrases of Sarmiento and Alberdi, express the sentiment of those who, while adhering to the formulas of equality and political freedom essential to the republican conception, see the “real people” as nothing more than an obstacle to the implementation of their own convictions. Republicanism has an ambivalent tradition in Argentina insofar as it is associated with the exclusionary practices that characterised the “limited republic”. This discrepancy is repeatedly expressed in the political discourse of the 19th century.

In his famous work *Facundo*, Sarmiento presents the desert as a figure symbolising the origin of a system of social and political life characterised by a lack of sociability, violence and authority without common law. As he describes in his pages, “the plains were immense, the forests boundless and the rivers endless,” and there was nothing but loneliness and depopulation as the indisputable boundaries between one province and another.

Without social cohesion, “brutal violence,” “the preponderance of the strongest,” and “the unbridled and unpredictable authority of the commanders” prevail. The desert is thus the origin of *barbarism*, that form of egalitarian despotism of the *caudillos* that Sarmiento describes as the evil of the politics of his time. To build a nation, common values and civic habits corresponding to the republican model are needed, but these were lacking among the inhabitants of the country.

The war of the Argentine Revolution was twofold: first, a war of the cities, which began in the European-influenced culture of South America against the Spanish in order to expand that culture; and second, a war of the caudillos against the cities in order to free themselves from all civil subjugation and turn their character and hatred against civilisation. The cities triumphed over the Spanish, but then the campaigns triumphed over the cities. This explains the enigma of the Argentine Revolution.

“Facundo” The two societies were strangers to each other during the colonial period and clashed during the revolution. One, the colonial civilisation in the cities, had the elements of an educated population: schools, shops, courts, workshops. The other, (un)civilised, “American, almost indigenous” culture, was typical of the man of the countryside, with different habits, different customs, different needs. The *gaucho* is the exact opposite of the hard-working and civilised European. The spontaneous political action of this group of men, who are subject to the exclusive command of an irreplaceable chieftain, is despotic egalitarianism, which Sarmiento sees as an effect of the egalitarian principles of the revolution spreading in an inappropriate environment. Americanism, then, is a combination of feelings and customs that keep the people in a state of backwardness and form the basis for the political actions of the caudillos.

John Anthony King, our correspondent in Buenos Aires, is also familiar with the problem of labour shortages. He writes:

The big issue in this country is the population, and as long as it is not increased by a hard-working breed of people, agriculture will remain at its current low point. It will have no secure defence against distant enemies, powerful neighbours and the ravages of the Indians. It would therefore be advantageous to encourage emigration from the overpopulated countries of Europe, to offer protection and to arouse interest in the country; then Buenos Aires could achieve the lofty goals that its sanguine politicians claim to be aiming for; but that will not happen through mere talk.

Alberdi also considers the issue of labour and immigration to be one of the country's central issues. A high illiteracy rate, civil wars and a population of 800,000 compared to 47 million today prevent the intensification and expansion of production. However, peace, education and immigration are necessary prerequisites for this. According to Alberdi's assessment, the population would need to double every decade. Secondly, given the low level of education of the Argentine workforce, the immigration of skilled workers would be indispensable, because compared to England, Argentines are a century behind. Thirdly, the cultural differences between northern and southern Europe in terms of work ethic would have to be taken into account. In the south, the overarching *patria* and the ruler are all-powerful, while in the north, the individual is powerful and sovereignty lies with the people. This implies higher productivity, but also, implicitly, conflict between skilled immigrants and unskilled gauchos, former slaves and the underclass.

The constitution finally adopted in 1853 states in Article 25 on immigration, that notwithstanding the seven major constitutional reforms to date, entry shall not be impeded or taxed "if it serves the purpose of cultivating the soil, improving industry and introducing and teaching science and the arts."

The governments of Chile and Brazil also want to increase their populations, and the rise in poverty in rural areas of Germany, especially in the Hunsrück, Sauerland and Westphalia regions, comes at just the right time for them. Chile is looking for agricultural specialists for the south of the country, which belonged to the Mapuche during the colonial period but is now being incorporated into the Chilean nation state. This serves several purposes: to increase agricultural production, to push back the Mapuche and to secure the south of the country against encroachment by Argentina. Chilean recruiters are sent to Germany. When the German bishops learn that the emigrants are to be exclusively Catholic, they forbid their faithful from emigrating. The recruiters consult with each other and are allowed to bring Protestants with them as an exception.

Argentina also encourages settlement in the south to thwart any Chilean expansionist ambitions. Finally, from 1822 onwards, Brazil invites not only farmers from Germany, but also mercenaries to build up its army. Emigrants must have sold their homes and farms and be debt-free, and prisoners are allowed to emigrate if they

declare in writing that they will never return to Germany. In the port of Hamburg, ships are ready to depart and waiting for the last places to be filled. The colonisation work is hard, not everyone can endure it and some return. The authorities warn against false hopes.

Sarmiento travels through Europe, North Africa and the USA. He wants to understand why other countries are able to rapidly increase their prosperity, but Argentina cannot. He is overwhelmed by the American mentality, creativity and everyday pragmatism. The more he sees and learns, the greater the distance to his homeland seems to him. Here, a very rare and fortunate combination of constitution and Protestant ethics, progress and virtue, pragmatism and tolerance come together, internalised by a large number of skilled immigrants. The possibility that the difference in the development of the two countries could also have to do with the form of ownership – unproductive large estates versus productive medium-sized properties – is not considered.

Sarmiento takes in the new impressions with all his senses: the landscape and cities, crafts and technology, the people and their customs. Everything is big: the distances within the country, the ships on the Hudson, the luxury hotels. The people are curious and relaxed; even back in 1845, the men like to put their feet up on the table. Sarmiento notes:

At the Fremont Hotel in Boston, I saw seven Yankee dandies engaged in friendly conversation, sitting as follows: two with their feet on the table; one with his feet on the cushion of a neighbouring chair; another with one leg over the armrest of his own chair; another with both heels on the edge of the cushion of his own chair, so that his beard rested between his knees; another embraced or leaned against the back of the chair, as we usually lean our arm.

Young girls go to parties alone and do not return until 2 o'clock in the morning. One takes a cigar out of another's mouth when he is looking for a light and gropes him when talking about his clothes. By European standards, this is simply rude.

Europeans mock these habits of rudeness, which are more apparent than real, and the Yankees are stubbornly opposed to them in a spirit of contradiction, trying to bring them under the aegis of freedom and the American spirit. Without wishing to condone or excuse these customs, having travelled through the early parts of the Christian world, I am convinced that Americans are the only cultured people on earth, the final result of modern civilisation.

They enjoy a specific freedom that does not struggle against experienced bondage and did not spark a rampant revolution that would have exhausted itself in bondage. "As a nation, the United States is the final result of human logic," Sarmiento remarks.

There are no kings, no nobles, no privileged classes, no people born to command, no human machines born to obey. Does this result not correspond to the ideas of justice and equality that Christianity accepts in theory?

There is no poverty as it exists in England and France. Freedom is not only political and economic, but also cultural, in the sense of freedom from constraints. The ability to acquire, generalise, vulgarise, preserve and perfect all the customs, devices, methods, procedures and tools that the most advanced civilisation has placed in the hands of men. In this, the United States is unique in the world. There is no invincible routine that delays the adoption of a known improvement for centuries; on the contrary, there is a tendency to adopt everything [...] The Yankee, the inventor of cities, is committed to a speculative science that leads him from one inspiration to another, guessing where a future city will flourish.

And there is a great appreciation of tools and advanced goods, unknown to Sarmiento in Argentina:

The carriages in which they travel are of the same design and as cleanly painted as those that run through the streets of Washington. The horses with their shiny harnesses belong to the English breed, which has lost none of its slender beauty and Arabian physique through emigration to the New World. For the American is far from barbarising the elements that European civilisation gave us when the colonists settled here; rather, he strives to perfect them even further and take them a step forward.

All this never ceases to amaze Sarmiento. He is faced with a miracle that has to do not only with morality and economy, which can be defined with some degree of clarity, but also with politics, which seems more enigmatic, creates enemy images and offers no moral equivalent. Sarmiento fails to grasp republicanism as the political form and mentality whose elements he describes as complex. Politics fails for many reasons, including the fact that we do not recognise it when it appears before us.

This leaves education as the most tangible measure. Education is essential to advance the country with political and economic liberalism and a cultural and intellectual concept of progress. This is not just about state-organised education, but also about self-education. Rosas encounters the thinking of Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the USA, diplomat, inventor of the lightning rod and enthusiastic promoter of the common good. His religiously inspired model of the self-made man inspired Sarmiento.

I felt like Franklin. And why not? I was as poor as he was, as hard-working as he was, and if I was smart and followed in his footsteps, I could one day become like him [...] I could even receive an honorary doctorate like him and secure a place in American literature and politics.

This required a high degree of self-discipline, as Franklin explained:

While I was striving to avoid one mistake, I was often surprised by another; habit took advantage of my carelessness; sometimes the inclination was too strong for reason. Finally, I concluded that the mere speculative conviction that it is in our interest to be perfectly virtuous is not sufficient to prevent us from making mistakes, and that the contrary habits must be discarded and good habits acquired and established before we can rely on consistently uniform righteous behaviour.

And his catalogue of virtues was moderation, silence, order, determination, frugality, diligence, sincerity, justice, temperance, cleanliness, tranquillity of mind, chastity, humility.

They must be practised and improved regularly.

This code of conduct is the core of the “American Spirit” of self-improvement. In contrast, the French Revolution, which ended in tyranny and Napoleon’s dictatorship, has nothing similar to offer.

However, despite the opportunities for acquiring an education that were considered realistic – unlike other caudillos, Sarmiento had not received any special education in his parents’ home – there was clearly a limit to the extent to which the strong cultural and social differences could be overcome, which led him to embrace the emerging racial theories of the second half of the 19th century. Liberalism and racism can go hand in hand; enlightenment and exclusion are not impossible. In his book *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en America* (Conflict and Harmony of the Races in America, 1883), Sarmiento writes:

The differences in brain volume that exist between individuals of the same race become more apparent the higher the level of civilisation. From an intellectual point of view, savages are more or less stupid, while civilised races consist of stupid individuals similar to savages, people of mediocre intellect, people of intelligence and superior people. It is assumed that the higher races are more diverse than the inferior ones, assuming that the minimum is common to all races and that the maximum, which is very weak in savages, is very high in civilised races.

In his disparaging view of barbarians, the author of “Civilisation and Barbarism” fails to notice that he too is in danger of developing such a view.

A disparaging attitude towards subordinates, women, the poor and those who are culturally different is by no means limited to members of the South American upper class. It is also held by Europeans who are admired as educated by Sarmiento, Alberdi and others. Their view of the locals, including members of the upper class, is not kindly.

While English globetrotters settle in Buenos Aires, the disturbing reputation still deters many people in Germany. Sarmiento notes:

For the German people, America is only north of the Tropic of Cancer; South America is not the America that is the cure for the evils of the present, that popular myth of an earthly Eden that Germans have known since childhood and which gives hope to those who would despair without it. The only thing that those who know South America know is that there is yellow fever, suffocating heat, poisonous vermin and endless war [...] According to popular belief, South America is therefore the myth of evil, the realm of darkness and death.

They also observe the locals closely, but it can always happen that those being observed disagree with what is supposedly being observed. For example, regarding the use of the long pipe, Sarmiento notes:

Since I have a mania for searching for the why of things, I believed that I had found the origin of the metaphysical mysticism of the Germans in the use of the pipe. A philosopher, I said to myself, who spends hours in pious contemplation of the smoke that swirls in columns and spirals before his eyes, dissolves, collects in indefinable, fantastic, incomprehensible forms, sometimes obscuring reality, the visible and the earthly, this philosopher, I said to myself, must be a cave explorer, a dreamer, a mystic, a hazy, metaphysical, incomprehensible person. However, this very plausible theory, which would shed great light on the mysteries of German philosophy, has not been accepted by the Göttingen scholars to whom I humbly submitted it. On the contrary, the Germans claim that, due to the nation's innate tendency to grumble, they have subjected tobacco use to the requirements of their own character.

Travellers from Europe observe foreigners in the same way that Sarmiento observed the barbarians in his own country. The foreigner is not yet the enemy, but is already close to being so. "When man is designated as an enemy, he ceases to belong to our species; neither laws nor any religion have yet been able to counteract the moral effects of this classification."

Of course, the strangers whom the travellers encounter and sometimes seek out are not enemies, but like enemies, they are a projection of an image formed by judgement and prejudice, an inevitable subjective reality. Sarmiento reflects on and forms an image of the foreign Americans of the north. As a politician, he is primarily interested in social and cultural issues. From the perspective of his own culture, he perceives the foreign as negative. The Creole, who was born in South America and is by no means merely a "savage," is neither "manly and hard-working, nor enterprising"; rather he is "lazy, listless, idle, indifferent, and incapable of any kind of sacrifice." In the process of enlightenment, reason and progress, he embodies the irrational, the feminine, the dark, the backwardness on the path from nature to culture.

Similarly, when the French natural scientist Alcide Dessalines d'Orbigny finds a dead whale on the beach with his native expedition members, he urges them in vain

to make use of the whale, to extract a few barrels of oil or to take the whalebone with them. "They always replied that they did not want to engage in trade they did not know," he notes with consternation.

Manners are rough, interest in public affairs is very low, and the laws of the young republic are not respected. Young people, especially in Buenos Aires, discuss "the most serious questions of morality and legislation," all kinds of theories from a wide range of disciplines, although "behind all this talk there is often a great deal of ignorance and [...] charlatanism."

Another traveller introduced by Andrea Pagni is the Englishman Joseph Andrews, who, in the Romantic era, travels through the landscapes of northern Argentina and Bolivia in a very unromantic manner, examining them for their economic usefulness. Alberdi publicly contradicts him in the press, contrasting the subjective perception of the beauty of Tucumán with an objective evaluation, local craftsmen to factory workers, the climatic reasons for slower work with accusations of laziness, and the refusal to exploit labour in foreign mining and forestry operations with the abundance of natural products and the intensification of rural production.

Republicanism in the United States eludes visitors, even though it offers rich insights into the institutions of the republic. Alberdi notes that "the caudillo presupposes democracy [...] He is the leader of the masses, directly elected by them, without interference from the official powers (judiciary, administration or media), by virtue of the sovereignty with which the revolution has endowed the entire educated and uneducated people." In short, the caudillo "is the immediate organ and arm of the people, in a word, the darling of democracy." If anarchy means the absence of institutions, then the field is open not only to populism but also to dictatorship. Caudillism combines both, rulers and ruled, in a democratic dictatorship. Peronism, influenced by fascism, embodies this form of rule.

Resisting the rule of caudillos and dictators requires a deeper understanding of the interplay between factions. The question is often how to prevent the great evil of politics, the dangerous vice of factionalism. The obvious answer would be to restrict freedom, rule through elites and tell people what to do. But the founders of the United States wanted to do the seemingly impossible: preserve freedom and the control passions of factions, as they called them. As Madison wrote in the *Federalist Papers*, No. 10: "Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency."

According to Madison and Alberdi, the imminent danger of division cannot be averted by eliminating its cause, namely natural plurality, but only by multiplying it so that it cannot be reduced to a majority versus a minority.

In his final years, Alberdi regretted his oligarchic ideas of the past and was annoyed by those who disqualified the democratic vocation of the “barbarians,” i.e. the federalists:

To distinguish between barbaric and intelligent democracy is to divide democracy; to divide it into classes is to destroy it, to kill its essence, which consists in the opposite of all class distinctions. Barbaric democracy means barbaric sovereignty, barbaric authority, barbaric people. That those who call themselves “friends of the people,” “Republicans” or “Democrats” give this title to the majority of a people is typical of people without brains, of monarchists without knowing it, of true enemies of democracy.

The Commerce of Violence The various forms of violence also express the existence of a great deal of violence. Before the military coup in 1976, references to weapons in advertising increased. Advertising did not invent these references, but as a medium and a reflection of society, it sensed the need to bring weapons to the fore. In the early 1970s, the media frequently reported on assassinations, attacks, weapons caches and shootouts, thereby trivialising this form of violence.

In an extensive study on the role of weapons in advertising, Sebastián Carassai comes to some insightful conclusions about violence as part of a corresponding culture of violence. It emerged in its current form with the coup d'état in 1955, which marked the beginning of a period of anomie, disorder and uncertainty in society. An increasing trend in the cycle of violence began in the late 1960s, when the state responded to social revolts and guerrilla activities with repressive measures.

A survey conducted in 1971 came to the paradoxical conclusion that, on the one hand, a majority of the population rejected the actions of the guerrilla groups and the current military government, but on the other hand, gave drastic answers to the question of how the problems plaguing society could be solved. A large proportion of those surveyed argued that the country should “start from scratch and change everything from the ground up.” Violence was unconsciously advocated as a means of solving problems, which was also reflected in the unusually high number of images and metaphors of violence.

The vast majority of respondents combined short texts (slogans, phrases or headlines) with striking or shocking images. Eleven days after the 1976 coup, for example, the company Musiplast, which was responsible for producing the Guerrillero toy machine gun, published announcements in newspapers stating that it would be withdrawing this product from sale. The dictatorship monopolised violence.

Before the dictatorship was introduced, however, there were many different representations of weapons. The Pasper weapons factory advertised its Robin Hood rifle and Robin Hood pistol with pictures of the weapons and a caricature of the archetypal hero. “Introduce your son to the manly sport of target shooting,” the advertise-

ment suggests. Most clothing brands that associated their products with weapons instead emphasised the status conferred on those who used them. "The shirt is dark, but you are the man," was the slogan.

Some advertisements insinuate a promise of a completely new beginning, in which the past is completely erased. Weapons offer solutions with a magical character. The new world begins after the trigger is pulled. A shot, a bullet, signals both the end and the beginning.

When the Montoneros carried out their first major action in 1970, kidnapping and killing former general and president Aramburu, who had overthrown Perón in 1955, the famous men's clothing company "Modart," one of the country's most important companies, announced price reductions for its products and published an advertisement in newspapers and magazines with the following sentence: "That's what liquidation means!" Various clothing stores used this play on words to refer to a clearance sale or the elimination of a person. The term "kidnapping" also came into frequent use after the first kidnappings by the guerrilla organisations. When murder is an act that is trivialised by society, violence has become banal.

In advertising, Carassai notes, desire and violence form a pair that is not only compatible but also complementary. "The violence of beauty is at the same time the beauty of violence." Death is implied in two ways, literally in images and accompanying text, but also as a trope that represents the new female roles in contrast to the traditional ones.

The fact that sex and violence or sex and death are thematised together is nothing new. But here, sexual conquest is associated with subjugation by weapons.

The fantasy implied by the weapons is twofold. From the perspective of the women represented by the model, this implies that one must be willing to kill in order to achieve a goal. From the perspective of the men whose fantasies the advertisement plays on, this implies that one must be willing to die in order to achieve what one desires. Furthermore, in both cases, killing and dying are portrayed as events that are not exceptional, but rather everyday and ordinary.

The world that is heralded by the increase in violence is not for the indecisive, but rather for those who are prepared to see it in black and white and thus accept the alternative of all or nothing. Changes in everyday culture point to major events to come.

6 Patagonia, Genocide

The Land Grab | War of Extermination and Eradication |
The Harshness of Frederico Rauch | The Visitor Darwin |
Calfucurá | The Buenos Aires Massacre | “The conquest of
the desert” | Survival | Private Genocide | Final Destination:
The Museum | Late Massacres | The Helpless Museum

Patagonia is the Spanish name for the region. South of Buenos Aires lies the Pampas, which is followed by Patagonia, stretching to the southern tip of Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn. It is a vast area. Three quarters of Patagonia lies in Argentina and one quarter in Chile. Both parts are larger than Germany and France combined, with the Argentine part twice the size of Germany. With only 2 million inhabitants, it is sparsely populated. And let's not forget the Chaco in the north, the third region of desire alongside the Pampas and Patagonia.

Before the Spanish arrived, the Tehuelche had long settled in the interior of the country, while the Yaghanes, nomads of the sea, lived mainly in Tierra del Fuego, where the Selk'nam had appeared shortly before the Spanish. The largest ethnic group today are the Mapuche, who immigrated to eastern Patagonia from Chile shortly before Argentina's independence. There are also 30 other peoples, such as the Huárpidos, who practised agriculture and cattle breeding in western and central Argentina, the sedentary hunters and gatherers of the Guaraní and Toba, who originated in the Amazon region in the east, Mocovies and Wichís, and the Ranquel hunters and gatherers living in the Pampas, who have extensive contacts with other peoples.

The Europeans' conquest of the land was accompanied by a “conquest of language”, an appropriation of the area through its new name. Like many things in Argentina, the origin of the word Patagonia is not entirely clear and gives rise to speculation. What seems certain is that Ferdinand Magellan, who led the first European expedition to this region in 1520, referred to the Tehuelche as Patagones because of their appearance, referring to their large feet. He may have been inspired by a popular chivalric novel *Primaleón* by Francisco Vázquez, published in 1512. In this novel,

one of the protagonists is called Patagón. However, the idea that the inhabitants of Patagonia were ten feet tall was pure fantasy.

At the moment of independence, the Creoles were generous. The assembly of 1813 declared the Indians to be “completely free people with the same rights as all other citizens,” and in 1816, the Act of Independence, printed not only in Spanish but also in Quechua and Aymara, declared that “the Indians are equal in dignity and rights to other citizens, enjoy the same privileges and are subject to the same laws.” The first constitution of 1853 states in Article 15 the duty to “ensure the security of the borders; maintain peaceful relations with the Indians and promote their conversion to Catholicism.” However, the reality was quite different; they did not receive specific rights until 1994. Today, there are still 31 indigenous peoples with 955,000 members, all of whom are largely invisible.

This is changing rapidly. “The poetic names,” writes journalist Osvaldo Bayer,

which the indigenous people gave to the mountains, lakes and valleys, were replaced in Buenos Aires with the names of generals and government bureaucrats. One of the most beautiful lakes in Patagonia, which was called “the eye of God” in the words of the Tehuelche, was replaced by the common name “Gutiérrez,” after a bureaucrat in the Ministry of the Interior who paid the salaries of the military. And in Tierra del Fuego, the lake called “Relaxation on the Horizon” was renamed “Monseñor Fagnano” in honour of the clergyman who accompanied the troops with the cross.

Neither has anything to do with the metaphysical world or that of the soul, but rather with the material and psychological sustenance of the aggressors.

The Land Grab Wars and violence shape the experience of the struggle for independence and hegemony through civil wars. The empty-looking space invited land grabbing. During the civil wars, the troops were tied to the battlefields of the confederated provinces, but the actors did not lose sight of their goal: the conquest of Patagonia, the “desert.” Where no one lives, the land belongs to those who act, the law to the strongest, history to the conquerors and the narrative to the victors. At the same time, this vast area is the centre of the country, promising a rich future. The struggle with the indigenous people is nothing new, but on a large scale only unfolds after the end of the civil wars. Then, however, the focus is no longer on the struggle for cattle and the defence of land against invaders, but on expansion and the seemingly boundless land itself. And should the Indians take up arms, they will all be destroyed.

The land is conquered in bloody battles and distributed among the rich families. The class of large landowners thus grows and their power is stabilised. They provide the leadership in politics and the military and determine the course of events. After the dictatorship of Rosas, the mid-19th century saw the beginning of the era of na-

tionalism, not only in Argentina but also in Europe, in which ethnic solidarity was declared the basis of national identity. Ethnicity and culture took precedence over civic equality and politics. Culturally different people become strangers and enemies, and the contradiction between them and us is stylised into the main contradiction. There is no room for unbound individuals with their civil liberties. The struggle for independence was not a struggle for freedom, and the conquest of Patagonia is not a struggle for the liberation of the people living there, but the opposite. It is about the liberation of the nation through the liberation of the population by means of expulsion or murder.

War of Extermination and Eradication The struggle for land is waged as murderous war. Sometimes it seems that limited peaceful coexistence might be possible. But then it turns out to be nothing more than a tactical move by Unitarians or federalists who form temporary alliances with individual indigenous communities against their respective Argentine opponents. A few groups of immigrants, such as those from Wales who settle in Trevelin and whose families intermarry with the locals, are only a small exception.

Campaigns and massacres are the norm. Major campaigns by the governor of Buenos Aires Martín Rodríguez and the united provinces of the Río de la Plata between 1820 and 1824 were followed by smaller campaigns from 1827 onwards, the campaigns of General Rosas in 1833–34, known as “Rosas’ campaign against the desert”, then General Roca’s campaign in 1875–83 and finally the “campaigns against the green desert” in 1884–1917, in the north, in the Chaco.

The Rodríguez campaigns aimed to “cleanse” the pampas of the Ranquele people who lived in the northern pampas. The civil war between the Federalists and Unitarians, each leading their allied Indians into battle, became mixed with the fighting for land and therefore the expulsion and extermination of the indigenous peoples.

The uprising of 2,000 indigenous people in 1820, even before the organised campaigns, shows how complicated the situation often was. They looted the city of Salto and completely destroyed it, murdered all 30 soldiers in the garrison, killed the men, enslaved the women as spoils of war and took 250 women and children captive. Behind this raid was José Miguel Carrera, one of the founding fathers of independent Chile, who was staying in Argentina. He led not only members of several local tribes but also 500 deserters and refugees, freed many Chilean royalists and made deals with the Ranqueles to get to Chile. But he was stopped by two provincial governors, defeated them in battle, and was then defeated in another battle, handed over by his soldiers, sentenced to death in a show trial and shot in the square in Mendoza – another of the incredible stories that abound in this era.

The Harshness of Federico Rauch Federico Rauch, who came from Germany and was hired by the government of the first president, Rivadavia, in 1826, took part in these

battles on multiple fronts. Born in Weinheim, Baden, in 1790, he fought for Napoleon in his younger years, arrived in Buenos Aires in 1819 and joined the hunter battalion with the rank of lieutenant. In 1823, on Rivadavia's orders, he began his campaign against the Ranqueles. He took part in the punitive expeditions organised by the government of Martín Rodríguez against the indigenous people of the Pampas. He supported Juan Manuel de Rosas in these campaigns and soon became known for his extreme harshness. He was called the terror of the desert: "Today we saved musket balls," he boasted, "we cut the throats of twenty-seven Ranqueles." His strategy was to pursue "the defeated until their destruction," according to historian Álvaro Yunque. Rauch was "an extraordinary leader. [...] He exterminated many tribes in the south and west. To this end, he carried out surprise attacks in which men, women and children were slaughtered indiscriminately." The cattle ranchers of the region praised him for his "efficiency" in exterminating the indigenous people. In the course of this warlike aggression, the mercenaries robbed the communities of control over 7 million hectares. Rivadavia then moved the state border further south to protect 538 landowners, to whom the stolen land was transferred.

Rauch carried out further raids of robbery and destruction. But he was not invulnerable, and certainly not immortal. He died soon afterwards, quite unexpectedly, in the Battle of Las Vizcacheras in 1829. The Argentine soldier Prudencio Arnold recorded in his memoirs, *Un Soldado Argentino* (An Argentine Soldier):

After hostilities broke out, Rauch overran the Federals and, according to his opponent's account, went all out without realising that his two wings had been defeated. He was distracted and began to savour his triumph, but soon found himself surrounded by troops he believed to be his own. It should be remembered that at that time, the Federalists differed from the Unitarians only by a ribbon on their hats that read: "Long live the Federation."

His rival remarked: "When he was among us, he realised that we were his enemies and only then did he become aware of the danger that surrounded him. He tried to flee and defended himself in a bizarre manner, but his pursuers outnumbered him every time and slipped through the grassland until the corporal fell from his horse and the Indian Nicasio killed him. [...] Thus ended the life of Colonel Rauch, a victim of his own military incompetence."

Bayer relates that the chief of the Ranquele, a young, handsome, tall, long-haired indigenous man whom the soldiers called Arbolito (Little Tree), waited patiently for Rauch in rough terrain, let him pass, then knocked his horse down, and when it collapsed, he quickly cut his throat. His head was severed and brought into the city in triumph, where it was provocatively displayed in a street in the centre.

His services were so highly valued that a small town not far from Buenos Aires was named after him: Coronel Rauch.

134 years later, in 1963, Osvaldo Bayer publicly proposed renaming the small town named after Rauch to “Arbolito” in honour of the cacique who had killed the Baden general at the time. But this outraged Enrique Isidro Rauch, born in 1914, who, like his ancestor, was a military man, an officer and major general in the Argentine army, also active in the secret service, and coincidentally at that time Minister of the Interior in the cabinet of President José María Guido, who ruled for only 19 months. His government was weak, dependent on rival military leaders, vainly attempting to stabilise the economy with six ministers of economic affairs, and repressive towards Peronists and leftists. As a result, Bayer was sentenced to two months in prison.

Back to Rosas. His commander was the caudillo Facundo Quiroga. The Buenos Aires newspaper *Gaceta Mercantil* reported at Christmas 1833 that Rosas’ campaign has been successful: 3,200 Indians killed, 1,200 people of both sexes taken prisoner and a total of about 1,000 Christians freed from captivity.

El Monitor reported different figures on 16 April 1834: 1,415 indigenous people had been killed and 382 captured, which together with their families amounted to 1,642 people. Furthermore, 409 Christians were freed from captivity, as well as 600 sheep, 1,800 mares and 2,435 horses. The historian Adolfo Saldías, on the other hand, puts the number of indigenous people killed at 10,000.

The scale of the tragedy becomes clear when one considers that some 60,000 indigenous people were involved in the fighting. Between 1820 and 1824, around 2,000 soldiers took part in each campaign on the side of Buenos Aires.

The Visitor Darwin Such a campaign is also of interest to science. On 13 August 1833, Rosas welcomed the 24-year-old Charles Darwin to his camp in northern Patagonia. On the 15th of the month, Darwin noted:

General Rosas is a man of extraordinary character; he currently has an overwhelming influence in this country and will probably end up ruling it. It is said that he owns 74 square leagues of land (nearly 200,000 hectares, WH) and has about three hundred thousand head of cattle. His estancias are admirably managed and have a much higher yield of corn than any others in the country.

He writes that Rosas became famous because he enacted laws in favour of his own estancia, which employed several hundred workers, and was able to resist all attacks by the Indians. He was said to be an excellent gaucho and wears the gaucho costume. He was immensely popular in the camp and wielded despotic power.

A day later, Darwin condemns the cruelty of this campaign, but is aware of the economic incentives. “This war of extermination, though conducted with the most shocking barbarity, will certainly bring great advantages; it will immediately open four or five hundred miles of beautiful country for cattle breeding.”

On 23 August, he learns that the indigenous people have murdered all the soldiers at a military base. It is suspected that they were members of Bernantio's tribe. He is then ordered that "if Bernantio does not bring the heads of the murderers, it will be his bitterest day, as not a single member of his tribe will remain in the *pampas*."

On 25 August, Darwin mentions Commander Miranda, who accompanied Bernantio with 300 men to find the murderers. They surprised them in the evening as they were resting and some of them were drinking the warm, steaming blood of the horses that had been slaughtered for their evening meal.

On 7 September, Darwin writes with horror how some captured Indigenous people betrayed the whereabouts of about 112 men, women and children. All were killed, only very few escaped.

When overtaken, like wild animals, they fight against any number to the last moment. One dying Indian seized with his teeth the thumb of his adversary, and allowed his own eye to be forced out sooner than relinquish his hold. Another, who was wounded, feigned death, keeping a knife ready to strike one more fatal blow. My informer said, when he was pursuing an Indian, the man cried out for mercy, at the same time that he was covertly loosing the bolas from his waist, meaning to whirl it round his head and so strike his pursuer. "I however struck him with my sabre to the ground, and then got off my horse, and cut his throat with my knife." This is a dark picture; but how much more shocking is the unquestionable fact, that all the women who appear above twenty years old are massacred in cold blood? When I exclaimed that this appeared rather inhuman, he answered, "Why, what can be done? they breed so!"

Everyone here is fully convinced that this is the most just war, because it is against barbarians. Who would believe in this age that such atrocities could be committed in a Christian civilised country?

He goes on to write that General Rosas' strategic plan is to gain large tracts of land for growing corn and, to this end, to mercilessly kill almost all the indigenous people in a bloody war. When the soldiers raided another camp of 20 to 30 indigenous people and killed them all, the *cacique* escaped

... in a manner which astonished everyone. The chief Indians always have one or two picked horses, which they keep ready for any urgent occasion. On one of these, an old white horse, the *cacique* sprung, taking with him his little son. The horse had neither saddle nor bridle. To avoid the shots, the Indian rode in the peculiar method of his nation; namely, with an arm round the horse's neck, and one leg only on its back. Thus hanging on one side, he was seen patting the horse's head, and talking to him.

The soldiers pursued him and changed horses three times, but the cacique escaped. Darwin imagined the scene, the bronze-coloured figure of the cacique, his white horse and the pursuers left behind.

Darwin finally rode to Buenos Aires. He passes several military posts before arriving in the city on 20 September. Exhausted, he writes: "The outskirts of the city looked quite pretty, with the agave hedges, and groves of olive, peach and willow trees, all just throwing out their fresh green leaves. I rode to the house of Mr. Lumb, an English merchant, to whose kindness and hospitality, during my stay in the country, I was greatly indebted."

Calfucurá No mention has yet been made of the legendary Calfucurá, an invincible chieftain who struck fear into other tribes and even the army, and who claimed to have been chosen by God. He was born in Chile around 1790 and settled in Salinas Grandes. A brilliant strategist in political and military matters, he formed alliances with Juan Manuel de Rosas and spent his life surrounded by fortresses and Malones, facing sudden attacks by the indigenous people, and fighting bitterly against the white man. Calfucurá was considered invincible; it is said that a spirit gave him wonderful powers that emanated from a stone he received as a child. It is said that he rode alongside Witranalve, the ghost rider, who advised him in battles against the white man and enemy tribes. He was the god of the pampas.

Calfucurá succeeded in becoming head of the indigenous world by concluding agreements with hundreds of chiefs. For decades, he controlled vast territories and represented a population of about 12,000 people. He acted diplomatically when possible and warlike when necessary, possessing the ability to recognise his enemies' weaknesses. He won a spectacular victory over the troops sent from Buenos Aires in the Battle of Sierra Chica on 31 May 1855.

Rosas granted him the rank of colonel of the Confederation and secured him an annual supply of food, drink, tobacco and livestock. When Rosas fell, Calfucurá renewed his alliance with his successor, Justo José de Urquiza.

Calfucurá died on 3 June 1873 and was buried in Chilhue, in the Salinas Grandes, together with his war horse, food, drink and weapons.

The succession was not easy. 224 chiefs gathered, and the situation seemed hopeless, when finally his eldest son, Namuncurá ("Stone Heel"), already over 60 years old, was elected. Roca could be glad that he no longer had a superior opponent.

In 1879, in the middle of the desert campaign under Roca's command, his confidant, the chief of the military general staff and later Minister of War and the Navy, Levalle, discovered Calfucurá's grave and his remains in a general's uniform, along with some weapons and the head of his warhorse with silver bridle. In addition, there were about twenty bottles of sugar cane, schnapps, water and food. Levalle ordered his soldiers to desecrate the grave: scatter the bones and take anything of value. The skull went to Francisco Pascasio Moreno, director of the Natural History

Museum in La Plata, who catalogued and examined it and exhibited it in the Anthropology Department for many years. The skull bore the inventory number 241. Calfucurá deserves a place among the best of the country.

The Buenos Aires Massacre In 1836, 110 indigenous people from the Pampas were publicly executed in the main square of Buenos Aires. According to reports, Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas ordered the execution. A clear-cut case, one would think, but to this day, many things remain unclear: the reason for the execution, the order, the number of victims and how it was carried out. In Eduardo Gutierrez's novel, *Juan Manuel de Rosas. Los dramas del terror* (Juan Manuel de Rosas. The Dramas of Terror, 1944), there is an explanation for everything and plenty of emotional experiences. But today are historians attempting to get behind the prevailing fictionalisation and uncover the factual reality with the help of archive documents and witness statements. They do not start from the traditional account of the massacre and the temptation to uncover even more scandalous details. On the contrary, they start with the simplest and most fundamental question: Was the event a product of political fiction, or was it a genuine massacre of indigenous people? Anyone who goes back that far accepts that they may not find anything special.

The process resembles a dry criminological investigation. The conclusion is that a group of indigenous people were taken by ship from Bahía Blanca to Buenos Aires. They rebelled on the ship, people were killed, and the indigenous people were executed on Rosas's orders somewhere near the port, probably in secret. Their remains were buried on the grounds of La Recoleta cemetery. It is possible that these prisoners were kidnapped during the punitive expedition against the Ranqueles under the command of Ramón Maza in early 1836.

In contrast, the novel is very dramatic. The execution takes place in the Plaza del Retiro, the former bullring (now Plaza San Martín). The Indians who are executed are the survivors of the tribe of the Kaziken Cañiuquil, after Colonel Francisco Sosa's battalion attacked the Indians' tents. The situation is complicated, and it is not always easy to distinguish between perpetrators and victims.

Rosas pursues a policy of pacification, supporting and providing for "friendly Indians." When he neglects this activity, Indian raids on agricultural estates near the border increase in 1837. In protest against the government's broken promises, Cañiuquil leaves his tents in Las Manzanas and sets up camp in Choele-Choel, from where he launches a "terrible invasion" of the border areas of Santa Fe, Córdoba, San Luis and Buenos Aires. This attack led to murders, cattle theft and captures; not even Rosas' estancias were spared. When Rosas found out, he was furious and swore revenge. He tried to distract Cañiuquil with the lure of a peace treaty, launching a punitive expedition against his lands when they least expected it.

Brother Delgado is tasked with carrying out the deception, which includes a "new treaty," and soon the first deliveries of goods arrive. Among them are boxes of

liquor and sugar cane “laced with narcotics” to lull the Indians to sleep. When they are surprised by the armed forces, they are unable to react. The soldiers stab them with their sabres while they are still half asleep. Men, women and children die, and the soldiers’ horses trample their corpses. Cañuquíl is held down by two soldiers and forced to watch the massacre. After the attack, the soldiers slit the throats of the dead. Then they seize the chief and murder and mutilate him. Despite the violent massacre, a few drunken Indians and a group of women and children survive, a total of 110 people. Although the soldiers want to cut the throats of the survivors, Colonel Sosa decides to send them as a “gift” to Rosas.

In Buenos Aires, the prisoners are escorted through the streets by fifty soldiers. This display is intended to terrify “decent people.” The indigenous people march covered with federalist insignia, and the federalists insult the onlookers for coming to watch. When the Indians reach the government building, they reject the gifts they are offered, attack the employees and threaten to kill the governor. In retaliation, according to Gutiérrez, Rosas decides to “slay them with the sword.”

The next morning, news spreads that the indigenous people are to be shot, attracting a large crowd. “The shooting of indigenous people is something the people don’t often get to see, and the opportunity must be seized,” writes Gutiérrez. A contingent of soldiers take up station in the northern part of the square and begin firing on them without warning.

Then begins the even more gruesome part of the story, which tells of the slitting of the throats of the living and the dead. At this stage, the curious disappear and the scene turns into an orgy of death:

“Then they began the most terrible slaughter: without distinction between the living and the dead, between the seriously and slightly wounded, between women and children, this godless band of soldiers began their federal work of decapitation. [...] These barbarians had reached the point of delirium in their cruelty. They threw the bodies of the children on top of each other and slowly cut off their heads with indescribable pleasure.” (p. 79).

The lifeless – and headless – bodies of the indigenous people are hung by their arms from the trees in the square. The soldiers decide to take trophies from the corpses as souvenirs of their deed and disperse to the taverns, carrying with them the ears, hands and even the heads of the children and women, which they have tied to their belts. Then, amid loud laughter, they toast the health of the dead: “Who carried a pair of ears, who a hand, and who other limbs?” asks Gutiérrez. “The most unfortunate, who wanted to appear more cruel, carried a pair of children or the head of a woman tied to their waist with a braid” (p. 80).

The story of the shooting of the Indians, describes a “monstrous festival” in which the followers Rosas’ revel in the slaughter of innocents and spread terror among the Unitarian families.

The contemporary poet and journalist Rivera Indarte reports something similar: The victims are shot so indiscriminately that many arrive at the cemetery still alive. “There, the police commissioners and Rosas’ adjutants competed for the pleasure of killing them with pistols.” (p. 149f.)

Whether Rosas was fighting a domestic political struggle or not, and what the historical truth is in this case, remains unclear.

In 1857, Rosas was found guilty of bloody tyranny over the people, treason and squandering public funds. In 1861, he was tried *in absentia*, as he had fled to England. The other crimes were treated as “ordinary crimes” and fell under the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. There, Rosas was sentenced to death in the first instance by Judge Sixto Villegas, solely for the seventeen murders he had ordered in 1842.

One can regularly read quite different things. The government offers indigenous people for farm work and in homes. “La Nación” writes:

The War Ministry informs the public that on the 5th and 6th of this month, indigenous people will be handed over for use on livestock farms. Indigenous women who are still wild are useful for performing domestic tasks in the homes of families in Buenos Aires. It should be noted that the behaviour of indigenous women is far from civilised, so these unfortunate women will need to be adapted. Underage indigenous people are also available for gentlemen tradesmen and companies in this area. These unfortunate people, who completely lack the blessings of civilisation, can be used to great advantage for errands. They must not be sent abroad. The distribution of the savages will take place free of charge at the immigrants’ hotel on 5 and 6 October from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (La Nación, October 1878)

On 31 December 1878, the newspaper El Nacional reported under the headline “Delivery of Indians”: “On Wednesdays and Fridays, Indians and Chinese women (Indiofrauen, WH) are delivered by the charity society to the families of this city.” Another article reports how mothers and children are separated in the process.

The despair and crying do not stop. The children are taken away from their mothers to be given away in their presence, even though the indigenous women cry, scream and beg on their knees with their arms stretched towards the sky. In this inhumane environment, some cover their faces, others look resignedly at the ground, the mother presses the child on her lap to her breast, the father spreads himself in front of them to defend his family.

But he, like many other men, is sent to the sugar cane plantations in the north.

A group of imprisoned men, women and children were forced to walk through the streets of Buenos Aires in chains on their way to the port. Militant anarchists rushed into the parade and shouted: “the barbarians are the ones who put the chains on them.” With this emotional support for the prisoners they managed to disrupt the

festive and “patriotic” atmosphere imposed on this sinister and shameful “victory parade”.

“The Conquest of the Desert” The previous battles and punitive expeditions were followed by the great “conquest of the desert” under General Julio A. Roca from 1878 to 1885, which was so successful that he was subsequently elected president of the country. (The A. in his name stands for Argentino). The opportunity was favourable because the strong geopolitical tension between Argentina and Chile over the unresolved borders in the south of both countries was easing. Chile was distracted by a war with Peru over the Atacama Desert.

In his daily order, Roca declared: “When the human wave invades these devastated fields, which yesterday were the scene of destructive and bloodthirsty raids, to transform them into riches and flourishing villages [...], then wipe out these nests of land pirates and take possession of the vast territory that shelters them [...], pursuing them with your bayonets.” *La Prensa* of 16 October 1878 agrees: “Conquest is sacred, for the conqueror is good and the conquered is evil. Since the conquest of the pampas is sacred, we should bear the costs it demands by exercising the legitimate right of the conqueror.”

The intellectuals of the so-called '37 Generation of Echeverría, Alberdi and Sarmiento, created a narrative in which the indigenous people appeared as “irredeemable savages,” the indigenous peoples as “rebellious tribes” and their territories as “deserts.” From then on, the idea of the desert plays a decisive role in the construction of the Argentine nation and the “indigenous other.” Two years before the campaign, as if to encourage it, Sarmiento wrote in *El Nacional* on 25 November 1876 (elsewhere, the source is given as *El Progreso* on 27 September 1844):

Will we ever succeed in exterminating the Indians? I feel an invincible loathing for the savages of America, which I cannot escape. These scoundrels are nothing but filthy natives, whom I would hang immediately if they reappeared. Lautaro and Caupolicán are lousy Indians, because that's what they all are. Since they are incapable of evolving, their extermination is predictable and useful, sublime and magnificent. They must be exterminated without sparing even the little ones, who already harbour an instinctive hatred of civilised man.

The liberal president Bartolomé Mitre always talks about the “Indian problem,” and Sarmiento, who is a quarter Indian thanks to his mother, almost always refers to them in clearly racist terms as “lousy Indians.” Alberdi does not engage with the indigenous people, but clearly distances himself from them on social grounds, and thus in a covertly racist manner: “I know of no respectable people in our society who have a Pehuenche or Araucanian surname, or does anyone know a gentleman who

prides himself on being an Indian? Which of us would marry his sister or daughter to an indigenous person from Araucania? I would much prefer an English cobbler."

In his widely acclaimed constitutional document "*Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la república Argentina*" (Foundations and Starting Points for the Political Organisation of the Argentine Republic), civilisation and barbarism are not limited to the two worlds of Enlightenment thinkers and caudillos, but are applied to Europeans and indigenous peoples as a racist self-confession:

What we call independent Americans is nothing more than Europe that has settled in America, and our revolution is nothing more than the dismemberment of a European power into two halves that now govern themselves. [...] We who call ourselves Americans are nothing more than Europeans born in America. Skulls, blood, colour, everything is from outside [...] in America, everything that is not European is barbaric; there is no other classification than this: first, the indigenous people, that is, the savages; second, the Europeans, that is, we who were born in America and speak Spanish, who believe in Jesus Christ and not in Pillan.

According to recent surveys, more than half of the Argentine population has Native American ancestors, which renders this strict dichotomy meaningless.

The incomplete Enlightenment betrays its principles of humanity, criticism and justice at the moment of humiliation or exclusion of women, workers and ethnic groups within the country and of other peoples in its external relations.

The dehumanisation of the face of the other leads to the dehumanisation of the perpetrators. In November 1878, Colonel Rudecindo Roca, brother of the general commanding the Argentine troops, captured a large delegation in Villa Mercedes that had been sent by the Loncos Baigorrita and Namuncurá to discuss the peace treaty signed a few months earlier. A few days later, he arrested a delegation sent by Chief Epumer. A total of fifty Ranqueles were captured and shortly afterwards shot in a barn. The women and children were sent to Tucumán as forced labourers. The press discussed the incident, with *La Nación* describing it as a "crime against humanity" (16/17 November 1878) and pointing out that this is not an isolated case and that impunity for such crimes could become commonplace during the upcoming military campaigns. *La Nación* also predicted that the victims would not only be indigenous warriors, but also the elderly, women and children.

After this prophecy came true, Senator Aristóbulo del Valle complained in the National Congress on 19 August 1884:

We have torn families away from the savages, we have brought them to this centre of civilisation, where every right seems to be guaranteed, and yet we have not respected any of the rights that are due not only to civilised people but to all of humanity: we have enslaved the men, prostituted the women, torn the children from

their mothers, sent old men away to work as slaves. In a word, we have turned our backs and broken all the laws that govern the moral conduct of human beings.

He thus accuses the entire nation, the politicians, the members of parliament, the associations, the military, the press. In vain.

The conquest of the desert was justified as a historical necessity. Peaceful civilisation by Jesuits and Franciscans in previous centuries had failed because the indigenous people were still at the level of hunters and gatherers, with cattle theft being seen as a new form of hunting. In 1879, at the beginning of the campaign, the daily newspaper *Tribuna* wrote as a matter of course: "To silence the remnants of the brazen tribes of thieves, no other tactics are needed than those used by European hunters against wild boars. They are not to be pitied."

Wars are always times of modernisation in weapons and equipment. The newly developed Remington rifle, a breech-loading weapon, multiplied the effectiveness of a rifle. Now up to ten cartridges could be fired per minute with an accuracy of up to 300 metres, whereas the previous muzzle-loading system could only fire two shots per minute. Argentina imported 10,000 of them from the United States.

At the same time, the offensive is accompanied by the abandonment of a defensive construction: the digging of a trench along the border, 600 kilometres across the pampas from Bahía Blanca to Italo on the edge of the Andes. Several metres deep and wide and equipped with fortifications, it was intended to make attacks by the indigenous peoples impossible. Begun in 1876 by War Minister Alsina, the project was abandoned just one year later with the death of the minister. By then, 376 kilometres had already been built. However, the indigenous peoples created landslides on both sides and were thus able to cross the trench with horses and stolen cattle.

What structurally resembles the Great Wall of China is a visible sign of the separation between civilisation and barbarism, this time not directed against the socially and politically different gauchos and caudillos of the provinces, but against ethnically very different peoples. The otherness of the provinces is still perceived as part of one's own self, against which an internal struggle can be waged. But the otherness of the *Indios* is not; it is something that is completely foreign, both internally and externally, against which all others unite. The great heroes of the country, apart from those who fought for independence against Spain, are the heroes of the conquest of the desert. The indigenous people, on the other hand, remain savages. Roca becomes the new Minister of War and describes the Alsina trench as "nonsense". Instead, Roca wages a massive war, wins it and is later honoured with the largest monument in Buenos Aires and the naming of the main streets in Patagonia, joining the ranks of heroes.

The "conquest of the desert" is intended to protect the new settlers on Argentina's southern border from the increasingly aggressive attacks of the indigenous people.

Their territories had been taken from the Ranquel and Pampa peoples and other indigenous groups, with whom relatively peaceful relations had existed at times.

As Minister of War and the Navy, General Julio Argentino Roca is determined to exterminate the indigenous population of the south in order to expand and enforce “national sovereignty.” He describes it as a “cleansing operation” linked to the advance. Compared to his predecessor Adolfo Alsina, he praised the “national armed forces” for being able to “eliminate the majority of the Indian contingents and their most important chiefs.”

When Roca was appointed president in 1880, he authorised his Minister of War, General Benjamín Victorica, to carry out the ruthless “cleansing of the region”. In 1883, the governor of Patagonia and head of the local garrison, General Lorenzo Wintter, led another campaign of extermination to destroy the last rebellious tribes under the command of the chief Sayhueque. During this campaign, around 3,700 indigenous fighters and a large number of tribesmen were killed.

The representatives of the various peoples were well known at the time of the battles and occasional negotiations during the wars of conquest, but today they are known only to experts. Among them, however, was the remarkable Maria La Grande, who controlled Patagonia from Punta Arenas to Rio Negro, lived from around 1780 to 1840, and was named La Grande by Argentina’s first military leader in reference to Catherine the Great.

There is no comprehensive history of Argentina from the perspective of the indigenous peoples, a change of perspective similar to that provided by Pekka Hämäläinen in “The Indigenous Continent” for the history of the United States. Argentine academia, including such prolific historians as Tulio Halperin Donghi and political scientists such as Natalio Botana, have addressed the problems of the republic, its emergence and consolidation, but only with regard to the republic of the Creoles, not that of the indigenous peoples. The desert remains the desert.

Such is the fate of the defeated. The victorious conquests are reported, while the opponents are defeated and their resistance exhausted. The struggle of the legendary Calfucurá, who carried out the greatest raid ever in 1872, is forgotten. That year, he led six thousand “spear Indians” against the cities of General Alvear, 25 de Mayo and Nueve de Julio. More than 300 Christians died and around 200,000 head of cattle were slaughtered.

Survival “If anyone had seen us from the outside,” writes soldier Prado, who joined the military at the age of 14, in his memoirs,

how we were dressed, they would have wondered what kind of hordes of soldiers we were. None of the soldiers were dressed alike. One wore a blanket as a *chiripa* (pantaloon), another a jacket; some wore old, worn-out boots, others espadrilles (light shoes made of esparto grass, WH); the feet of this group were wrapped in

pieces of leather, others were barefoot. The only things that were uniform and clean were the horses and the rifles. However, when the national anthem was played and the chief shouted "Hail to the Fatherland," these poor militiamen responded with all the enthusiasm in their hearts, perhaps thinking that they had not yet done enough to earn the gratitude of the nation.

"The total collapse of the barbarian empire of the pampas," according to Colonel Olascoaga, "took place with dizzying speed, and all undertakings were crowned with success." The partial expeditions led to the dispersal of entire tribes, the liberation of prisoners, the rescue of stolen cattle and the destruction of all the savages' camps: "For several months, the good news was repeated uninterruptedly [...] Every day, people woke up surprised by the announcement of a victory. Civilisation is finally wresting centuries of rule from vandalism," Prado rejoices.

The indigenous people had left Pichi Carhué," he notes, "not only because they knew about my march, but also because Namuncurá had warned them that Commander García had just attacked Nahuel's camp.

Cacique Namuncurá and his family left their *toderias* and set off for Chiloé. During this expedition, Lieutenant Fraga, now Minister of War, Lieutenant Hernandez, now a member of parliament, and many other officers whose names I cannot remember distinguished themselves for their bravery.

At the same time, Teodoro García from Puán attacked the Indians of Cañumil, killing 30 men and capturing 160 fighters, including the son of the cacique himself. Levalle invaded Catriel's territory, ravaged the *tolderías* and returned with numerous prisoners. And behind Levalle, Vinter storms in at the head of 300 men, and this time he succeeds in overcoming the indomitable Catriel. "Your conduct," says the minister, confirming receipt of the dispatch in which Levalle reports on his operation, "is commendable. With less than 300 men, you advanced more than 60 miles into the desert and reached the place from which you came more than forty years ago," Prado repeats his words and recounts:

One day, Racedo advances as far as Leuvucó, surprises Epumer, captures this barbarian and returns with 400 prisoners and 3,000 rescued animals. In this action, he loses 15 men, both dead and wounded; and believing that these lives require a new effort, he returns and crushes the armies of Mariano Rozas.

Rudecindo Roca went to Poitahué and Leuvucó twice in less than two weeks and captured 500 soldiers after killing more than 150 warriors.

By the end of 1878, there is not a single tribe left in the pampas capable of undertaking even the most insignificant *malón*. Catriel, Pincen, Epumer, Cañumil, Nahuel Payun and Painé are in the hands of our troops; Namuncurá has fled with the remnants of his former power to the south of Neuquén, and Baigorrita is

preparing to follow him, convinced that the secular rule of barbarism has come to an end in the Pampas.

In 1884, the Welshmen William Williams, John Parry, John Hughes, Richard Davis and John Daniel Evans travelled up the Chubut River in search of gold. On the way, they encountered Roa, who has 80 men and 600 horses with him. Roa captures half a dozen Indians and three Chinese women. The Welshmen continue their journey until they are pursued and killed by the Indians; only Evans escapes, saved by his famous horse "Malacara".

On the 18th, the desertion of two men was confirmed during roll call. I sent Lieutenant Maldonado to search for them. At three o'clock in the afternoon, this officer returned with the deserters. They had been tracked down at noon.

The soldier Blas Gonzalez, who was a better horseman than his comrades, caught up with the deserters and was killed after a fight in which one of them was wounded. The rest of the troop arrived and seized the guilty men, who, as soon as they reached the camp, were handed over to a court martial, which sentenced them to death [...] And when this painful act was over, the division marched on as if it had stopped to harness the horses.

In a large camp, smallpox breaks out furiously and relentlessly. Within two weeks, a quarter of the troops are lost, and the scourge is only temporarily defeated with the frost in June.

"I have no intention," Prado declares, to

draw parallels between Caesar's campaign in Gaul and the expedition to the Rio Negro; but I do maintain that the colonial manoeuvre that led the army from Trenque Lauquen to the Rio Negro is the most important, the most profound, the noblest military operation ever undertaken on the continent, since the immortal epic of our independence. [...]

The first operation we witnessed under the direct command of the Minister of War was the crossing of the Colo-Rado.

Wide, impetuous, murky, because in the fury of its torrential flow it tears open and destroys the earth of the gorges that surround it, we saw the mighty river, whose waters border the Pampas in the south, rushing down, drawn by the abyss of the distant sea.

A scout led the way, and behind him came the minister, his staff, the regiments, the women, the wagons, the cattle, the horses, creating a monstrous concert that amplified the mighty roar of the river, the screeching of the horsemen and carts, the commanding voices of the officers, and the cries of the frightened women and children.

Finally, "we saw below, in the deep valley, the greenish line of the willows and, within this frame, the silvery surface of the river.

At that moment, all hearts beat wildly, all souls trembled with joy, all arms shook with enthusiasm. The Republic had abolished the desert, and its territory stretched unhindered to Cape Horn, where the homeland ends because God did not want to make the continent any larger.

On 1 January 1885, Chief Valentín Sayhueque, accompanied by Inacayal, Foyel and several minor leaders, together with around 700 spearmen and 2,500 Indians of various ages and sexes, surrendered to Lieutenant Colonel Nadal in the fortress of Junín de los Andes. This surrender marked the end of the Neuquén Wars.

General Wintter reported to General Roca: "I am extremely satisfied and have the honour of declaring to the Supreme Government and the country that all border restrictions against the savages in the south of the republic have been lifted forever."

After the "conquest of the desert" was complete, the newly occupied lands were redistributed as usual. There were no prospects for the surviving indigenous people. Plans to convert the concentration camps into agricultural colonies for "more civilised" indigenous people were not pursued.

The victorious "conquest of the desert" was followed by the distribution not only of land, but also of the workforce. Slavery, abolished in 1813, is practically reintroduced for those who survive. The prisoners are taken on long marches to the Valcheta concentration camp in the province of Río Negro, from there to Bahía Blanca and by ship to the island of Martín García off Buenos Aires, where the men are sent as needed to work in livestock and agriculture or on the sugar cane plantations in the north, and the women as domestic servants for powerful families. Charitable organisations such as the *Sociedad de Beneficencia* are on hand to help. It is easy to imagine the abuse suffered by the women in these houses, who have no rights.

Subjugation, concentration and deportation are the means and the process used to solve the "Indian problem". The surviving prisoners are taken to concentration camps, many of which are built in various sizes. These include Valcheta, Chichinales, Chimpay and Junín. In Neuquén, approximately 20,000 people are "grouped together". In large camps, such as Chichinales, thousands of people are imprisoned in 1886. When the Salesians Cagliero, Remotti and Panaro make an extended visit to the tribesmen of the Kaziken Ñancuche, they count about 700 people, and 1,700 among those of the Kaziken Sayhueque. Groups were transported back and forth between the camps. John Daniel Evans, a settler from Wales, remembers this eerie place. His granddaughter recounts his impressions:

I believe that most of the Patagonian Indí were in this camp [...] They were fenced in with high wire mesh; the Indians ran around in the courtyard trying to recognise us; they knew we were Welsh from the Chubut Valley. Some clung to the wire with their large, bony hands, parched by the wind, and tried to communicate by

speaking a little Spanish and a little Welsh: 'poco bara chiñor, poco bara chiñor' (a little bread, sir).

The prisoner transports were often murderous. "The way they beat him down," recalls a witness about a weakened prisoner: "When he got tired out there, walking, they took out their sabres and cut his throat. The people who got tired [...] were just left there, alive, torn and cut up. And that is, of course, [...] very sad [...] You have to have a heart, because – I'd rather not talk about it, because it's very sad. Very sad."

During and after the war, the prison island of Martin Garcia also served as a transit point for the distribution of indigenous labourers. They were examined and classified as "indios inútiles" (useless), "de depósito" (in reserve) or "presos" (arrested), depending on their state of health, gender, age or the degree of danger they posed to the military. A medical report states:

The hard and laborious work can only be harmful to many of them. The Indians are lazy and accustomed to idleness. Any effort is extremely painful for them, and in the season we are in, in the weakness in which most of them find themselves due to lack of good food, in the privations they suffer, in their moral despondency, for they feel the loss of the desert as a king feels the loss of his palace; and, moreover, the disease that is spreading, all this advises the greatest moderation in work.

From December 1878 to March 1879, more than 220 indigenous people died. The precarious working and living conditions also encouraged the spread of smallpox.

An island once used as a prison camp always found a use, even in political struggles. By 1900, a police headquarters, a military hospital and artillery batteries had been installed, and stone continued to be quarried on the island for use as building material in Buenos Aires. Between 1900 and 1970, numerous important politicians were exiled there, including Presidents Hipólito Yrigoyen (1930), Juan Perón (1945) and Arturo Frondizi (1962).

An attempt to civilise the indigenous population through work, i.e. to test the productive capacities of the Indí, which began at the same time as the military occupation of Patagonia, ended in dehumanisation. The so-called "remnants of the Catriel tribe" were sent to the newly created "Colonia Conesa" and placed under military supervision. Within a few years, Conesa was transformed into a concentration camp whose inmates were forced to perform hard labour for the development of the provinces of Patagonia and Río Negro.

Wherever the indigenous people settle, they are not only suspected of being robbers, but are also repeatedly driven from their land due to unregulated legal conditions. Since they all came from Chile, it is claimed that they are living on illegally occupied land. Increasingly confined by privatised and fenced-off land, the indigenous people find themselves once again in a camp that no longer even has a name,

and to which they are no longer taken, but which forms around them. This opens the door to further encirclement or expulsion.

With the Public Auction Law of 3 December 1882, 5.5 million hectares of land were awarded to speculators, and with the law of 5 September 1885, 541 high-ranking officers of the Argentine army received 4.6 million hectares in what are now the provinces of La Pampa, Río Negro, Neuquén, Chubut and Tierra del Fuego, and finally, in 1887, the climax came when a special law passed by the National Congress awarded General Roca another 15,000 hectares.

Of course, the ordinary soldiers were excluded from this raid. Soldier Prado lamented in his memoirs: "Poor, good militiamen! They had conquered twenty thousand miles of land, and later, when this immeasurable wealth passed into the hands of speculators [...] many of them – even on the dung heap of the military hospital – found no place to breathe their last breath of a life full of heroism, self-sacrifice and true patriotism."

All that remained for the former users of these lands was alms: 6 miles of land for Namuncurá and his people, 6 miles for the Kaziks Pichihuinca and Trapailaf, and 12 miles for the Sayhueque. A total of 24 miles of land, but only in barren and remote areas.

"At the end of 1878, there is not a single tribe left in the pampas," writes Prado, "that would be capable of mounting even the most insignificant raid. Catriel, Pincen, Epumer, Cañumil, Nahuel Payun and Painé are in the hands of our troops; Namuncurá has fled with the remnants of his old power to the south of Neuquén, and Baigorrita is setting out to follow him, convinced that the centuries-long reign of barbarism in the Pampas has come to an end." Of the approximately 60,000 indigenous people living in Patagonia, 20,000 were killed during the "conquest" and 15,000 were deported to the north and to inaccessible areas, or they remain in huts, without rights and invisible.

Private Genocide The memoirs of Scottish shepherd William Blain in the mid-19th century point to the concrete course of what we tend to refer to collectively as colonial expansion. Numerous sons of starving families left the Highlands to find work in Australia or New Zealand. William Blain reports in his memoirs how he instead travelled to the Falkland Islands with a sheep-breeding company and, over time, rose through the ranks to take on administrative tasks. Like other sheep farmers, he seems to have saved a lot of money.

The world market needed more and more virgin wool, so the number of sheep increased and the grazing areas grew immeasurably. With such expansion, the indigenous inhabitants of the area became a problem. The poor did the "dirty work" that consumers in the north know little about. But even if they did, they would side with the entrepreneurs.

Where state structures are weak, shady characters appear and fill the gaps. One of them is Julio Popper, a mining engineer born in Bucharest in 1857, who, after studying at the Polytechnic in Paris, travels through the Middle East, works on the Suez Canal, visits China and Japan, then Siberia, crosses the Atlantic, travels through Alaska and finally stays for a long time in New Orleans and Mexico.

In 1885, he arrived in Buenos Aires with a reputation as a man of universal learning, especially in the natural sciences, and was granted a concession for gold mining in Santa Cruz by President Roca. At the same time, he was appointed technical director of the *Compañía Lavaderos de Oro del Sud* (Gold Washing Company of the South).

With the government's permission, Popper set up a paramilitary army with uniforms, discipline and a unified command. Its members were Croatian mercenaries who wanted to enrich themselves and "clean up" the area of locals. "They were criminals of the worst kind, well armed and well equipped," writes Father Alberto María de Agostini in his memoirs, "My Journeys in Tierra del Fuego."

During an expedition, Popper ordered a massacre of the Selk'man natives and photographed their corpses. He built four gold extraction plants on the island of Tierra del Fuego, the most famous of which is El Páramo de la Bahía San Sebastián near the Chilean border, where he planned to build a harbour and a city called Atlanta. In just over a year, 265 kilograms of gold were mined in El Páramo, as his biographer Boleslao Lewin writes in the book *Popper: A Patagonian Conqueror*. Anthropologist Carlos Martínez Sarasola explains that the Selk'man were murdered not only by gold prospectors, but also by the militias of the estancias. Popper expanded and created his own stamp and coins. The governor of Tierra del Fuego resisted his expansionist ambitions: "Popper has gone so far as to presume that he has acquired legal title to exercise sovereignty over Tierra del Fuego." This involved a third of the most economically valuable areas. The reason for his abrupt demise at the age of only 36 remains unclear. In 1893, the governor was deposed by the central government, and two months later Popper died in a hotel in Buenos Aires.

In 1910, the Italian Alberto Maria De Agostini, a missionary of the Salesian order, arrived in Tierra del Fuego. He was 27 years old, born in Pollone on the edge of the northern Italian Alps, and a passionate mountaineer, explorer, geographer, ethnographer, photographer and documentary filmmaker. He travelled between Tierra del Fuego, Chile and Argentina, was the first to climb peaks and glaciers, and got to know the Ona, Yamaná and Alacalufes in Tierra del Fuego and the Tehuelches and Araucanos in Patagonia. He accumulated a wealth of precise notes on the ethnological characteristics of the various tribes, their traditions and customs, religious beliefs and social ties.

But he also learned about the murderous persecution of the tribes by white settlers and reported on it in his book "Ten Years in Tierra del Fuego." According to his account, an Argentine expedition ship encountered a large group of Indians in San Sebastian Bay in 1886, "whom the captain immediately ordered to be pursued

and taken prisoner. When they saw that they were being pursued, they naturally defended themselves and fired a few arrows at the intruders. That was reason enough for the captain to order his men to fire and they slaughtered the Indians in a few minutes: twenty-eight corpses and many wounded covered the ground, including several women and children."

From the mid-1880s onwards, after the victorious end of the "conquest of the desert", sheep farmers who had appropriated large parts of northern Tierra del Fuego as grazing land murdered members of the Selk'nam tribe.

The acts of inhuman cruelty that have taken place since the whites invaded here and proceeded without further ado to exterminate a harmless, vigorous race," explains De Agostini:

... will forever remain a stain on civilisation. Researchers, cattle ranchers and military personnel had no qualms about shooting the poor Indians wherever they found them, as if they were beasts, some kind of game. Women and daughters were mercilessly torn from their husbands and fathers, subjected to every kind of humiliation and dragged from their homes in the name of science to distant lands [...], where they were displayed as the lowest representatives of the human race." To justify these barbarities, the representatives of civilisation invented all kinds of horror stories or exaggerated individual incidents beyond measure. They told of ambushes and bloody attacks by the natives, of gruesome massacres and looting. In reality, however, the Indians were never warlike; they only defended their possessions, their land and their families.

The "cruel cannibal stories told by Darwin also belong in the realm of fable," writes de Agostini. He accuses the governor of Punta Arenas of deporting entire tribes and driving them to Punta Arenas under the pretext of "wanting to rescue them from the misery in which they lived and provide them with food and clothing." The responsibility for these wars of extermination against the Onas lies largely with the governor. De Agostini writes:

The hatred of the natives and their contempt went so far with the new owners, who wanted to get rid of the rightful owners for good because they were an obstacle to the expansion of their herds, that they offered a pound sterling reward for every pair of human ears brought to them.

And since the Indí would eat anything to satisfy their hunger, including dead animals they found in open fields, they poisoned large pieces of meat with strychnine to achieve their insidious goal more easily. Others simply killed the Ona as game so that the museums of London could adorn themselves with their skulls.

Finally, “the Indians, displayed almost naked in the streets of the city, were distributed among all those who needed them (Indian auction), without regard for the background of the applicants.”

It was the shepherds, mostly Anglo-Saxons, who saw the Indians as the greatest obstacle to the reproduction of their herds, and therefore subjected them to a merciless hunt as if they were wild animals. The Englishman Sam Jslop even boasted of wearing belts made from Indian skins that he had obtained from the backs of these unfortunate people. Another terrible persecutor of the Onas was the Scotsman MacLennan, manager of the ‘Primera Argentina’ ranch. [...] To boast of his ruthless exterminations, he equated the number of his victims with the number of whiskies he had drunk, which cannot have been few, as he was in a constant state of drunkenness.

MacLennan is a foreman in one of the numerous companies owned by the largest landowner in Patagonia, the largest exporter of gold and wool, the second largest cattle breeder and owner of over 50 ships, the Asturian-born “King of Patagonia” José Menéndez Menéndez. Together with Julio Popper, Menéndez is responsible for the genocide of the Selk’nam. For loyal service, he presents MacLennan with a gold watch from B. Haas, Jeunes et Cie., which he purchased in Paris.

The decline of the indigenous population is accompanied by the rise of three families and their connection to a monopoly. Alongside Menéndez, the Braun Hamburger family, who immigrated from Russia, soon gained a monopoly in sheep production, and José Nogueira, a shipowner, sheep farmer and leather exporter from Portugal, became rich through the rapidly growing land holdings of this family. For people married among themselves as in feudal times: Sara Braun and José Nogueira, Mauricio Braun Hamburger and Josefina Menéndez.

General strikes in 1918 against the Braun-Menéndez companies led to clashes with the police, resulting in deaths and injuries. In 1921, further strikes were organised, prompting Braun and other large landowners to call on the Yrigoyen government, which responded with the usual military intervention. A military intervention at the Estancia Anita, owned by the Braun-Menéndez family, ended the strike there. 100 workers were forced to dig their own graves and were then shot, while 300 were spared so as not to jeopardise production. In 1923, the commander of this military operation was shot dead by an anarchist on his doorstep in Buenos Aires. We will hear more about this later, because it is no longer a question of genocide against the indigenous people, but of massacres of the working class.

The Salesians are the Europeans who approach the indigenous people most benevolently and gain insights into their culture, but also rob them of their cultural values and customs. To put an end to the killing, the missionaries offer the large landowners to deport the indigenous people to their mission stations on Dawson

Island and near Río Grande in Tierra del Fuego and to “civilise” them. But with education, hygiene and the end of nomadic life, they unwittingly accelerate the extermination of the Selk’nam. Infectious diseases brought over by the Europeans, such as smallpox and tuberculosis, further transform the missions into deadly traps. Not only the murders, but also the diseases reduce the number of tribe members. In 1884, the English missionary Thomas Bridges counts 945 Jahgans; two years later, after a severe measles epidemic, only half remain. In 1880, he estimated the Alakaluf population at 3,000, in 1900 at only 1,000, and in 1924 at 200. The Ona had 3,600 members in 1880, 2,000 in 1891, and only 270 in 1924. De Agostini lamented:

Never again will the primeval forests, in the deep silence of a moonlit night, hear the ancient legends of the hero Kuanip, son of the red mountain, and his unfortunate wife, the graceful Oklta, who was transformed into a bat. The Koliot (stranger), who comes from distant lands, thirsts for wealth and possesses deadly weapons, has quickly accomplished his nefarious work and forever destroyed the worldly happiness of this primitive race, which for centuries lived alone and innocent in the most unique region on earth.

Final Destination: The Museum Calfucurá’s skull is a prominent exhibit in the Museum of La Plata, founded in 1883. Like other countries, especially European ones, Argentina wanted to build anthropological collections and conduct research. This involved plundering traditional graves of indigenous communities when the inhabitants had been driven out or murdered. As always, war provided favourable conditions for cultural raids.

Museum director Moreno undertook five expeditions to Patagonia, which he recorded in his diaries. The inventory quickly grew to 5,581 items. The ethnologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche arrived from Berlin and became head of the anthropological department. He compiled the inventory, which includes entries such as this: “1769 – Indio Toba, ‘Petizo’, Resistenzia, Chaco. Shot in 1886 on the orders of Lieutenant Obligo. Spegazzini Collection.” The inventory also includes “many cervical vertebrae” and a “stuffed foetus”.

Lehmann-Nitsche conducted “objective” research into “anthropophysis,” the “borderline phenomena” in which society reveals itself in its most dramatic and elementary aspects. This included the “investigation of primitive human instincts of a sexual nature,” according to Lehmann-Nitsche. In 1923, he published texts from the La Plata region in vernacular Spanish and argot in the collection “Anthropophyteia. Yearbooks for Folkloric Surveys and Research on the Developmental History of Sexual Morality” as the eighth volume under the pseudonym Victor Borde. He collected the material during his first three years in Argentina. It consists of a detailed catalogue of couplets, poems, sayings and riddles of an erotic, sycophantic and prostatic nature, which he found in brothels (*lupanarias*), among rowdy characters (*bacanes*)

and in inscriptions in public toilets (*escatológicas*), and an extensive “dictionary” of terms relating to the language of prostitution, such as genitals, excrement, love practices, diseases, etc. The volume was republished in Spanish in 1981.

It was not until 2020 that what had always been rumoured was confirmed: that a group of indigenous people had lived in the museum under Moreno's instructions. Carolina Keye writes in *La Nación* that it is estimated that there were between 12 and 20 people. The men were asked to help build the museum and the women to cook for the workers, but they all refused. They lived in the basement for years until their deaths. Afterwards, their scalps were removed, and in some cases their brains as well. A death mask was made from plaster and sometimes the body of a dead person was covered with quicklime.

The most famous case is that of the chieftain Inacayal.

Moreno and Inacayal met in 1879 during an expedition [...] According to historical records, five years later, the tribes of Inacayal and Foyel, consisting of 180 people, appeared at the Villegas fortress to declare their peaceful intentions towards the national government. However, the army captured them and sent them to Buenos Aires. There they were separated from their children, and Inacayal was imprisoned for a year and a half until Moreno took him to the museum in La Plata.

The newspaper *La Capital* reported on 27 September 1887 under the headline “Grave Accusations”:

It is said that four days ago, three indigenous people from the two families living there on behalf of the government died [...] The chief Inacayal, who saved Mr Moreno's life during one of his expeditions to the south and whom Moreno refers to in his work “I travelled to Patagonia”, died yesterday. The body of this man is currently being dismembered in the museum. How did he die? Which doctor certified his death? And did the community approve his burial in the open air? [...]. We would like to add that other indigenous people are also in imminent danger of death. Only two small indigenous children, Arturo and Maish Kensis [...] are perhaps the only ones who are not currently in danger of death.

But this scandal has no legal or political consequences.

“The museum hall is at the top of the stairs,” Keye reports, “Between the columns are several corridors that soon become narrow and dark and form a hexagon. On both sides, drawers and antique furniture are stacked up, revealing all kinds of objects, from precious stones to fish in jars. The further you go, the colder it gets. The same goes for the smell of formaldehyde.” The basement where the prisoners lived houses the museum's offices and workshops.

A report on the young Maish Kensis, who belonged to the Yaghan people living in Tierra del Fuego, has been preserved by the Dutch anthropologist Herman ten Kate,

who specialised in skull research and was appointed by Moreno after his studies in Berlin and at the Ethnographic Museum in Paris. He died around 1894 of a lung disease.

People are also examined in their living and dead state. In 1896, a three-year-old girl survived the massacre of her Aché family in Paraguay by white settlers. She was christened Damiana and became an object of scientific interest, observed, photographed and measured. Because of her rebellious attitude, she was pathologised, criminalised and subjected to psychiatric treatment. She died of tuberculosis at the age of fourteen, but continued to be exploited. Her body was dissected, skinned and packed into vials and boxes, which were distributed to museums in La Plata and Berlin. The documentary film “Damiana Kryygi” recounts the six stages of her life: massacre, captivity, science, death, desecration and restitution. It draws attention to racist science, an anthropology that only emerged with imperialism, and the subordination of the body to science.

Moreno justified the abduction of people in Patagonia for the museum in La Plata, using his unsubstantiated story of gratitude to the locals who had sheltered him on his voyages of discovery. He claimed that this is why he obtained the release of these people, who were captured during the “conquest of the desert,” from the Argentine government. Now they were being held captive in the museum.

They were prisoners of science. A science based on racism, evolutionism and social Darwinism that wanted to observe the extinction of a community of people who were massacred on the grounds that they were at an incompatible stage of cultural development. This is not science. Lehmann-Nitsche was part of this enterprise. He was apparently present at the government massacre in 1924 at the Palalpí reduction in the Chaco, without commenting further. His estate at the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin contains his membership card for the anti-Semitic German National People's Party.

Those who were imprisoned and shot are forgotten. They are the infamous people whose lives Foucault commemorates in his essay of the same name: inconspicuous people with simple stories that move us. “Lives as though they had not been, that survive only from their clash with a power that wished only to annihilate them, or at least obliterate them, lives that come back to us only through the effect of multiple accidents – these are the infamies that I wanted to assemble here in the form of a few remains.” Lives of those imprisoned and monitored, not of those killed and buried.

There is no data about their lives; they must be reconstructed with the help of other sources, told in literary form and placed within the framework of possibility and probability. Everything can be pieced together like a mosaic: the reports of perpetrators and observers, and the few accounts of the victims. Biographies and autobiographies are also reconstructions. It just needs to be wanted and undertaken, possibly as a change of perspective, as an awakening. According to Foucault, look-

ing at the infamous would change the literary discourse of the Western world: "Its ceremonial functions would gradually fade; it would no longer have the task of manifesting in a tangible way the all too visible radiance of force, grace, heroism and might, but, rather, of searching for those things hardest to perceive – the most hidden, hardest to tell and to show, and lastly the most forbidden and scandalous." In Argentina, this means understanding invisibility as a consequence of violence.

In 2006, a university group for social anthropological research (GUIAS) was founded to investigate the events. Among other things, this group found the remains of a person with a broken skull behind a wall of the museum and then the bodies of prisoners who had been living in the museum. They had been dismembered and exhibited in the museum under the title "Wild races that are dying out." By 1994, more than ten thousand human skeletal remains had been collected in the museum. They were then gradually returned to the ethnic groups.

First, the Mapuche-Tehuelche community of Pu Fotum Mapu recovered the remains of Longko Inakayal. However, the GUIAS research group discovered that the museum had kept his brain, scalp and left ear, as well as the remains of his wife Margarita Foyel. It was not until twenty years later that the museum was able to return all the remains.

Late Massacres The defamation, lack of rights, frequent internment and arbitrary murder of indigenous people, as well as the privatisation of their lands, kept them in a state of lawlessness even after the "conquest of the desert" was complete. Violence was therefore always latent and culminated in regular massacres: in 1880 and 1910 in Tierra del Fuego with more than 900 victims, in 1887 in San Antonio de Obligado with around 20 victims, in 1924 in Napalpí, in the Chaco with 500 murdered, and in 1947 in Rincón Bomba with 750 to 1,000 victims. These are only the most spectacular cases.

A look at history reveals a long history of massacres since the beginning of Spanish colonisation. For example, several massacres of indigenous people have been documented in the pampas of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata since 1580. In a complex web of regionally sovereign and politically decentralised Indian nations and colonial administrations, relations are alternately diplomatic and violent. Raids by Indians and regular killings of Indians of all genders and ages, combatants and non-combatants, participants and bystanders, are the order of the day. From 1599 to 1784, eight massacres are recorded, with an estimated 600 deaths. The Spanish attacks were fierce, with the destruction of families, the deportation of men and the threat of extermination of entire tribes intended to serve as a deterrent.

Even in the 20th century, two major massacres took place, in 1924 in Napalpí in the Chaco and in 1947 in Rincón Bomba. The massacre in the Colonia Aborigen Napalpí by soldiers of the army, police officers and landowners on a group of about 500 Toba and Mocoví Indians was part of a larger wave of violence in the 1920s, which

was the last violent manifestation of the so-called Conquista del Chaco, the conquest of the remaining areas in northeastern Argentina that were still held by indigenous peoples at the time.

In the Rincón Bomba massacre in 1947, also in northern Argentina, Argentine security forces murdered between 750 and 1,000 members of the Pilagá indigenous group and tortured and raped many more. This happened during the first term of Perón, who did nothing to prevent such a massacre. The deep animosity towards the indigenous people is shared across party lines. These events are now classified as genocide.

Both massacres, as in all other cases, were devastating responses to peaceful protests, most of which were directed against the deterioration of working and living conditions.

The first case concerns the Napalpí reduction, established in 1911 and populated by the Pilagá, Abipón, Toba, Charrúa and Mocoví peoples. After the end of the “conquest of the desert,” the question arose as to what to do with the remaining indigenous people. In a parliamentary debate in 1885, Foreign Minister Francisco Ortiz explained the alternatives:

The problem to be solved is whether we drive these Indians away, whether we murder them, whether we keep them in a state of constant war, or whether we make the necessary sacrifices to tame them, domesticate them, gradually civilise them so that they become part of our civilisation by making them useful people instead of thieves, robbers, murderers [...], we must do something for this disinherited race, which we ourselves have driven from the territory it once inhabited.

It was not until 1911 that the decision was made to establish the reductions. These were essentially concentration camps with thousands of inmates who were given a small piece of land for self-sufficiency and otherwise had to work in the commercial enterprises in the surrounding area, mainly on sugar and cotton plantations.

In 1936, a report by Dr. Lorenzo Galíndez to the *Comisión Honoraria de Reducciones de Indios* (Honorary Commission for Indian Reductions) described the working conditions in the San Martín de Tabacal sugar factory:

We visited a private company (the San Martín de Tabacal sugar mill) where indigenous people work from sunrise to sunset without a break, poorly fed, almost naked, living in straw huts infested with lice, and where the most serious infectious diseases thrive. The indigenous people are directly subordinate to a human trafficker who hires them, treats them like animals, and dismisses them after the harvest, giving them a few old rags and a few coins. (Bayer et al., Historia)

When, in May 1924, the provincial government levied a 15% tax on the harvest and, at the same time, Toba and Mocoví shamans appeared to proclaim the end of oppression, the first isolated acts of violence broke out on both sides. The massacre was finally triggered by a strike by the indigenous people, who demanded payment in cash instead of food vouchers.

In response, the governor of the Chaco, Fernando Centeno, known for never having earned an honest peso in his life, sent about 130 police officers, who, together with white cattle ranchers and farmers, invaded the colony of Napalpí. There they set fire to the homes of the indigenous people and shot the survivors, men, women and children. The attack lasts less than an hour and began when a biplane flew over the area and dropped food and sweets. When the people came out of their hiding places to pick them up, they were hacked to pieces with machetes and shot from the air. They were celebrating a religious festival in the Aguará area within the colony's borders, which is considered sacred by the shamans and the Qom people. They died armed only with sticks. The wounded had their throats cut, some of them were hanged. In 45 minutes, 5,000 shots were fired. It was estimated that only 38 children and 15 adults survived. They fled to distant plantations and lived in silence, afraid of being recognised. The bodies of the leaders were displayed in a public square in the town of Quitilipi. Memories of the brutality of the civil war and Rosa's dictatorship were reawakened.

The cotton plantations serve the global market, and the indigenous people are its human tools. The massacre served as a lubricant to restore low-cost production.

The population were outraged, and even white workers supported the indigenous cause. The regional judiciary felt challenged, but the governor quickly appointed a new judge who, as expected, acquitted the 80 police officers accused of participating in the massacre. This is despite the fact that there is a trophy in the police station in the town of Quiti that confirms their participation: a vessel containing the ears and testicles of the chief and leader of the uprising, Pedro Maidana.

The entire nation followed the verdict of impunity: the majority in the national parliament saw no reason for prosecution. And even when, in 2004, the Toba people won a 116 million dollar lawsuit against the Argentine state as historical compensation for the massacre, in 2005, the government of Peronist Néstor Kirchner rejected the decision on the grounds that the Toba did not constitute an ethnic group and that the Napalpí massacre could not be considered a crime against humanity. Those affected were outraged and considered this rejection an expression of "malice, discrimination, racism and inhumanity."

In the second case, the 1947 massacre of Rincón Bomba, the state reacted to the presence of Pentecostal missionaries in the area. Numerous indigenous people gathered to hear them. The indigenous people normally lived in a fenced-in colony and worked in a sugar mill. But now the Pilagá were outside the colony, practising

their religion and culture in a free environment. They were ordered to return to the colony. When they refused, the order was given to shoot them.

In her film "*Octubre Pilagá. Relatos sobre el silencio*" (October Pilagá. Stories of Silence, 2010), documentary filmmaker Valeria Mapelman reconstructs the events based on witness statements.

As in many such cases, there are no documents, no certainty, only many stories. This has given rise to another version, which Mapelman does not accept. According to this version, thousands of Pilagás and members of other indigenous communities migrated to Tartagal (Salta) in 1947 to work in the San Martín sugar mill, but were then cheated out of their promised wages. When they ran out of food, clashes broke out, during which they were given food that had passed its expiry date, ultimately killing around fifty Pilagás. Hundreds of survivors were massacred by the gendarmerie.

In an interview with "Página | 12", the filmmaker explains that

the film I made is based on the memories of the elders. And there are no records of any of this. I couldn't find any documentation about it either. They told me that they were attending a religious gathering, that they were warned and told to leave the area. And on 10 October, at six o'clock in the evening, the machine guns were set up and they were shot. After this first shooting on 10 October, the massacre continued for ten days throughout the bushland of the province of Formosa to kill the witnesses. In addition, an aircraft was sent from Buenos Aires, which took off from the El Palomar military base, equipped with a machine gun instead of a door, and flew over the area. This is based on the memories of the old men and the documents that were found. [...]

Did the gendarmerie confuse a religious celebration with an uprising? [...] No, there is no possibility of confusion. In this case, they tried to criminalise in order to suppress. There could be no confusion between the one and the other. On the part of a state that has built a colonial regime to control the indigenous people of Argentina since 1880, there is no confusion. That is to say, since the time of Roca, when General Victorica was sent to conquer the "desert" of Chaco, there has been a plan to control the indigenous population in the north. [...]

Why do you think the Peronist government covered up the massacre? [...] I can imagine that any government would have to cover up something like that because it was really on a huge scale. The Napalpí massacre was also covered up under a radical government. The same thing happened during the desert campaign, which we have only just learned about. I believe that the Argentine state is responsible for a genocide that has been going on for a very long time. It doesn't matter which government is in power: it has always happened, and it has always been hushed up because it is a disgrace. [...]

Why did the gendarmerie classify the Pilagás as dangerous? Was it to frighten the rest of the population? [...] I wouldn't talk about the gendarmerie, but about the nation state. The nation state must have had a plan to control the indigenous

people. On the one hand, oppression, on the other, control and punishment. [...] But the idea behind the documentary was to collect the memories of the older survivors because they are dying. They are very old. When they die, it's over: there's no one they can tell, because they don't have books or the means to publish what happened. So we had to collect these memories somehow. [...]

Was there a before and after in the life of the Pilagá community after the massacre? [...] Yes, of course, but it wasn't the only massacre. They had already suffered many before, which I did not cover in the film. This is the most recent. [...]

Were you surprised by the memories that the members of this community have of the massacre? [...] No, actually it's quite interesting what happens with memory. I think people who don't write have a better memory because they train it better. And a lot of information is passed on. Grandparents who remember the events in La Bomba also remember what their parents told them about earlier massacres they suffered. Oral memory is a very interesting and rich exercise. [...]

Although the massacre decimated the Pilagá population, it did not prevent them from preserving their identity. [...]

Yes, there are things that cannot be destroyed despite oppression. Regardless of the violence with which certain phenomena – political, religious, cultural or other – are suppressed, there are things that cannot be killed. And that is exactly what happened at the community level.

Three children of survivors recount: “As they fled, they ran through tall thistles, and all their clothes were torn and they were injured,” because, they explained, “not even an animal can get through those thistles, but they were so frightened and desperate that they got through anyway.” They spent two days and two nights in the middle of the bush, according to Sabino. “They had almost no water, only muddy water, which they had to drink anyway, and then their little brother Antonio died of hunger.”

Sabino added that his mother's uncle later returned to the reduction to see if his brother was still alive and, hiding, “saw that the police were guarding the place so that the bodies could not be seen; there they dug the pits into which the indigenous people were thrown.” He later added that his mother's uncle had told her that he saw smoke and that it was later discovered that the bodies had been burned. The search for survivors continued in the forests for another month. When a doctor arrived at the colony a year later, he identified famine as the biggest problem.

One hundred years after the beginning of the “conquest of the desert,” dictator Jorge Rafael Videla ruled the country in 1979. The anniversary celebrations took place where Roca landed with his expeditionary force; it was attended by Interior Minister Albano Harguindeguy, Labour Minister Llamil Reston, Army Chief of Staff Suárez Mason, the governor of the host province, Domingo Trimarco, and the director of the National Gendarmerie, Antonio Domingo Bussi. All generals. Also present were the Minister of Economy, Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, and the Minister of Culture and

Education, Juan Llerena Amadeo, church authorities, indigenous chiefs and tribes representing their ancestors who collaborated with the expedition at the time, and almost one hundred horsemen who set out from Bahía Blanca at the beginning of May to re-enact the army's movement. Finally, more than a thousand children from schools in the region took part. They were portraying the invaders and their collaborators.

The dictator praises "a glorious and transcendent deed by all Argentinians" through which the nationality and sovereignty of a country that had until then been "dominated by loneliness and neglect" was achieved. Less is said about the defeated, and praise for the "noble race" is feigned, as is talk of "virtue and purity." But to leave no room for doubt, Harguindeguy explained that these were "foreign Indians."

Videla admires Roca; both talk of cleansing, are determined to go to extremes and, in doing so, supposedly rebuild the country and rid it of those who cannot be integrated. One murders in his open-air campaign of extermination, the other in the secret slaughterhouses of the big city. One murders foreign peoples, the other the children of his own middle class.

It was not until 1994 that indigenous rights were included in Article 75 of the Constitution:

Recognition of the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of the indigenous peoples of Argentina. Guarantee of respect for their identity and the right to bilingual and intercultural education. Recognition of the legal status of their communities and of their communal ownership and possession of the land they traditionally inhabit. Regulation of the provision of other land suitable and sufficient for human development. None of these lands may be sold, transferred or encumbered with charges or embargoes.

However, when the basic learning elements and programmes that every national primary and secondary school must teach were reformed in 2006, indigenous peoples barely appeared. In the context of the Spanish conquest, they are mentioned only in a footnote, and in the context of the 19th century, they are not mentioned at all; the only things of interest are nation building and the economic system. The survivors of these peoples are invisible, and Argentinians today still consider themselves a European country.

With increasing immigration, urban growth and industrial development, a working class and, gradually, a middle class emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, which organised itself politically. However, violence as a traditional form and means of communication between rulers and the ruled did not disappear, but now also led to massacres here. In the 19th century, there were five massacres: a prisoner revolt, an uprising in the Falkland Islands, a party political confrontation and a mass murder of children, with a total of 377 deaths. In the 20th century, there

were approximately 4,700 victims, not including the figures from the various military dictatorships; in the 21st century, there have been around 136 massacres with approximately 160 victims. The majority of these massacres were not committed by state institutions.

A notable exception is the massacres in Patagonia in 1920–1922, which were committed against farm workers and documented by Osvaldo Bayer in his publication *“Patagonia rebelde”*. We have already heard briefly about this in the context of the wealthy landowners in Patagonia. This is not about indigenous peoples, but about the Argentine working class. The workers demanded an improvement in their working and living conditions to a minimum humane level: No more than three men should be allowed to sleep in 16 square metres, every worker should receive a packet of candles per month, there should be no work on Saturdays, food rations should be improved, a minimum monthly wage of 100 pesos should be paid, and the trade union should be recognised as the sole representative of the workers’ interests. The demands were a response to the economic crisis, with world market prices for wool falling and the situation becoming serious.

Police repression led to the radicalisation of the workers, and the government sent in the 10th Cavalry Regiment, which, however, reached a peaceful agreement with the strikers and returned. But when the farm owners broke the agreement to improve the workers’ conditions, the spiral of violence began. The army returned, followed by armed clashes. The soldiers are said to have killed around 100 unarmed workers suspected of collaborating with the strikers. Santiago González, a stonemason, was forced to dig his own grave before being shot. Albino Argüelles, a trade union official, blacksmith and member of the Socialist Party, was arrested and shot. One of the farm owners, Daniel Ramírez, was arrested for supporting the armed strikers and shot. 900 exhausted strikers wanted to negotiate favourable terms of surrender with the army, but the commander refused. Elsewhere, 480 strikers were arrested, leading 4,000 horses and carrying numerous weapons. More than half of them were executed by a firing squad. Shortly afterwards, a one-hour battle ensued with 500 strikers. The survivors were shot.

Numerous acts during the “Conquest of the Desert” as well as the massacres in Napalpí in 1924 and Rincón Bomba in 1947 raise the question of whether the crime of genocide was committed. The Chaco Regional Court has repeatedly described the Napalpí massacre as genocide. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide specifies in Article II that genocide is one of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: Killing members of the group; Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

All these acts apply to the campaigns in Patagonia and the Chaco, where the aim was to wipe out ethnic groups, even if only part of them were destroyed, as in the case of Napalpí. This was also recognised by the Argentine court. The deportations and imprisonment in camps led to physical ruin and mental damage; unhygienic conditions exposed the deportees to a high risk of death from infectious diseases; the separation of men and women prevented the birth of offspring; the adoption of Christian names was intended to destroy ethnic identity, and children are taken away from their parents on a large scale, for example when families attend church services.

Crimes against humanity are already committed when they are planned, begun or not yet fully accomplished.

In the controversy over whether or not this constitutes genocide, the respected historian Félix Luna attempts to relativise the acts and justify them with an alleged “zeitgeist”. One must take into account the context of that time, “when a Darwinian atmosphere prevailed, characterised by the survival of the fittest and the superiority of the white race.” But Darwin himself denounced the murder of indigenous women to prevent their reproduction, and the sale of children.

The Helpless Museum. The Imaginary In 1893, a private regional museum was built in Punta Arenas for what remained: the “Museo Salesiano Maggiorino Borgatello.” There, in a diorama, sits an indigenous man armed with a bow and arrow, ready to shoot. It is not clear whether he is shooting an animal or defending himself against his killers. No indigenous people who have been shot or poisoned are on display, nor are the invaders. The museum is not built for reality, but for collectibles: an Inca mummy from Peru, removed from what was probably its sacred surroundings, Mapuche artefacts and stone figures from Easter Island, whose naturally smaller copies one would gladly buy in the museum shop. Or those of the Selk’nam, Aonikenk (an ethnic group of the Tehuelche), Kawesqar and Yámana: canoes, hunting weapons and everyday objects. Not a memorial, but a souvenir shop, sterile and floating. Even murderers, such as those of the Holocaust, collected remains – for a museum of the exterminated. Of course, this collection is not that grim. The colourful objects at the exit already inspire fresh thoughts of forgetting: What now? Fancy a coffee?

After the extermination of humans, a newspaper report in Germany now shocks us with the extermination of animals:

A landowner in Argentina crushed hundreds of penguins and their nests with a bulldozer – apparently to make way for an access road.

The bulldozer rolled over everything in its path. Nests, chicks and even adult penguins fell victim to it in a brutal manner. In the end, the swath of death was 700 metres long and three metres wide.

An initial report by two Magellanic penguin experts now provides an overview of

the extent of the devastation caused by an Argentinean who drove the bulldozer in Punta Tombo in the province of Chubut in southern Argentina: in total, the machine destroyed 146 nests and killed 292 chicks. It is not known how many adult animals were crushed in the “penguin massacre,” as the daily newspaper “Página | 12” called the incident. However, experts estimate that dozens of adult Magellanic penguins were killed. The birds had no chance because “they stay in their burrows, especially when they are incubating eggs,” according to the report. The field where the Argentine wreaked havoc with his bulldozer is said to border a nature reserve but is privately owned. (Augsburger Allgemeine, 2 December 2021)

The memories of soldiers, hacienda owners and those not directly involved in the genocide are diverse. Events, stories, traumas. While some cheerfully describe an unforgettable event, others remain silent because they cannot forget. The arts express feelings, they tell the stories of some and remain silent for others, and even more than that: they give them all a poetic or pictorial meaning. Governments exploit this to standardise memories, feelings and meanings.

After the first campaign, the poet Esteban Echeverría wrote “*La cautiva*” (The Captive) in 1837. It is 2,134 verses long, a work of Romanticism, written in a rhythm that is not always appropriate. Its success lies not in its literary quality, but in its depiction of human misery caused by the barbarism of the indigenous people.

“*La cautiva*” is set in a border area south of Buenos Aires at the beginning of the 19th century. The story centres on a Creole couple who are captured by a group of indigenous people who have successfully carried out a raid on a village. The members celebrate their success around a campfire and cut the throat of a mare to drink the blood flowing from her neck. After eating, they get drunk and become violent towards each other. During the night, Maria, one of the captives, manages to escape with her badly wounded husband. Meanwhile, a troop of soldiers surprises the sleeping Indians and kills them.

The mob, asleep, awakens in confusion / and cries out in terror: / ‘The Christian is near, the Christian traitor!’ / Children and women in turmoil raise their cries; / their souls tormented by grief; / some stunned by the terrible danger, / others fleeing, screaming in fear and confusion. [...] In such a fierce trance, the Christian rushes towards them, / holding in his hand the terrible lance that is merciless. The bravest Indians fight back, / attacking like wild animals; / his arm leads the cruel slaughter. [...]. / Terrible, terrible is the slaughter / by the Christians on that day; / neither women nor men, nor descendants / of this tribe remain alive.

What follows is a moving story of escape, in which Maria twice successfully defends her husband against a tiger and crosses a wide river with him, but ultimately cannot save him from death. When she later learns that her son has been murdered by the Indians, she dies on the spot.

The role of Maria is remarkable. She possesses courage and skill and defeats barbarism in the form of the Indians and tigers. The tragic end of Maria and her husband is not only in the romantic spirit of the time, but is also due to the desert campaign, which has not yet been completed. Both sides act barbarically, and the author naturally sides with the Argentinians.

In 1889, six years after the end of the “desert” conquest and the end of the extermination campaigns, the Uruguayan painter Juan Manuel Blanes created the most popular representation of the Conquista with his huge painting measuring 7 by 3 metres. It was commissioned by the government and is housed in the National History Museum in Buenos Aires. The successful annexation of Patagonia marked the beginning of a period of economic boom and institutional reform. The man responsible for and beneficiary of this progress was none other than José Roca, who was appointed president after his victory.

The monumental image of victory shows nearly 20 officers on horseback, relaxed and freshly dressed, as if they had come to a *parrillada*, a festive feast.

The peaceful atmosphere stems from the certainty of victory. Barbarism has been largely eradicated, albeit by barbaric means; agriculture is expanding. What is shown also implies what is not shown. Just as day refers to night, the living to the dead, the visible officers stand alongside the invisible, the absent, the murdered, the opponents and victims of the military.

The propaganda of the unified nation state no longer needs to rely on the dictatorship of Rosas, who enforced internal unity, but can now elevate to hero status those who brought victory to the outside world.

The image of Blanes’ painting on the 100 peso banknote helps to convey this. On one side of the banknote are the visible and invisible, on the other side Roca, the leader and victor of the civilised soldiers, looks at us. The central bank explains what we are supposed to see. “The main motif shows the portrait of the hero,” it explains. “It evokes Argentina’s progress, shining in the sun of the future. The country’s rapid expansion, combined with the effective action of the state, refers to the following verse of the national anthem: ‘A new and glorious nation is born on the globe.’”

The reverse side shows General Roca and his staff inspecting troops. “Handwritten sheets, a sabre and a laurel branch are reminders of the ruler and the man in arms. The outlines of a horse and a lance can be seen in the background.” It is the enemy, now only existing in outline. The population on both sides of the group of horsemen has disappeared from the banknote. On the left is a group of converted Indians with a priest and a freed prisoner, and on the right is a group of scientists. In the distant background, more people can be glimpsed.

To mark the centenary in 1979, the Videla dictatorship issued a postage stamp featuring Blanes’ horsemen. The image has been cropped so that only the horsemen are visible, while the sides and background of the banknote are blurred as if someone had tried to wipe them away with a rag.

Just three years later, in 1892, Ángel Della Valle painted “*La vuelta del malón*” (Return from the Raid). It is located in the Museum of National History in Buenos Aires.

It depicts several Indians galloping wildly with the spoils of their raid, proudly holding aloft a cross and a chalice, along with a priest’s clothing, a Bible, the heads of their victims, a bag and, of course, the horses. Above all, however, they have a white Christian woman in their power, who has been kidnapped by the indigenous people and is being carried away on one of the horses. A gloomy, cloud-covered sky, which makes up more than half of the painting, heightens the drama and the glow of the riders.

The indigenous people are tanned and appear to be well-trained, excellent riders. The scene does not show degenerate barbarians, but rather rivals, not least in a sexual sense. For the Christian woman is not suffering, but sits in front of an indigenous man on his horse, surrendered in his arms, her upper body nestled against his, her head leaning on his shoulder. It is the scene of a couple in love. Yet at the same time, the Christian woman, in her dazzling white figure, appears cold and hard as marble in comparison to the tanned and vigorous Indians. The kidnapped woman surrenders herself in her gesture, but as a symbol she resists. She has been kidnapped, abducted and conquered, yet at the same time she is untouchable as a marble figure. She stands as a symbol of the culture of the victors, of Christianity.

The imaginary gives meaning to what has happened in authoritative words and images. It explains the supposed reality of the desert and the supposed truth of the events. But the imaginary, reality and truth are based on a lie that simply conceals the fundamental truth. This means that everything that can be seen and heard also becomes a lie: not only the barbarism, but also the stolen woman is a lie, the stolen insignia of the Church are a lie, and so is the reversal of perpetrators and victims.

Roca, the protagonist of the genocide, was finally elevated to the highest pedestal in Buenos Aires on a rather rickety horse. Countless streets throughout the country were named after him. The monument stands near the town hall where independence from Spain was proclaimed. It was initiated by Roca’s son, who was also vice-president to President General Justo, the conservative politician who, as is well known, was elected thanks to the so-called “patriotic fraud”. This was a sophisticated system of electoral fraud justified on the grounds that the population was not yet ready for democracy.

Oswaldo Bayer campaigned for the “demonumentalisation of Roca”. He referred to Roca’s speech in the national parliament on ending the “conquest of the desert”: “The wave of barbarians that flooded the fertile plains for centuries has finally been destroyed. [...] This expedition has just crowned its most brilliant success and freed those vast territories from Indian rule forever, which are now full of dazzling promises for immigrants and foreign capital.” And Bayer adds: “There is no better definition of the official term ‘genocide’ than these words of the genocidal murderer himself (a sentence in which his incredible racism is evident, accusing the people

who had inhabited these areas for centuries of flooding the fertile plains. In truth, it was the descendants of the European *conquistadors* who once ‘discovered’ America).”

The independence fighter San Martín still spoke in 1810 of “our compatriots, the Indios,” and his comrade-in-arms Manuel Belgrano proclaimed the equality of the indigenous peoples on 30 December 1810 during his expedition to Paraguay. He declared, “I have come to restore to them their rights to freedom, property and security, which have been denied them for so many generations, serving only the greed of those in power. I have come to establish the following articles: 1) All the natives of Misiones are free; they shall enjoy their property and be able to dispose of it as they see fit. 2) From this day forward, I exempt them from tribute.” And in further articles, he allowed them to take over all civil, military and ecclesiastical offices. Thus, the indigenous people were promised human rights, including the abolition of slavery, all of which were taken away from them again by denying them their humanity. They were a “sterile race”, a “pack of hyenas” or simply “worms”.

Bayer’s campaign against the monument was unsuccessful. Once again, it was Macri who resisted calls for self-criticism and declares that “we must look forward in history,” to which Osvaldo Bayer responds: “Then, according to this criterion, Germany would still have to have all its Hitler monuments.”

7 The Military Order

The Image of the Military | The Coup Leader | A German Career | Politics of Justification | "The Tragic week" | Rebellious Patagonia | Racism | They Believe in Violence | Self-Doubt | Suicide | The Mission of the Military

After the end of the war against the indigenous peoples, a wave of immigrants flooded into Argentina, an export economy developed, mainly based on meat and grain, and, as already mentioned, a working class emerged. The country rose to become one of the most prosperous countries in the world. However, the differences between Buenos Aires and the province, as well as between rich and poor, were striking. Conflicts with the indigenous peoples were followed by conflicts with the working class. The growing middle class pushed for democratisation, and in 1916, Hipólito Yrigoyen, a member of the liberal, radical Civic Union, was elected president thanks to democratic electoral reform.

Until then, the absence of a bourgeois revolution that would have given the country dynamic structures was painfully apparent. Instead, the long-standing constellation of rivalries and struggles continued as a struggle between large landowners and merchants on the one side and the growing middle class, workers and intelligentsia on the other. This characterised the structural weakness of politics in the second half of the 19th century and especially in the 20th century.

Since political rivalries in Argentina cannot be resolved peacefully in a democratic forum, the only option is the violent seizure of power, a change of power by means of a coup. This is the hour of the military, which seizes power in order to intervene as a temporary moderator, primarily in favour of the large landowners and conservatives, and then withdraws to the position of observer.

The Image of the Military The struggles for independence from Spain and the armed conflicts between the caudillos of the provinces in the decades that followed created an image of the military based on the deeds of great men and the combination of military virtues with political power. The battlefield of the struggle for indepen-

dence was in the domestic colony, and military skills were learned from relatives in Spain. The opponents were therefore fellow citizens, equals in culture and language, with whom lively relations were maintained even after the war. The relationship with the indigenous peoples was different. They were strangers with whom there was no equivalence, no basis for peaceful coexistence. They lived within and outside the nation in their own cultural and legal world. Thus, after the “conquest of the desert” was completed, the military continued to feel that it was entrusted with domestic political tasks.

The 20th century brought a new economic constellation with political consequences. An early industrial society with modern global trade in which goods and ideas were exchanged. The middle class wanted to participate and demanded a democracy to match, while the working class fought for better working and living conditions and flirted with socialism and anarchism. In the view of the ruling conservative circles, an internationally active enemy threatened once again, with unacceptable strikes, militant attacks and foreign ideologies from Europe. The indigenous peoples were followed by the workers, and the military knew its task: to defend order, neutralise the internal enemy, and sometimes the ideological external enemy.

In the 20th century, army officers mainly came from middle-class families in the cities, not from the upper classes. The military served to integrate the masses of European immigrants who arrive in Buenos Aires at the turn of the century. Until 1980, military personnel also held high positions as civil servants. The military occupied the vacant position of a moral elite, stood for the ideal of the Catholic nation, founded a series of military high schools to influence education, and considered itself responsible for restoring order in the country should it become unstable.

With this image, military coups repeatedly gained the approval of the civilian population. After the war with Great Britain in 1982 over the Falkland Islands, the military’s reputation declined significantly and the last dictatorship to date was overthrown. An attempted coup in 1990 failed.

Six coups d’état were successful in the 20th century, in 1930, 1943, 1955, 1962, 1966 and 1976. The first four established provisional dictatorships, while the last two established dictatorships of unlimited duration with a bureaucratic-authoritarian model of government. In the 19th century, there had been four coups, but they failed. These were not military coups, but rather civil actions by liberals to overthrow the conservatives.

The six coups brought six illegal regimes to power, which ruled for a total of 25 years and produced 14 dictators with the title of “president.” During this period, all democratically elected governments, Radicals and Justicialists (Peronists), were overthrown by coups.

The Coup Leader Coups d'état must be learned. Since democratic elections were not possible until 1912, there were several coups before then. Coups were considered a legitimate means of changing power as long as the competition for democratic majorities was not conducted violently. Thus, the liberal Bartolomé Mitre, who was elected president in 1861, did not accept the election of his rival Avellaneda in 1874 due to alleged electoral fraud and launched a "revolution" that failed. It cost 5,000 people their lives. The subsequent coups also failed, allowing the liberal-conservative Partido Autonomista Nacional (National Autonomist Party) to rule until 1912.

After two years of severe economic crisis, in 1890 the newly founded liberal party "Unión Cívica" (Civic Union) attempted to offer an alternative to conservative, personalistic, elitist and corrupt politics and to overthrow President Celman, who was not only the successor to but also the brother-in-law of the notorious General Roca. It formed a revolutionary junta and a military lodge called the Lodge of the 33 Officers. Among the leaders was First Lieutenant José Félix Uriburu, who 40 years later, in 1930, would lead the first successful coup d'état and overthrow Hipólito Yrigoyen.

The plan was to gather the rebels in the artillery park and bomb the Casa Rosada, the seat of the president, and the Retiro barracks. At the same time, groups of militiamen were to capture the president, Vice President Carlos Pellegrini, the Minister of War and Senate President Julio A. Roca, block the railways and cap the telegraph lines. But in the middle of the attack, the commander of the uprising changed the plan and decided not to take the Casa Rosada, so the rebels stayed in the park. That is why this coup is also called the Park Revolution. Behind it was a secret deal with Roca to overthrow the government but not let the rebels win. And it worked. The president fled, and after prolonged fighting, the rebels surrendered on condition that they would not suffer reprisals. This was granted to them. Pellegrini took office as president and appointed Roca as his interior minister. The number of victims of this manoeuvre is unknown. The coup failed, but Pellegrini won.

Since the coup did not bring about political change, the party added "radical" to its name in 1891 (Unión Cívica Radical, UCR) and united various factions ranging from social democratic, liberal and federalist to nationalist: UCR Antipersonalista (against personalism, 1924–1946), UCR Junta Renovadora (Council of Renewal, 1945–1947), UCR del Pueblo (of the People, 1957–1972) and the UCR Intransigente (uncompromising, 1957–1972). This character of a flexible melting pot reappears 50 years later in Peronism.

In 1893, under the grandiose name of "Revolution," two military uprisings took place within two months, with which Hipólito Irigoyen and the UCR sought to overthrow the conservative government of the land oligarchy that had been in power since 1880. However, they failed due to a lack of broader support in the army and among the population. Irigoyen also took part in the coup attempt in 1905. In 1916, he was elected president thanks to the new electoral law, ending 40 years of conservative rule. Irigoyen was responsible for economic and social reforms, but also for

the massacres of workers in Buenos Aires and Patagonia. In 1928, he was re-elected with overwhelming support.

However, this went too far for the conservatives and the military, leading to a coup by José Felix Uriburu in 1930. Yrigoyen was interned on the island of Martín García. He died in 1933 and was buried in the "Pantheon of the Fallen of the Park Revolution" in the La Recoleta cemetery. The victims of the "tragic week" are also buried there, along with all liberal politicians and around 350,000 others.

The military leaders such as Uriburu had received a modern education abroad and, in the wake of the First World War they were engaged in socio-political reflection in the face of revolutionary movements and the dissolution of empires. Conservatism and liberalism lost their appeal and no longer seemed appropriate for the times. An alternative emerged in the form of Mussolini's rule, fascism, which found many supporters in Argentina due to strong migration from Italy.

Uriburu makes a career for himself, initially in the military. Since the south of Argentina and Chile were only taken over after independence from Spain and were initially sparsely populated, the border in the Andes remained unclear. This aroused lasting desires and created rivalries. To this end, the army would have to be rearmed and modernised. Due to the Spanish origins of many of their immigrants, the inhabitants of both countries had great respect for the French army, which had occupied the Iberian Peninsula with Napoleon and advanced as far as Moscow.

In addition, the local wars of the caudillos were over. Now, with the emergence of nation states, military tasks were growing. This required modern armies instead of regional mercenary armies, which mainly recruited gauchos. The 20th century became a century of the national army in Argentina. It continued to see itself as a political force that intervened when necessary and took over the government for a limited period of time.

A German Career The reputation of the French army suffered a severe blow when the German army defeated the French in 1870/71 and marched to Paris. This made a big impression. Buenos Aires therefore decided to modernise the Argentine army with the help of German experts. Berlin, given its ongoing rivalry with France, was not averse to this and sent a group of officers to Buenos Aires.

Among the advisors was Wilhelm Faupel, born in 1873. His professional career took place in the milieu of military and political extremism between 1900 and 1945. Although he died in 1945, his spirit lived on in the circle of Nazi refugees, including Eichmann, and even in the positive attitude of the German Embassy in Buenos Aires towards the 1976 dictatorship.

Faupel's career essentially spanned two areas, the military and the political-ideological. His military career began in 1900 with participation in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China. In 1904, he volunteered for the colonial army in German South West Africa, where he took part in the suppression of the Herero and

Nama uprisings. The historian Oliver Gliech points out how the colonies were used as a testing ground for isolating the population, setting up concentration camps and committing genocide. This was inspiring and instructive for those in power in Germany after 1933. The official report of 1906/07 by the “War History Department of the General Staff” describes the climax of the genocide, when the Hereros retreated and crossed a valley that proved to be their undoing. The report provides information about “the harrowing fate” in “gruesome detail.” First Lieutenant Count Schweinitz writes: “Especially in the dense bushes along the roadside, where the dying animals had probably sought shelter from the scorching rays of the sun, hundreds of carcasses lay close together and on top of each other. In many places, holes 15–20 metres deep had been dug in the vain search for water. [...] Everything suggests that the retreat was a death march.”

From 1911 to 1914, Faupel was a military adviser in Argentina. In 1918/19, after the First World War, he was awarded the Order of Merit and took command of the *Freikorps Görlitz*, with 2,500 men under his leadership, and brutally suppressed uprisings in Görlitz, Magdeburg, Dresden and Munich.

From 1921 to 1926, he returned to Argentina, this time as personal advisor to Army Inspector José Félix Uriburu, who would later stage a military coup in 1930. Faupel explained his mission in Argentina as follows: “My main task there was to weaken French influence and strengthen German ideology.”

Faupel strove for more influence. From 1934 to 1936 and from 1939 to 1945, he was the director of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin. The title “director” was not enough for him; it had to be “president” because that is what the office is called in Latin America. During Faupel’s time the institute promoted cooperation with political and cultural circles in Latin America, including the export of culture and political ideas. In this capacity, he worked intensively to spread Nazi propaganda in Latin America and cooperated with the SS in Germany.

This brought him to Spain in 1936 – from soft cultural policy to hard power politics. He resided in Salamanca, Franco’s seat during the Civil War, as chargé d’affaires of the German government, and was responsible for relations with Franco in this capacity. Franco’s agreement with Hitler provided for the deployment of 1,500 selected SS men to Spain to head the Spanish police force and 200 propaganda specialists who were to be granted Spanish citizenship for five years.

Faupel was considered arrogant and ignorant, behaved like a *gauleiter* and considered Franco’s clerical-fascist movement ideologically backward in comparison to the National Socialist movement in Germany and the fascist movement in Italy. Shortly after his appointment as German ambassador to Spain in 1937, Franco asked for him to be replaced.

In 1939, Faupel was appointed honorary lieutenant general, after which there are only sparse references to him. He is said to have worked in the Nazi espionage department in Spain and to have travelled by submarine from Cádiz to Buenos Aires

in 1943 to take Nazi assets and war criminals into custody. On that occasion, he is said to have urged Perón to stage a coup, which took place shortly afterwards. Then Faupel's trail goes cold, and he is believed to have committed suicide in the Battle of Berlin in 1945.

Those who paid close attention in Spain and Argentina got to know a rampantly violent representative of totalitarianism.

Politics of Justification Every action, especially an unlawful one, requires justification. Every "because" in a rational explanation conceals the actual intention behind the "in order to." In order to appear as the most skilful, powerful and therefore immortal leader of his country, spectacular actions are required, which in turn must be justified as legitimate – pre-empting the enemy, administering justice or completing a mission.

Uriburu presents a justification for his coup, but not details of his intentions. These must be reconstructed by historians, political scientists or biographers.

On 7 September 1930, *La Prensa* wrote:

The Provisional Junta addresses the people with a manifesto.

In response to the outcry of the people and with the patriotic support of the army and navy, we have taken over the government of the nation.

As defenders of order and educated in respect for the law and institutions, we have watched with dismay the decline of the country in recent years.

We have calmly hoped for a saving response, but in view of the frightening reality that is bringing the country to the brink of chaos and ruin, we have taken it upon ourselves to prevent its final collapse.

The inertia and corruption of the administration, the lack of justice, the anarchy in the universities, the improvisation and waste in economic and financial matters, the depressing favouritism as a bureaucratic system, political machinations as the government's primary task, the destructive and humiliating activities in the army and navy, the international and domestic discredit achieved through bragging in defiance of the law and through behaviour and statements that reveal an aggressive culture, the glorification of the subordinate, abuse, mistreatment, fraud, theft and crime are only a faint reflection of what the country has had to endure.

If we resort to violence to free the nation from this disastrous regime, we do so inspired by a high and noble ideal. The facts will show that we are guided by no other goal than the good of the nation...

The coup is primarily attributed with moral goals: criticism of the depravity of everyday political life and society, altruistic motives, a higher, disinterested perspective, virtue and the moral re-establishment of the conservative opposition. Morality, or rather the moral guise of justification, conceals what is intended.

But the reality is different. Martial law is declared and, after a summary trial, militant anarchists are executed, including Severino Di Giovanni, whose life Osvaldo Bayer has described in detail, Gregorio Galeano, José Gatti, Joaquín Penina, Paulino Scarfó and Jorge Tamayo Gavilán. Uriburu had several political leaders imprisoned, including former President Hipólito Yrigoyen, censored the newspapers, intervened in the universities and repealed the core provisions of the 1918 University Reform, namely autonomy and co-determination. However, the CGT, the General Confederation of Labour, newly founded after the coup, behaved accommodatingly towards the military regime.

Uriburu dreamed of a corporative state modelled on Mussolini's, with the key concepts of "order, property and hierarchy," and he promised elections soon. But when the UCR won in the provinces, the elections were annulled. This marked the beginning of "the infamous decade" of electoral fraud, bribery and corruption.

The writer Roberto Arlt had already polemicised against "His Majesty, Bribery" in 1929:

Bribery is the moth that eats away at the mechanism of our administration, the log that holds back the ship of state (and this time the myth of the log and the wooden stake in the ship of state is true), bribery is the lubricating oil with which every inspector and sub-inspector who roams here and there greases his joints and fattens his stomach; Bribery is the mother of many forms of well-being, the soul of numerous forms of prosperity, the guardian angel of those who sell sawdust for flour, chicory for coffee, burnt bread for chocolate, ground marble for sugar; bribery is the patron goddess of all the crooks who swarm in our country, of all the commissioners who go in thin and come out fat, of all the judges who cover their ears so as not to hear the cries of justice, what is bribery if not enormous, nourishing bribery? Wherever you look, it is there: invisible, secure, effective, unerring.

The justifications for the other coups are always similar: in 1955, the declaration of the "*liberation revolution*" stated that the aim was to restore the rule of law and "give the people of the Argentine nation back the unrestricted exercise of their freedoms and self-determination over their destiny." To this end, any "use of portrait photos or sculptures of Peronist officials or their relatives," "the Peronist coat of arms and flag, the name of the deposed president, the names of his relatives, the terms 'Peronism,' 'Peronist,' 'Justicialism,' 'third position', the abbreviation PP, the dates glorified by the overthrown regime, the pieces of music 'Marcha de los Muchachos Peronistas' and 'Evita Capitana' or parts thereof, and the speeches of the overthrown president or his wife or parts thereof."

The justification for Onganía's "Argentine Revolution" in 1966 was similar: "The resolution adopted unanimously and with discipline by the armed forces" aims to rebuild "a country weakened in spirit and body, heir to a glorious past and possessing

the potential to achieve its lofty goals." "We have all experienced this reality and felt the agony of chronic frustration, which was incomprehensible given the abundance of our moral and material resources."

Videla also declared in 1976: "In the face of speculation and widespread corruption, all of which led to an irretrievable loss of a sense of greatness and faith, the armed forces have assumed leadership of the state in fulfilment of an indispensable duty."

The Tragic Week In 1902, workers went on a general strike for the first time. In the years that followed, there were numerous strikes, including 775 involving more than 200,000 workers in Buenos Aires between 1907 and 1910. The number of strikes and strikers increased, from 95 strikes with 23,698 strikers in 1913 to 367 strikes with 308,967 strikers in 1919. Since 1880, a large number of trade unions have been founded, including those for bakers, train drivers and cigar makers, which became part of the Argentine Workers' Federation (*Federación Obrera Argentina*) in 1901. The newspapers of the two major political movements, the socialist *Vanguardia* (Vanguard) and the anarchist *La Protesta* (The Protest), were founded, and the first factories were established.

Roca, who was appointed president for his "services" as conqueror of Patagonia, passed a residency law in 1902 that allowed the expulsion and repatriation of undesirable persons to their country of origin if they endangered national security or disturbed public order, had been convicted of crimes, or were wanted by foreign courts. Departure was to take place within three days and those affected could be detained until they can board a departing ship.

In contrast, President Avellaneda passed a law in 1876 creating a far-reaching legal framework for immigration, including an immigration authority and the obligation to accommodate and feed all new arrivals for the first five days of their arrival, provide them with work and transport them to their final places of residence. Between 1870 and 1910, over two million people, mainly Spaniards and Italians, immigrated to Argentina. In 1914, around 33 per cent of the population was born outside the country. They brought with them world views and radical ideas that unsettled the representatives of the conservative order. Interior Minister Joaquín V. González declared that the social unrest in Argentina was "the result of a few dozen professional agitators" and that "it would suffice to eliminate them to restore the peace that society deserves." In the first weeks after the law is introduced, 500 people are deported. The first general strike of 1902 is also a response to this law. On 1 May 1903, the anarchist newspaper *La Protesta Humana* writes:

For the sole offence of having taken part in workers' revolts or freely expressing their ideas, these honest men were arrested as if they were criminals and deported to their countries of origin without even an hour to prepare for their unexpected

journey. The brutality of the police measures was so great that many of the deportees were not allowed to say goodbye to their wives, children and mothers. There are no words to describe such aberration.

And racism grows with immigration.

In 1910, after many years of propaganda against anarchists and non-whites, the “Law for the Defence of Society” was passed. In the parliamentary debate, the conservative and racist MP Lucas Ayarragaray stirred up the atmosphere: “The law [...] gives us the power to refuse entry to epileptics, lunatics, degenerates, all those who are suspected anarchists.” So that “this country has the fundamental right, Mr Member of Parliament, which all constitutions of the world recognise, to protect itself through laws for social preservation against imported external dangers, be it an epidemic, a known thief, a person convicted by a court, an anarchist, a prostitute or a *cafet* (pimp, WH). For anarchism, Mr President, ultimately consists of a gang of degenerates and fanatics,” and it is important “that a good, physiologically well-educated future race can emerge on purified ethnic foundations. It follows that we do not need yellow immigration, but European fathers and mothers, the white race, in order to surpass the hybrid and mestizo elements that form the basis of the population of this country (sic).”

In 1907, a new type of strike broke out among residents of tenement houses in Buenos Aires, Rosario, La Plata and Bahía Blanca, who refused to accept excessive rent increases. Their protest is also directed against the catastrophic living conditions in the tenements. In the capital, the striking workers’ families are driven out in the early hours of the harsh winter of 1907 by the fire brigade on the orders of police chief Colonel Falcón.

Between 1928 and 1933, Roberto Arlt published the column “Aguafuertes porteñas” (Etchings from the Capital, 1928–33) in “El Mundo”. No whitewashing, he explains, just ink and charcoal. “The Girl with the Tie” describes the ongoing social misery:

Every day, at five o’clock in the afternoon, I stumble across girls looking for sewing work.

Emaciated, tormented, suffering. The rice dust is not enough to cover their throats, where their tendons are visible; and they all walk with their bodies bent to one side: the custom of always carrying their bundles on the other arm [...]

They work until three days before they marry, and marriage changes nothing in the lives of the women in our poor neighbourhood. No, on the contrary, it increases the work, and a week after the wedding, you can see these little women bent over the machine. They have started sewing again, and a year later there is a child in the cradle, and this girl is already wrinkled and sceptical, now she has to work for the child, for her husband, for the house. [...] Every year a new child and more worries and the same poverty; the same deprivation, the same wages, the

same problems that existed in their parents' homes are repeated in their own, only bigger and more burdensome.

And now you see these women: tired, thin, ugly, nervous, shrill.

And all this has been caused by misery, by work; and suddenly you count the years of your life until old age, and with astonishment, almost mixed with horror, you ask yourself: "How many years of your life have you really lived?"

How many minutes of happiness have these women had in so many years of life? And you feel with horror that a voice inside you answers that these women were never happy. Never!

The peaceful gatherings on 1 May are brutally suppressed.

On 1 May 1904, the demonstration march is violently broken up by the police shortly after it begins, leaving 40 people dead. Interior Minister González laconically declares that these deaths are "shrouded in the impunity of silence." On 1 May 1905, four people are killed, more than 50 injured and hundreds are arrested. On 1 May 1909, two gatherings in public places were brutally dispersed. The toll: two dead and 80 injured. A general strike was called, in which 200,000 workers took part and 60,000 accompanied the funeral procession. The "semana roja" (red week) began.

A few months later, police chief Falcón is shot dead by Simón Radowitzky, an anarchist who has emigrated from Russia. A general strike is called, and 70,000 participants march to the prison where numerous demonstrators are being held. Nationalist youths attack workers' meeting places.

Osvaldo Bayer describes Radowitzky's assassination. The day before

a vehicle stopped unexpectedly on Avenida de Mayo. It was Colonel Ramon Falcón, the police chief, who had arrived in person to lead the repressive forces. The people recognised him and began to shout: "Down with Colonel Falcón! Death to the Cossacks! War on the bourgeoisie!" And defiantly, flags and banners were waved. Falcón, who was only a few metres away from the crowd of anarchists, looked on impassively, as if sizing up the crowd. It looked as if he was taking stock of the crowd's strength, like a general before battle. Falcón was considered an officer of the old school, a "priest of discipline."

There he stood, spindly and gaunt, like a falcon, facing the workers who, in his eyes, as in the eyes of most of the ruling class, were "foreigners, without origins, without traditions, without roots, anti-Argentines."

Nothing happened during the speech, but afterwards, when the crowd began to move westward down Rivadavia, the carnage began. After a brief conversation with Jolly Medrano, the commander of the security forces, Falcón gave the green light for the attack. First came the cavalry, riding over the people, then the shooting started.

Many decided to flee, but not all. Those who did not retreat did not even bother to take cover behind a tree, but bravely faced the repression. However, after half an hour of fierce and unequal fighting, the square was cleared. The pavements were

littered with caps, hats, sticks, scarves and thirty-six pools of blood. Three bodies and forty seriously injured people were immediately taken away. The dead were Miguel Bech, a 72-year-old Spanish street vendor who lived at 92 Pasco, Jose Silva, a 23-year-old Spanish shop worker who lived at 955 Santiago del Estero, and Juan Semino, a 19-year-old Argentine coachman. A few hours later, Luis Pantaleone and Manuel Fernandez (a thirty-six-year-old Spanish tram conductor) died. Virtually all of the wounded were Spanish, Italian and Russian.

The riots in the city were violent. But Falcón had no intention of resting on his laurels and immediately had six young anarchist leaders arrested and all anarchist premises closed. The police later reported that “the behaviour of the Russians, who made up part of the cosmopolitan mass of workers, is remarkable.” The police files also included manifestos “written in Hebrew and containing extremely violent propaganda.” According to the police, “they recommend murder and public looting.” And as if to underscore the credibility of these claims, there were official reports to match, such as this one: “It proved impossible to take a statement from the twenty-two-year-old wounded Russian Jacobo Besnicoff, as he does not speak Spanish.”

The following day

his open car drove slowly down Avenida Quintana. At the wheel was the Italian Ferrari, a driver who had worked in the same department since 1888. Next to Falcón sat 20-year-old Alberto Lartigau, the only son of a family with nine children, whose father had got him a job as Falcón's private secretary on the grounds that working with Falcón would “make a man of him”.

The car turned onto Avenida Callao and headed south. At that moment, two men – the driver Jose Fornes, who was at the wheel of the car behind Falcón's vehicle, and the War Ministry official Zoilo Aguero – spotted a foreign-looking young man running behind the police chief's car. He had something in his hand. When he reached the car, he ran diagonally towards it and threw a package inside. Half a second later, there was an explosion, and the boy looked around before running off towards Avenida Alvear.

In 1912, there were 200 strikes, and in 1913, there were 150. During the First World War, world trade declined, and between 1916 and 1919, the cost of living doubled. Yrigoyen's election in 1916 raised high hopes for labour-friendly policies.

But in 1919, during the *Semana Trágica* (Tragic Week), around 700 strikers were shot and 4,000 injured. Fearing a repetition of the Russian Revolution or the unrest in Germany, socialist and anarchist suspects were hunted down and murdered. They were called “maximalists” who wanted everything and would not compromise.

Those killed included: Juan Fiorini, Argentine, 18 years old, single, day labourer on Avenida Alcorta in front of house number 3189, killed by several blows to the skull; Torbio Barrios, Spanish, 42 years old, married, garbage collector, died in Avenida

Alcorta opposite number 3189 from multiple skull fractures; Santiago Gómez Metrolles, Argentine, 32 years old, single, garbage collector, killed in Avenida Alcorta 3521 by Lázaro Alberti with a shot to the right temple; Miguel Britos, married, day labourer, also died from gunshot wounds. According to the police report published in *La Nación*, none of them were killed in combat and none of them attacked the police.

The events took the worst possible turn, caused by companies, politicians and the police. The company hired strike breakers to weaken the workers' front. Instead of reducing the confrontation, this led to its escalation. The company then hired armed civilians as "parapoliice shock troops" to end the strike through direct violence. The strikers, for their part, were counting on economic collapse by cutting off supplies. Now the strikers were being supported by neighbours and shopkeepers. The company responded by distributing firearms to transporters and strike breakers. The climate of violence and deaths escalated. Police, firefighters and strike breakers were armed with machine guns. This was only the beginning of the "tragic week."

There were several rounds of negotiations on the workers' demands for shorter working hours and wage increases.

Negotiations were broken off, but police chief Elpidio Gonzalez received a 20 per cent wage increase for his police officers from President Yrigoyen on the same day, in view of their difficult tasks.

On Thursday, a funeral procession of thousands set off for the cemetery, led by the "Workers' Self-Defence", about a hundred workers armed with revolvers and carbines.

During the ceremony, members of the police and army appeared behind the cemetery wall and began firing on the crowd. According to newspaper reports, 12 people were killed and almost 200 wounded. The workers' press speaks of 100 dead and more than 400 wounded. Both versions agree that there are no casualties among the military and police forces. The crimes remain unpunished.

The reason for the failed negotiations and the attacks and murders is the fear widespread in conservative circles, the police and the military of a development similar to that in Russia or Germany, with a revolution and the establishment of Soviet rule. Since the strikers do not merely represent immediate workers' interests but also pursue more far-reaching socialist or anarchist goals, they are labelled as Russians, especially if they have Russian names and have apparently immigrated from Russia. However, this does not restrict the development of the strike; on the contrary, it receives support from workers in other cities such as Mar del Plata and Rosario. Meanwhile, in Buenos Aires, city traffic is paralysed by barricades. The so-called *White Terror* emerges, perpetrated by patriotic and paramilitary groups of "good children" who, together with the police and military, take to the streets to kill Jews, Bolsheviks and anarchists. During the night of 10 to 11 January, police and

groups of civilians break into houses and murder the inhabitants. Hundreds are killed.

Finally, on 11 January, Yrigoyen's radical government agreed with the FORA of the 9th Congress to release more than 2,000 prisoners, grant wage increases of between 20 and 40 per cent depending on category, introduce a 9-hour working day and reinstate all dismissed strikers. The government congratulates the officers and troops responsible for the repression and once again speaks of subversion.

In an interview with *The Times*, Yrigoyen's ambassador to Great Britain reassures foreign investors: "The recent labour disputes in the Argentine Republic were merely a reflection of a situation common to all countries. The vigorous application of the residence law and the deportation of more than two hundred ringleaders have been sufficient to halt the advance of the movement, which is now suppressed."

The report from the American ambassador to his country's State Department mentions 1,356 dead and 4,000 wounded. A high-ranking army commander informed the ambassador that 193 identified bodies were lying in the naval arsenal, including 14 Catalans and 179 "Russian Jews."

The writer Arturo Cencela is awarded the Buenos Aires City Literature Prize for his satirical stories *Tres relatos porteños* (Three Tales from Buenos Aires, 1922). He writes:

Julio Narciso Dilón, the protagonist of the following story, is not made of the stuff of heroes. He lacks the imagination and capacity for enthusiasm to be a hero. This deficiency prevents him from exaggerating danger to the extent necessary, and the absence of the latter condition prevents him from getting worked up about overcoming it.

He is astonished that he cannot take a carriage because of a strike, that he gets lost in the city despite its rectangular street layout, and that he is arrested by the police even though he only wanted to greet them. The following scene also shows that appearance and reality do not correspond, and the flaneur's critical gaze describes the actions of the police and the reactionary "Liga Patriótica" as violent and inappropriate.

In front of me stands a small, old, grey-haired man in a mourning coat, espadrilles and a shiny bag. He walks hurriedly, without attracting the attention of the crowd. Suddenly, a group parked in the middle of the street stops us imperiously. I stop, but the old man does not. A burly fellow wearing the familiar blue and white armband approaches him with a revolver in his hand.

"Get up! Hands up!"

The old man straightens up and raises his left hand in the air. This partial obedience irritates the young man, who repeats the command:

"Put your hands up!"

The old man continues to hold his left hand up, while his right hand disappears completely into the pocket of his embroidered jacket, which contains an unusual

lump. A shot rings out, and after swaying slightly, the old man collapses face down on the ground, his left hand still raised. [...] Quickly, the milk-bearded man who fired the shot rushes towards the fallen man to snatch the gun he undoubtedly holds in his right hand, pulling an empty sleeve out of his pocket, which lies stretched out on the tiled floor. The end sticks out over the kerb and bends towards the street like an empty water hose. But only for a moment, because seconds later a thin trickle of blood sprays onto the pavement. The old man was one-armed.

Cancela is one of those literary critics who have no need for myths, Argentineanism with gauchos and indigenous peoples, or national identity, and who reject centenary celebrations as a means of creating a hegemonic historiography. Cancela also rejects the emotional mood of such undertakings, if one understands the significance of the seriousness with which authority is sought. It is not enough to reject the arguments; seriousness must also be countered with the emotion of satire, parody and even nonsense. Criticism must always target not only the arguments, but also the styles and feelings that accompany them, i.e. understand all three in their interrelationship. Cancela, popular in his day, is forgotten today.

In his story "En la Semana Trágica" (In the Tragic Week, 1966), the writer David Viñas describes the scene of the clashes, the suburbs. "They are dusty, flat neighbourhoods, blackened by the shacks that stretch out to the south of the city, impregnated with the smell of the river." Places of inhumane working conditions, extreme poverty and violence, both within and outside the city, part of modernity and the struggle between state and worker violence, one side willing to go to extremes to maintain state order, the other only to fulfil specific demands within the state order. Violence is the central form of communication, taken for granted because it marks the boundary of existence. Crossing it comes at a price. The price is determined by the number of dead, injured and financial losses, and once it reaches the limit of what is tolerable for all parties, the violence ceases.

Rebellious Patagonia Violence also reigns once again in Patagonia, where large farms with numerous workers have sprung up to produce for the world market. In 1921, extensive strikes break out there. One of the largest farms calls on the government for help. They send soldiers by rail. Once again, it is the same president as during the "Semana Trágica", from whom social reforms had been hoped for.

During the subsequent repression, around 1,500 workers were murdered. Around 100, as we have already heard, were forced to dig their own graves and were then shot. However, 300 workers were spared in order to maintain production. Workers who had taken some of their superiors hostage surrendered; they too were shot. Some time later, an anarchist shot and killed the commander of the operation. Osvaldo Bayer broke the silence surrounding these events and wrote the

comprehensive book *Patagonia rebelde* (Rebellious Patagonia, 1972–74), which was also made into a film.

Not only the assassin has ties to Russia, but also Piñe Wald, who came from Poland when it was still under Russian rule. He is a member of the “Bund,” a party that advocates Jewish proletarian socialism in Poland. Wald fled the Polish-Russian pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century and emigrated to Argentina.

There he discovers that the police measures during the “Semana Trágica” are not only directed against the workers, but also clearly against Jews. Shops are attacked, meeting places are devastated and a valuable library, mainly containing Russian books, is looted, destroyed and burned. This is the Buenos Aires pogrom. Unknown, unmentioned – incredulous amazement.

Wald is arrested during the demonstrations in Buenos Aires and tortured, like many other Jews. He is accused of wanting to install a Soviet government. Ten years after the events, he publishes his experiences in the volume *Koshmar* (Nightmare), in Yiddish, because that is the language of his innermost feelings.

At night, two policemen look into Wald’s cell.

“Today we can laugh,” says one of them. “But a few days ago, none of us felt like laughing. Our lives were hanging by a thread.”

“Are you that afraid of the maximalists?”

The man addressed looked around and said in a low voice:

“Between us, to tell you the truth, I’ve never seen a maximalist. It was terrible chaos between the military, firefighters, police and civilian gangs. That’s how it was.” And he added: “No one knew where to start. That led to us attacking each other”

And as if the second man wanted to prove that he understood the matter better than the first, he added:

“Listen, I’ll tell you, I don’t think the maximalist idea is so bad. They want everyone to live in equal conditions. I think that’s a very good thing, but you can’t rush it, you have to be patient.”

“They scared us by saying that the maximalists would cut our throats, so what else could we do? Instead of waiting for them to shoot us, we were the first to shoot. You ask who? Maybe we knew something? They ordered us to kill, and we killed. And how many of our people were killed!”

“By the maximalists?”

“How should I know? The police were ordered to occupy the rooftops and open fire immediately if they heard any noise. They shot from the rooftops onto the streets and from the streets onto the rooftops. And who was shooting at whom? The police were shooting at the military, and the military was shooting at the police. Maybe someone knew what was going on? They just shot.”

As the labour movement grows stronger, reactionary circles are promoting civilian terrorist groups such as 'Orden Social' (Social Order) and "Guardia Blanca" (White Guard), which later became the "Liga Patriótica Argentina" and the "Comité Pro Argentinidad" and formed armed brigades that were approved by the police and the army and financially supported by the "Asociación Nacional del Trabajo", the employers' organisation. The Liga Patriótica carried out most of the attacks on workers' centres and meetings, Wald was brought into the organisation Orden Social.

"May I ask you a question? Am I sitting opposite the head of the Orden Social?"

"That's my job. But at this moment, you are not sitting opposite the head of the Orden Social, but a person who admires his kind and would like to know something about the fantasy of hell that Dante imagined in the Divine Comedy."

This is not hell, but the Divine Comedy. And if I had found the strength to overcome it, that strength would also have had a very human character: the fear of surviving fear itself. I felt like I was in hell, crossing its paths, its connections, its hidden corners. I had to convince myself of the extent to which people are capable of torturing other people: to observe human bestiality, this refined form of bestiality. To see how fear turns into madness and takes the form of people who exercise power: and I also wanted to use these examples to convince myself of how much physical and mental pain a human being can endure. I wanted to experience it first-hand, to see and feel the actual hell around me, above me and inside me, to get to the bottom of the hidden, the unknown and the terrifying, to get to what one fears so much.

For Wald, the horror in Buenos Aires is reminiscent of what he felt in Lodz during the 1905 revolution. The two blend together. "How they shot at the demonstrators, how some fell and others ran away in panic. The galloping of the cavalry, the wild cries of the attackers and the cries of pain of those who were attacked, wounded and bleeding, all mixed together in a single nightmare of terror."

Racism After the assassination of Ramón L. Falcón by the young anarchist activist Radovitzky, xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiments intensified. "But even wilder were the demonstrations of the 'good children'," notes Piñe Wald in *Koshmar*, "that the storm brought with it. With cries of 'Death to the Jews!', 'Death to foreign maximalists!', they celebrated orgies and proceeded in a sophisticated, sadistic manner, torturing passers-by. For example, a Jew who was already bleeding profusely from the mouth after the first blows. In this situation, they ordered him to sing the national anthem. He couldn't, and they murdered him on the spot."

Anti-Semitism has been widespread since the turn of the century. Against the backdrop of Catholicism and new nationalism, ethnic classification is considered essential in conservative circles in two ways. In 1890, Julián Martel's successful anti-Semitic novel *La bolsa* (The Stock Exchange) was published in *La Nación*. Govern-

ment agencies and social organisations launched campaigns to promote national sentiment in order to oppose “this race of people without God, country or law,” as stated in the brochure *Guía del buen sentido nacional* (Guide to Good National Sentiment). These projects were finally put into action with the founding of the Argentine Patriotic League. The aim was “above all to promote the feeling of being Argentine.”

Ayarragaray drafted it together with Carlos Meyer Pellegrini and Nicolás Calvo. Meyer Pellegrini came from Hamburg, was married to President Pellegrini’s sister and entered the service of the coup leader Uriburu. The conservatives supported him with a large demonstration.

The law essentially empowered the executive branch and even the police to expel any foreigner accused of anarchism from the country, but also made it a criminal offence for them to return, or to transport returnees, and prohibited events, the possession of explosives, etc. In the years that followed, hundreds of anarchists and trade unionists were deported.

A section of intellectual circles, particularly those surrounding the writer Jorge Luis Borges, remained vigilant in the years following the pogrom. Anti-Semitic rhetoric from the Catholic Church permeated Argentine society. For priests Gustavo Franceschi, director of the Catholic magazine *Criterio*, and Leonardo Castellani, pogroms were no longer an unimaginable solution. In his 1936 book *El Judío* (The Jew), Father Julio Meinville explains why pogroms might be necessary: Jews, whom he equates with the Antichrist, promote sin in God’s society, i.e. in Catholic society, which he equates with Argentina; he therefore calls for measures to protect the country and the faithful.

On a literary level, Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, alias Hugo Wast, propagated radical anti-Semitism. His two-part novel “Kahal” (The Jewish Community) and “Oro” (Gold, 1935) presents stereotypes from the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and depicts the Jews of Buenos Aires as a danger to Argentine society. His novels were read by millions. Zuviría became director of the National Library, where the magazine section is still named after him. His successor was José Luis Borges, who is known to have gone blind. Two other writers also went blind, Miguel Marmol and Paul Grousac.

When a bomb exploded in the Colón Theatre in 1910, injuring several visitors, the frightened political class dusted off a long-planned “law for the defence of society”. It represented a significant tightening of the 1902 residence law.

During the parliamentary debate on the law, Ayarragaray did not stop at anarchists and political opponents, but linked them to racist positions:

It is necessary to prohibit the insane and epileptics from entering the country, which means that this country has the fundamental right, recognised by all the constitutions of the world, honourable Members of Parliament, to protect itself by laws for the defence of society, whether against an epidemic, a notorious thief,

a person convicted by a court, an anarchist, a prostitute or a jailer. (it) authorises us to refuse entry to epileptics, lunatics, degenerates and all those suspected of being anarchists, because, if they fall under the influence of the sermons of godless people, they are individuals who, by their very mentality, are prepared for crime, assassination, arson and bombings.

He states: "We do not need yellow immigration, but European fathers and mothers of the white race to overcome the hybrid and mestizo elements that form the basis of the population of this country."

In 1925, Ayarragaray published "*La anarquía argentina y el caudillismo; estudio psicológico de los orígenes argentinos*" (Argentine Anarchy and Caudillismo: A Psychological Study of the Origins of Argentina), a comprehensive work in which he settles accounts with the defects of the Argentine mentality. To this end, he goes back to the colonial era and criticises arbitrary rule and corruption, as well as the inaction and laziness of the hidalgos, "bourgeois illiteracy," "gaucho democracy," the "simplistic nature of Argentine concepts of renewal," the "groups marauding on the battlefields and slitting throats," the "war damage," the power of the caudillos, etc.

The book culminates in attributing Argentina's inefficiency to *mestizos* and non-whites. "The mestizo, especially the mulatto, is a distorted creature," he writes, "without character, without consistent will, without inclinations toward higher ethics and intellectual activity."

This means that "the country that emerged from the conquest was an organism with two antagonistic types of blood circulating in its veins; no longer wanting to be indigenous did not mean becoming European. It was a coarse country, without intellectual and moral unity." Ultimately, the result of this was political failure: "Confusing ideas, political perversions, unrest and dictatorships were fostered by the overpopulation of unequal races."

When Uriburu staged a coup, general concern grew, and in 1932, following the announcement of a campaign against the communists, it became more concrete that this was also, or even primarily, an anti-Semitic campaign. The Hebrew weekly newspaper *Mundo Israelita* felt alarmed by the rhetorical violence emanating from the military and asked Argentine intellectuals to comment on this danger. Borges agreed and wrote on 27 August 1932:

Certain ungrateful Catholics – see the people who belong to the Church of Rome, which is a dissident Israelite sect [...] want to introduce a sinister doctrine into this place, which is known to be of German origin [...] The mere enumeration of this sinister litany is enough for the alarmed Argentine to recognise the seriousness of the situation. [...] We are talking about – let's leave out the obscene word – anti-Semitism. Those who recommend its use often blame the Jews, all Jews, for the crucifixion of Jesus. They forget that their own faith has declared that the cross

brought about our salvation. They forget that blaming the Jews is tantamount to blaming vertebrates or even mammals. They forget that when Jesus Christ wanted to be human, he chose to be Jewish, and that he did not choose to be French or even Porteño (a resident of Buenos Aires, WH), or to live in 1932 after Jesus Christ in order to subscribe to *L'Oiseau d'Or* for a year. They forget that Jesus was certainly not a Jewish convert. The Basilica of Luján would have been as incomprehensible a spectacle to him as a gas oven or an anti-Semite.

Fascist-influenced thinking had also reached the military, including Uriburu. He came from an aristocratic family, was the nephew of President José Evaristo Uriburu, and was educated at an Argentine military school, where he earned a reputation as an enthusiastic soldier and staunch defender of the rights and privileges of his class. In 1890, at the age of only 32 and a young officer, he co-founded a secret military society in Argentina dedicated to preserving the political importance of the military oligarchy in his country. In the same year, he was involved in the “Revolución del Parque” (Park Revolution), which led to the resignation of President Miguel Juárez Celman. In 1896, he was a member of the commission set up to settle the endless border dispute between Argentina and Chile. In 1907, he was appointed director of the War College on account of his leadership qualities. In the 1920s, he developed his ideas on the leadership of a state, influenced by the concept of a corporative state à la Mussolini.

In 1930, at the age of 62 and already a lieutenant general in the reserve, Uriburu led the uprising against President Hipólito Yrigoyen and provisionally took power.

He removed the leaders of the Radicals from national and local administrations, dissolved the courts, reformed the constitution and the electoral system, and denied former Radical leaders' participation in government and even in politics in general. But the revolution collapsed when Uriburu died unexpectedly.

Looking back on the history of the Argentine military, author Marta Merkin concludes that “Argentine society repeatedly knocks on the door of the barracks to urge the military to restore order. That is also the tragedy of our fate: we value neither democracy nor dissent.”

They Believe in Violence But it was no longer a question of restoring order, but of constructing a new order. Uriburu moved in circles friendly to fascism and met Leopoldo Lugones, the poet praised by everyone, including Borges. But Lugones did not just write poetry, he also wanted to play a role in politics. He was not given much room there, but he was allowed to write and deliver political speeches.

Lugones was first an anarchist, then a socialist, and now he sympathised with Mussolini's fascism. Many intellectuals, sons of wealthy families and members of the military had followed this path, attracted by the prospect of special privileges as members of the elite. Many people were unsure of where they belonged. They wa-

vered in their political and moral orientation. They sought alternatives to the status quo and considered the path to revolution, without knowing where it would lead them. They believed that harshness is helpful in any case. They believed in violence, but not so much in themselves. Those who fell off the path, who despaired, might resort to extreme measures and kill themselves.

Lugones seems to be someone who could provide guidance. In 1924, he gave his sensational "Speech of Ayacucho", 100 years after the victorious battle against Spain in Peru. And he called for the military to intervene in politics:

Gentlemen, let me ensure that this hour of emotion is not in vain. I would also like to venture something that is difficult to say in these times of libertarian paradox and failed, albeit bold, ideology. The hour of the sword has struck again, for the good of the world. Just as the sword has achieved the only thing we have achieved so far, namely independence, it will create the necessary order and establish the indispensable hierarchy, which democracy has so far been unable to do and which is therefore fatally drifting towards demagoguery or socialism as a natural consequence. But we know only too well what collectivism and peace have wrought, from the Peru of the Incas to the China of the Mandarins. Pacifism, collectivism and democracy are synonyms for the same void that fate offers the predestined chieftain, i.e. the man who, with or without law, rules according to the law of the strongest, because this, as an expression of power, merges with his will [...]

The army is the last aristocracy, i.e. the last possibility of a hierarchical organisation that remains in the midst of demagogic disintegration. Only military virtue realises the higher life that is beauty, hope and strength at this moment in history.

"The hour of the sword" is thus a call to violence, but one that must not be left to anarchic development; rather, it must be used in a controlled manner under military leadership. The fragile relationship between weak politics and unregulated violence is to be strengthened dictatorially. The change in Lugones' political orientation is exemplary, not only for his generation and intellectual circles, but also for the intellectual development of his country.

The shift from anarchism to socialism is not difficult to understand. What anarchism does not offer, representation in parliament and the Marxist strategy of class struggle and seizure of power, is offered by a militant but non-violent socialism. Moreover, it corresponds to the significant changes in Argentina brought about by sustained economic growth and an influx of workers who want to share in progress and are committed to social improvement.

However, the strategies seem too abstract and the appeals too rational to satisfy emotional needs. In the 1920s, a wide range of conservative-religious and revolutionary-elitist groups emerged, replacing rationalist class-conscious materialism with a new heroic, moralising and warlike spirit. Typical of the rapidly spreading nationalist groups were quasi-military leagues such as the Legión de Mayo, the Legión

Cívica, the Liga Republicana and the Acción Nacionalista Argentina. The new spirit was overshadowed by the myth of nationalism as a guiding principle, which offered the loss of self in the collective and devotion to a higher purpose in place of the individual and his critical enlightenment. Combined with the rejection of economic and cultural imperialism and utilitarian thinking, an anti-materialist version of Marxism and radical nationalist become the two foundations of fascism. It presents itself as an alternative to liberalism and Marxism.

All of this is attractive to Lugones. For it enables the practice of what he had previously sought and found in anarchism and socialism: the primacy of individual freedom and action as a heroic deed. "Life is intuition and potency, and it triumphs not through reason and truth, but through violence [...] War is natural to man because he is a combative animal." No mediocre democracy, especially not socialism, which is mediocre in its radicalism, can meet these conditions, but only "a society guided by knowledge and intelligence." Its forms of communication should correspond to Latin American customs in accordance with the concept of command, the order, not the concept of dialogue and consent.

Lugones also raves about the national myth and reinterprets the epic "Martin Fierro." The gaucho is the opposite of the decadent bourgeoisie and not a representative of anarchic conditions, but the hero of an orderly and disciplined society.

In a plan for Argentina, he envisages a "revolutionary Argentine democracy" in a syndicalist state with workers' self-management instead of bourgeois representative government, the dissolution of the police and military, and the replacement of formalised court proceedings by people's courts. Without a doubt, this programme leads directly to a police state. At the same time, he advocates economic progress to strengthen Argentina; the bourgeoisie should not be eliminated, but guided towards productivity.

His collection of essays, *La patria fuerte* (The Strong Fatherland), served as study material for an entire generation of Argentine civil servants, while *The Hour of the Sword* was widely criticised in Latin America for legitimising violence.

Leaving aside Lugones' dreams of a heroic elite ruling the country, his ideas about the state and the economy, as well as those of the various groups, point to a strong state with an ideology of nationalist integration, strong industrialisation, a protectionist domestic market and authoritarian welfare policies.

One of Uriburu's first measures is to set up an illegal repressive "special department" of the police, which systematically tortures opponents. The son of Lugones, Polo, becomes the leading police officer of the special department. He is one of the first to use the *picana*, an electric cattle prod, to increase the efficiency of torture. As with Rosas, the relationship with animals in the countryside shapes the relationship with people in the city. After his appointment, Polo Lugones set up an interrogation and torture room in the basement of the old prison on Calle Las Heras. Torture instruments, which had been publicly burned in 1913, were repurchased. One of those

tortured there, the radical Carlos Gimenez, describes Lugones' son in his book *El martirologio argentino* (The Argentine Martyrology), published in 1932: "He is an anthropoid of medium height, rather fat, with a white complexion, a somewhat high voice, a round face, a slanted and cloudy gaze; his greenish and misshapen eyes are the clearest reflection of his dark soul; his hair is not very black and combed with hair gel, his general appearance is that of a large foetus that sees, walks and talks at birth."

The coup was short-lived, not only because of Uriburu's early death. Various social interests also collided, allowing the liberal oligarchy to exploit the military's indecision to return to a democratic society.

The search for a contemporary form of government is intended to preserve the old oligarchic structures in property and politics. At the same time, it is intended to take account of modernisation with its industrialisation. In view of the lack of political liberal or republican institutions of freedom, this path leads to a distorted, fascist version of the common good and the welfare state. Immigrants experience only individualistic politics as concern for themselves, the rich for their rule and the poor for their survival.

Self-Doubt It is not surprising that, in addition to different perspectives on history, there are also different perspectives on the present in Argentina. However, these are not gradual differences, but fundamental ones, juxtapositions of progress and failure, illusion and disillusionment, hope and disappointment.

Independence, the adoption of a constitution, the "conquest of the desert," economic expansion, the centenary celebrations in 1910 and democratisation all raised hopes. However, economic crises, stagnation and decline led to deep disappointment. Why did the country not become what Sarmiento dreamed of? The assumed coincidence of linear progress and the expectation of a great, imminent positive destiny was illusory – unrealistic wishful thinking. Sarmiento described his impressions of failure as early as 1880.

Intellectuals such as Lucas Ayarragaray, Leopoldo Lugones, Benjamín Villafaña, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada and Julio Irazusta unite the contrasting moods within themselves, or even among themselves, whereby they establish relationships with the architects of illusion as intellectuals who addressed the issue of failure" (Kozel). This does not happen smoothly, but rather with great effort, laborious reckonings and long polemics. This also leads to radicalism and fierce, self-destructive negativism. These tensions never disappear completely. For Lugones, whose hopes are not simply temporary illusions but shape his worldview and actions, everything is destroyed by the limited impact of Uriburu's coup. Others waver between elation and despair.

Here, too, literature is a seismograph of social sentiments. But while Discépolos' grotesque theatre deals with the reality of life in the lower classes, survival and

the will to exist, middle-class literature indulges in failure, feelings and concepts of hope, illusion and defeat.

The philosopher Graciela Scheines discovers a wealth of “metaphors of failure” used in the novels and stories. She observes how the pendulum swings between excessive dreams and dark frustrations from the time of discovery to the present day. She offers insights into the work of Adolfo Bioy Casares, who, like other Argentine writers, deals with the fantastic and the uncertain. This is not about the supernatural suddenly intruding into everyday reality, but rather the opposite: the characters find themselves in an unexpected world that deviates from the familiar world. Two parallel worlds exist that are alien to each other, but secretly communicate. “I am obsessed with travelling,” Bioy Casares often says. “I always think that I will solve everything if I go away.”

The characters in Bioy Casares’ stories always embark on a journey that unwittingly leads them into the supernatural. Often it is a routine journey along a familiar route that suddenly becomes strange and plunges them into mystery. Sometimes it is a return to the place of a happy childhood. According to Scheines, these are transgressions of a boundary between two different orders: fiction-reality, dream-reality, past-present, future-present. “As soon as you cross the street, you are on the side of the shadows,” says one of Bioy’s stories. Almost always, during a journey in Bioy Casares’ stories, “a crack appears in the unshakeable reality.” It is necessary to leave, but it is also imperative to return. The ideal balance between a life of coming and going, between these two antagonistic and parallel worlds, is repeatedly disrupted. They are indicated by isolating elements: water, forests, deserts, inhospitable landscapes, walls, keys and padlocks. And salvation can be found in houses of refuge and order or fortresses, isolated and far away from the surrounding landscape. This can also be found in the works of Eduardo Mallea, Manuel Mujica Láinez, Ernesto Sábato, Marco Denevi, Beatriz Guido, Sara Gallardo, María Angélica Bosco, Julio Cortázar and Ezequiel Martínez Estrada. “This Argentine preference for houses or villas that protect or isolate, and the dream of owning one’s own home, which is so deeply rooted in the bourgeoisie of my country, is linked to the old themes of national identity and uprooting that tormented Argentine intellectuals in the 1940s.” (Scheines). However, these houses are not idealised worlds; they can also be prisons, granting or erasing identities. The inhabitants never take possession of such a house, which always remains autonomous and frightening.

Scheines discovers something similar in the generation of writers born around 1940 who wrote their great novels in the 1980s, such as Ricardo Piglia, Juan Carlos Martini, Rodolfo Rabanal, Manuel Puig and others.

The protagonists are often cultural figures, always passionate readers, writers of letters, intimate diaries, unpublished novels and secret notebooks. What sets them apart is failure. They drown in a sea of words, in a cruel inertia, stuck in a state of departure, in the preparation of something that will never be accomplished. They

avoid the centre, moving on the margins, in border zones, in no-man's-land, in the transition to another reality. And again and again, the image of the cripple appears.

"Our tragedy lies in living in the passage: we settle in the border zone, we pitch our tents in no place, halfway, in the middle of the road of melancholy, in the uncertainty of the shadows, in the indecision of horror." Or in the café between the office and home, a moment of conversation or heated polemic, idle, a "passionate immobility." (Scheines) The traitor is also a person of the passage: he lives between two loyalties, in the loneliness of perfidy. The traitor makes the passage his home station. Unlike immigrants, who settle in a new place, these are exiles who have had to leave their old home. What is an Argentinean? asks Umberto Eco, and answers: someone who spends his whole life wondering what an Argentinean is.

The hopes of enlightened thinkers such as Sarmiento that immigration would bring a civilising boost with prestige and prosperity have not been fulfilled. The immigrants' hopes of "making it in America" also evaporated in the face of poverty, a lack of belonging and uprootedness. They spoke different languages and formed new common languages such as the Spanish-Italian *Cocoleche* and *Lunfard*, the *argot* of the La Plata region. Roberto Arlt describes them in "The Seven Madmen":

One evening, Ergueta was in the Plaza de Flores, opposite the pastry shop. There was also the drunk Delavene, who had passed his bar exam a month earlier, and many other hooligans from the Club de Flores. They were harassing passers-by. Suddenly, Ergueta saw a Galician coming towards him, opened his fly, and when the other man reached him, he sprayed him with a stream of urine. The man remained calm and disappeared, grumbling. Then the pharmacist said to Delavene, who was boasting exaggeratedly:

- "Well, I bet you don't dare to piss on the first person who comes by."

- "You bet I will!"

Everyone laughed, because the Basque Delavene was a wild man. A man turned the corner, and Delavene began to urinate. The stranger jumped aside, but the Basque almost knocked him over and sprayed him.

Then something terrible happened.

Without saying a word, the offended man stood still, and the gang watched, whistling and grinning. Suddenly, the stranger pulled out a revolver, there was a bang, and Delavene clutched his stomach and sank to his knees. The Basque's death throes were long and painful.

Armando Discépolo brings this social and cultural mix to the stage of a popular theatre in a grotesque, comical and at the same time tragic way. It emerges in the transition from the optimism of the liberal heyday to the pessimism of the crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. Similar to Roberto Arlt, the characters are simple people, poor, loners, enthusiastic and deceived Argentinians. But Discépolo does not contrast hope with failure. Viñas portrays him as a social critic who makes his own state of mind

the subject of his profession and removes the mask of conformity and civilisation from the true face of the man of the street behind it. However, this does not happen in an educated middle-class or Brechtian didactic theatre, but in a drastically realistic, existentialist manner, heightened by the use of the grotesque. The “Creole grotesque” takes place in the homes of the poor, dubious bars and brothels.

Armando Discépolo and his much younger brother Enrique Santos (also known as Discepolin – little Discépolo) are the children of Italian immigrants from Naples. Armando became the author of many successful plays, his brother one of the most famous writers of tangos. Their father studied music and hoped for a career in Argentina, but he remained a penniless bandleader throughout his life. Enrique was five years old when his father died, and three years later his mother died and he was raised by a loveless aunt. He did not have a normal childhood or adolescence, was physically frail and shy. He experienced the world as hostile and remained a vulnerable person who was unable to offer much resistance to challenges.

In the song “Tormenta” (Storm), he expresses the despair of his generation.

When life is hell
and the honourable live in tears,
what is good...
when he fights in your name?
clean, pure... for what...
When today infamy shows the way
and love kills in your name,
God, what have you kissed...
To follow you means to give the advantage
And to love you means to succumb to evil.
I will not abandon you,
to prove myself once and for all.

Armando wrote about two plays a year between 1910 and 1934. Thematically, he turned away from the working class, which he had presented in 1921 in “Mustafá” as strikers, but who now work in lonely workshops. His first grotesque play, “Mateo”, was performed in 1923. The wholeness of the shared world has dissolved, and now only individual elements such as egoism, monomania and quirks prevail. It is always the same record that is played. In *Hombres de honor* (Men of Honour) in 1924, a participant in a funeral provokes, thunders and grotesquely, leading to the abolition of classes and individual destinies. Their lives are based on uncertainty, abandonment, contempt, exploitation and corruption. In “Babilonia” (1925), the workers find themselves in an underground corner, the grotesque dominates the action and turns it into hell, the myth of building America has turned into dependence.

In *El organito* (The Accordion, 1925), there is no memory of the workers. The past can be felt at most as dampness on the walls of simple dwellings. The grotesque mixes with the picaresque among beggars and thieves. In the crumbling city, the gloomy madhouse, the optimism of the period before 1919 has vanished. Pessimism and scepticism have merged, bordering on cynicism, all of which is now internalised, degenerating into awkwardness.

In *Patria nueva* (New Fatherland, 1926), the characters, the immigrants, are ugly and physically deformed, completely contrary to Sarmiento's hope for a development that would spur progress. It is the gringos who are ugly, not the gauchos.

In the most frequently performed play, *Stefano* (1928), all the characters are victims of an explicit idealisation of America that is itself grotesque: the core of the grotesque lies in the generational conflict between fathers and sons. This also makes the story grotesque, as it repeats itself like an old woman and progresses in a vacillating, meaningless manner. History is an autistic figure. For Discépolo, it is "the great figure of regressive grotesqueness, because the protagonists of the grotesque, increasingly naturalised, can only talk to animals or imitate them until they feel inferior to them or envy them. [...] From the fragmentation of the linguistic norm, we have moved on to Lunfardo as a secret language." (Viñas)

In *El relojero* (The Clockmaker, 1934), time is separated from history, internalised to the point of coagulation into clocks, also grotesque, a mere timetable as a consequence of deforming work. There is no dawn and no more plans; the promising future is already past, and no one talks about the future anymore. The internalisation seems to end in immobility.

Discépolo takes from Italian grotesque above all the tension between face and mask, the clash between the inner self and external reality, which emerges as a revelation of a social condition in the midst of a crisis of ethical and aesthetic values. The vicissitudes of fate and the social and political environment of the country undermine his dreams as an artist and as a human being.

According to Pirandello, the typical humorous feeling is a sensation of contrasts, with the comic and the tragic alternating or appearing in each other. To perceive these contrasts, needs constant reflection. The relationship to ugliness is already mentioned by Aristotle in the fifth book of his Poetics, which describes comedy as the realm of the inwardly and outwardly ugly. Humour therefore does not have to be positive. According to Pirandello, the humorist's attitude to life is based not on sympathy, but on a chronic conflict of emotions. It may be based on the negative experiences of Enrique Discépolo.

Thus, in the field of humour, the grotesque is a form of recognising contradictory feelings by taking them to extremes, or rather, into an oscillation between the moderate and the extreme that enables moments of insight. Together with theatre, which depicts the relationships between the actors and their environment on stage

and is the most political of the arts, the “Creole theatre of the grotesque” can reflect reality more accurately and more popularly than the works of contemporary writers.

Suicide Leopoldo Lugones, who advocates the violence of the sword, dies by it. He breaks the strict rules of marital fidelity he himself defends when he enters into a love affair with a much younger woman that lasts 12 years. His own son Polo intercepted the love letters and took them to the woman’s parents. He wanted to restore the moral purity of the family at any cost. If the lover’s family did not withdraw, he would have Leopoldo declared insane.

Horror reigns over four generations: fame and shame, abuse and silence, torture and suicide, resistance and murder.

During Alvear’s presidency, his son Polo works as the director of a reformatory for minors. He is accused of corruption and rape of minors. When he is about to be sentenced to ten years in prison, President Yrigoyen saves him. He grants the imploring request of his father, Leopoldo Lugones, and secures his acquittal for the sake of “family honour”. After the Uriburu coup, his withheld salary payments are also released.

When Polo’s marriage ends after he becomes violent towards his wife, their daughter Piri is abused by her mother’s second husband, a neurologist, from the age of 12. Piri not only suffers from this, but also from bone tuberculosis, which causes her to limp. However, she is able to skilfully conceal her disability. She is advised not to become pregnant, but gives birth to three children.

Pirí hates her father Polo and likes to imagine that she is the granddaughter of a poet and the daughter of a torturer. She becomes known as a leading figure in the culture of the 1960s and a member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), which joins forces with the Montoneros. There she belongs to the prominent circle of friends of the Montoneros, Paco Urendo, Juan Gelman, Lili Massaferro, Jorge Cedrón and Rodolfo Walsh. She is arrested, tortured and murdered in 1977. According to information from the human rights organisation “Nunca más” (Never Again), she sarcastically accused her torturers of not even being good at torturing, whereas her father had been the best at it.

All the speeches, threats and abuse were underpinned by violence, which culminated in a series of suicides: Leopoldo took cyanide in 1938. Polo died in 1971 on his second attempt. Piri’s son Alejandro hanged himself on the same island in Tigre near Buenos Aires as his grandfather. He was missing a hand because his mother had rubella during pregnancy. Almost exactly four decades after her grandfather’s suicide, Piri was thrown out of a plane by the military during a “death flight” over La Plata in 1978. Before her arrest, Piri sold her father’s anarchist archive to Osvaldo Bayer for little money and also gave him a library that belonged to her grandfather Leopoldo.

Tabita Peralta had a great-grandfather, a grandfather and a brother who took their own lives. A mother who joined the armed struggle and disappeared, was tortured and murdered. And behind her lie a whole host of morally reprehensible acts. She appeared in the film *Familia Lugones* by Paula Hernández. She lives in Paris and Barcelona and has published a book entitled *Withdrawal from the Family*.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the death of writer Horacio Quiroga's family shocked the public. A few months after his birth in 1878, his father died in a hunting accident. Horacio lived alone with his mother for twelve years until she remarried. Everything looked good, and his stepfather developed a loving relationship with Horacio.

But then his stepfather fell seriously ill and was almost completely paralysed after a stroke. He grew weary of life and decided to kill himself. He put a hunting rifle in front of him so that he could pull the trigger with his toe. At the moment the shot hit his stepfather, Horacio entered the room. He was sixteen years old.

He was 23 when his first book, *Los arrecifes de coral* (Coral Reefs), is published. At the same time, two of his siblings die of typhoid fever.

In the same year, a friend wants to fight a duel. Horacio offers to check the pistol for safety. When he accidentally points it at his friend and pulls the trigger, he shoots him through the mouth.

Two years later, he published his second volume, *El crimen del otro* (The Crime of the Other), whose texts revolve around death and madness.

He lived in the jungle of Misiones with his wife, who is 15 years younger than him, and their two children. His harsh parenting included leaving his children in the jungle overnight. The marriage fell into crisis and became increasingly broken. In 1915, after a violent argument, his wife poisoned herself with mercury chloride and dies in agony over the course of eight days.

Quiroga left the children with his wife's family. Years after his death, they commit suicide.

The stories in *Cuentos de amor, de locura, y de muerte* (Tales of Love, Madness and Death) deal with the indomitable nature. In *A la deriva* (Adrift), the snake Yararacusú bites the protagonist and causes his death. *El almohadón de plumas* (The Feather Pillow) describes mites and fleas as the main causes of allergies and diseases in today's world.

In "The Son", humanity is represented by a boy who goes up a mountain, gets lost and is found dead by his father.

In "The Mad Dog," Quiroga tells the story of a man who is bitten by a rabid dog but survives thanks to the care of his wife and mother, only to end up mad and violent towards both of them. It is a reference to the regression of humans to their wildest and most primitive state.

Although animals have reason, they are destroyed by the raw violence of humans. And the dehumanisation of humans occurs through the subjugation of their will to their most primitive instincts.

At the age of 49, Quiroga decided to breed and domesticate wild animals and published his most successful book of short stories, *Los desterrados* (The Exiles).

In "The Dead Man," a man is doing everyday field work and carelessly falls into his machete.

Man tries to wrest goods or resources from nature, but nature stubbornly refuses to let them go; an unequal struggle that always ends in defeat for man, accompanied by madness and death.

At the age of 50, he married another much younger woman and moved with her and a young daughter to the wilderness to live as a moonshiner, farmer and charcoal burner. After eight years, his wife and daughter left him. In 1935, the poet learnt that he had advanced cancer and took cyanide in a run-down hospital in Buenos Aires. He died at the age of 59. His daughter Eglé also committed suicide in 1938, as did his son Dario in 1952. His daughter from his second marriage, Maria Elena, took her own life at the age of 61. A family was wiped out by eight unnatural deaths.

A year later, in 1938, his great friend Leopoldo Lugones, with whom he had made his first excursion to Misiones as a photographer, also took his own life. Lugones took cyanide, but with whiskey.

His friend Alfonsina Storni wrote a poem about Quiroga:

To die like you, Horacio, in your right mind, / and just like in your stories, isn't so bad; / a bolt of lightning at the right moment and it's all over... / They'll talk about it there. / You can't live in the jungle with impunity, / not even facing the Paraná. / Well done for your steady hand, great Horacio... / They'll talk about it there. / "It doesn't hurt every hour – it's written – / the end kills us." / A few minutes less... who accuses you? / They'll say over there.

Alfonsina Storni passed away in the same year as Lugones. She walked into the sea at La Perla beach in the Argentine seaside resort of Mar del Plata. Her last words were:

Voy a dormir / Voy a dormir, nodriza mía, acuéstame. / Ponme una lámpara a la cabecera; / una constelación, la que te guste; / todas son buenas, bájala un poquito, /

I'm going to sleep / I'm going to sleep, my nurse, put me to bed; / put a lamp at the head of the bed / a constellation, whichever one you like; / they're all good, dim it a little

For years she had suffered from cancer and rejection as an unmarried mother.

In 1972, the poet Alejandra Pizarnik died of an overdose of sleeping pills at the age of 36. In her diary, she left the following in memory of Storni: "Every year, the sea performs an act of joy. The reason: the possession of its beloved Alfonsina Storni." (1956)

Pizarnik was rebellious, bisexual and came from a family that had escaped the Holocaust but lost everything else. The last entries in her diaries read:

9 October: I have been admitted to Pinovano (hospital) for four months.

Four months ago, I tried to take my own life with pills. A month ago, I tried with gas.

The words are more terrible than I thought. My need for tenderness is a long caravan.

As for writing, I know I write well, but that's all. It doesn't help me to be loved.

21 November, Sunday

Last Sunday, I tried to hang myself. Today, I can't stop thinking about drowning myself.

"There are many suicides in our literature. Alfonsina Storni, López Merino, Horacio Quiroga. The essential thing is the feeling of uselessness that people who devote themselves to literature have in this country," says Jorge Luis Borges. In 2024, Wikipedia lists 118 websites featuring Argentine artists and politicians who have committed suicide. Most are hardly known. Lugones, Quiroga, Storni and Pizarnik are the exceptions. Most of them suffered from a lack of recognition and self-doubt. Comparable to the self-doubt of young people.

Pere Rojo has investigated the suicides of writers.

Salvador Benesdra, a kind of John Kennedy Toole, who threw himself from the tenth floor of his house in Buenos Aires at the age of 43, probably influenced by the fact that he could only be published posthumously; Arturo Borja Pérez, who took an overdose of tricyclic antidepressants in his hometown of Quito at the age of just 20; Andrés Caicedo, who died in Cali at the age of 25 with his first book in his hands; Adolfo Couvé in Cartagena, Chile; Jorge Cuesta in Tlalpan, Mexico; Joaquín Edwards in Santiago de Chile; Javier Egea in Granada, Spain; Rodrigo Lira in Santiago de Chile; José Mallorquí from Barcelona, who committed suicide in Madrid, Spain; Carlos Obregón, a Colombian poet who also committed suicide in Madrid; Carlos de Rokha, in Santiago de Chile; Guillermo Rosales, another Cuban who died in Miami (next to Rainaldo Arenas WH); Armando Rubio, also in Santiago; José Asunción Silva in Bogotá, Colombia; and to finish the list of those I have found, Teresa Wilms, who might have gone down in history as the most revolutionary poet of the Generation of '27 if she had not been born in Viña del Mar and if she had not taken her own life in Paris in 1921.

In 2019, UNICEF Argentina reported that suicide among young people aged 10 to 19 had tripled as the second leading cause of death over 30 years. Cases in the rural provinces of Salta, Catamarca and Jujuy are ten times higher than in the rest of the country. The reasons cited include the absence of important figures or institutions to provide guidance, difficulties in meeting accepted social norms, untreated mental illness and sexual abuse. These are constellations of violence.

The Mission of the Military The political environment of the 1930s was later referred to as the “*década infame*” (the infamous decade), in which the military, the Church and the oligarchy formed a united front to control and dominate the poor and their anarchist tendencies.

Every military regime brings with it new instruments of power. Uriburu’s son’s *picana* and the use of torture, the Supreme Court recognises the coup leader as provisional president of the republic and thus fatally legitimises the so-called “de facto government”.

When Uriburu fails to gain the support he hoped for his socially corporatist project, he restores democracy, albeit under military control, corrupt and fraudulent, and excluding the liberal UCR.

In the same year, 1932, a group of prominent military officers and members of the UCR attempted to install a “revolutionary transitional junta” with the help of a mass uprising. It was supposed to call elections within a year. However, the acting government imposed a state of siege and arrested numerous people; the most important leaders were imprisoned or sent into exile.

In 1943, the military staged a coup. The reason was not so much the “*Década Infame*” or the tense relationship between the liberals and large landowners as the pressure from the United States to abandon its neutral stance during the Second World War and at the same time reduce Britain’s dominant position. This coup is therefore the only exclusively military coup that merely installed a transitional dictatorship. Although it put an end to the conservative and corrupt system of government, the political class received no recognition. Numerous groups became involved in a chaotic power struggle.

While the vast majority of the military was anti-communist and Catholic, socialists and revolutionary syndicalists now joined forces with a group of young army officers led by Colonel Juan Perón to form a successful trade unionist-nationalist movement that eventually gained the support of the working class and became known as Peronism. This movement led to a new polarisation, this time between workers and the middle and upper classes.

A proper transfer of power took place through democratic elections in 1946, from which Juan Domingo Perón emerged victorious.

However, as early as 1951, parts of the armed forces attempted to overthrow Perón, arguing that he had lost moral, spiritual and material trust. In the early

hours of the morning, the coup leaders stormed the Campo de Mayo military base, where units were already in turmoil. There were exchanges of fire in the tank regiment stationed there, leaving one person dead. Of the thirty tanks available, only two were operational due to sabotage. The coup leaders set off with these two Sherman tanks, three tank units and 200 mounted soldiers.

The expected support from the National Military Academy failed to materialise, as did that of the naval air squadron and the Punta Indio military base when they realised that they lacked ground troops. The coup failed and the coup leaders were sentenced to prison terms of between 6 and 15 years.

In 1955, the military staged another coup, this time led by Generals Eduardo Lonardi and Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, the two successive dictators of the “Revolución Libertadora” (Liberation Revolution). They formed a National Advisory Council in which most political parties were represented and divided into two sectors, a nationalist-Catholic sector and a liberal-conservative sector. The latter staged a palace coup and elected Aramburu as “president.” The Peronist Party was banned, its sympathisers persecuted and the trade unions controlled. Here, too, new methods were developed for the persecution and execution of opponents, in some cases publicly, in others secretly. Aramburu was publicly kidnapped and murdered in 1970 by the newly founded Montoneros as an act of initiation.

The Ministry of Economy was led by Adalberto Krieger Vasena, among others, in favour of the ruling circles.

In 1958, the liberation revolution ushered in a return to limited democracy. Peronism was excluded, so that the Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (UCRI) won the elections as planned and Arturo Frondizi, in agreement with Perón, became president. Frondizi secured a comprehensive amnesty for convicted politicians and trade unionists, as well as a reform supported by the Peronists to restore unified trade unions by industry and sector. Four years later, Frondizi was overthrown by the military.

The coup was carried out by the commanders-in-chief under pressure from some sections of the armed forces due to a deterioration in their relations with Frondizi. The air force protested against plans for an aircraft carrier because it believed this would result in a loss of power to the navy. The Peronists also soon broke with the government and wanted to demonstrate their strength by creating a climate of uncertainty. In 1959, they detonated numerous bombs in Buenos Aires and the surrounding area and also won elections in ten of fourteen provinces. Frondizi immediately intervened in the provinces, asked General Aramburu to mediate and accepted the plan for a coalition cabinet, which, however, was not supported by the other political parties.

Frondizi was taken to Martín García Island. As the military failed to decide on further steps, except for agreeing that Frondizi should be succeeded by a civilian, the deputies elected José María Guido as provisional president of the Senate, who

was immediately sworn in by the Supreme Court. Guido accepted the military's demands to annul the elections in the provinces, outlaw communism and Peronism, and reversed the introduction of proportional representation

Four years later, in 1966, there was another coup, and once again a liberal was ousted from the presidency, Arturo Illia, a member of the Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo, and once again the breach of the constitution and the dictatorship were glossed over in all their brutality and unimaginativeness, this time as the "Argentine Revolution." But now, instead of a provisional government, a permanent military dictatorship was established, as in Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and Paraguay. It was justified by the challenge posed by the Cuban Revolution and the emergence of guerrilla movements. Unlike previous coups, the "Argentine Revolution" of 1966 enacted a statute that had a higher legal status than the constitution, thereby suspending the separation of powers. In 1972, in anticipation of political liberalisation, a constitutional reform strengthened executive centralism (absolute majority in presidential elections, rapid approval of new laws, impeachment proceedings for judges, etc.). The military's worldview is traditionally Catholic, with additional fascist elements since the 1920s and, following the Russian Revolution and then again after the Cuban Revolution, increasingly anti-communist.

The social and political situation remained unstable. The high level of political and social conflict during the "Argentine Revolution" and the struggles between the various military sectors led to two internal coups, resulting in three military dictators coming to power in succession: Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–1970), Marcelo Levingston (1970–1971) and Alejandro Agustín Lanusse (1971–1973). They pursued different economic policies. Onganía, with Krieger Vasena, remained committed to the ruling economic circles, while Levingston, with the radical Aldo Ferrer, promoted a nationalist, development-oriented course that could be observed worldwide.

The military saw no other way to pacify society than through elections in 1973 with the participation of the Peronists without Perón, in which, of course, the Peronist candidate Héctor J. Cámpora received just under 50 per cent of the votes and resigned after his election to allow free elections. Perón emerged as the overwhelming winner with 62 per cent of the votes. He had fought for this for 18 years, and now he died less than a year after his election: once again, a democratically elected government was brought down. This time, civilian and military right-wing extremists surrounding the new president, María Estela Martínez de Perón, were able to undermine democracy and assassinate members of the opposition until, in 1976, the military was able to blow away the rotten tree of democracy like a gust of wind.

8 Perón, Perón, How Great You Are

The Career | The Third Way | The Peronist March |
Repression and Criticism | Unpopular Intellectuals |
Exodus | Power and Values | Anomie | Mentality | Violence
Football | Republican Customs

The Career A photo shows the open car of the coup leader Uriburu in 1930, with the 35-year-old Perón sitting in the back. He is a military man and is learning the tools of the coup d'état. The liberal General Justo also joined the nationalist Uriburu in the coup. Perón was disappointed by the Uriburu faction's inability to work conspiratorially and switched to Justo, but fell victim to Uriburu's purge and had to give up his new position as private secretary to the Minister of War. At least Perón was transferred to the War Academy as head of the Department of Military History. There he learned the rhetorical clarity and persuasiveness that he would later need in his speeches from the balcony of the presidential palace. When Uriburu died in 1932, Perón was back in the right place on the side of the new president, Justo. Learning the twists and turns and power games of palace intrigue would prove useful for his later career.

He spent several years as a military attaché in various countries, including Germany, and finally travelled to Italy to complete his mountain infantry training. There he witnessed the Duce's ability to mobilise the masses. He was enthusiastic about fascism as a third way beyond liberalism and communism, which had many supporters in the Argentine military.

He wrote to his sister-in-law from Italy: "Contrary to what many people think, I don't believe that we have anything to learn from Europe in terms of material order, but we must honestly admit that we have a lot to imitate in terms of spiritual order." He considered fascism to be "a great contemporary spiritual movement, a logical reaction to a century of 'communitarian' materialism. "The great material values are on the side of the Allies, but the great moral values are on the side of the Germans," he states. And he admires Mussolini as a "great man who knows what he wants and knows exactly how to achieve his goal."

Perón is ultimately convinced that fascism is the best form of government for balancing the interests of capital and labour. And like most Argentinians, he considers Argentina to be an immeasurably rich country that must overcome the mismanagement of its resources.

After his return in 1941, he founded the secret lodge "G.O.U." with other officers. They developed plans for cooperation with Nazi Germany and the achievement of supremacy in South America. G.O.U. initially stood for "Organization and Unification Group," then "Working Group for Unification," and only later "Group of United Officers." There was no hierarchy within the G.O.U., but rather a community of military personnel who were committed to the common cause with an ethos of dedication. The programmatic basis of the G.O.U. states that "the military in a state must analyse the plans of politicians that endanger the existence of the state and the army. This is the modern duty of the military; it would have prevented communism in Russia and the civil war in Spain." This requires an army with a high level of readiness, imbued with a single doctrine and determined to act with the utmost unity, determined to enforce order as soon as a disturbance arises.

In the meantime, Mussolini had been overthrown, and Perón had discovered the compatibility of mass mobilisation and democracy that does not smack of fascism and totalitarianism.

The British ambassador at the time, David Kelly, confirmed this: "From my very first conversation with Perón, I came to the conclusion that he was a brilliant improviser with a keen political instinct and great personal charm, but with no interest in Nazism or any other ideology."

Perón effortlessly combined such disparate issues as global and social policy. In a private meeting in 1944, he explained:

Argentina's problem today is to solve the social question. In the face of communism, only one of the following attitudes can be adopted. First, to destroy every communist organisation by force. Second, to make promises to the workers that will be kept and not broken as they have been in the past. Thirdly [...] to meet the workers' demands fairly. That is the path I have chosen: I have always believed it better to eliminate the causes than to destroy their effects.

This meant eliminating abuses, increasing union membership and raising the standard of living. It also meant working preventively and not waiting until serious conflicts arose. In the newly created Secretariat of Labour, Perón developed regulations for the modern world of work that were previously known almost exclusively in Europe – almost, because Chile and Uruguay already had social welfare laws. Perón established labour courts, enacted a statute for agricultural workers, set a minimum wage and improved the food, housing and working conditions of agricultural workers. He introduced compulsory social insurance, Christmas bonuses and paid an-

nual leave for all workers, compensation for accidents at work and, finally, the eight-hour working day. Trade union membership doubled, health care was significantly improved and illiteracy declined rapidly.

In an interview with *El Mercurio de Chile*, he made an extremely positive impression. “Colonel Perón welcomes us in a simple and familiar manner. He is a young, tall, handsome man, extremely friendly and cordial. Far from being serious, he gives the impression of a 45-year-old with the spirit of a laughing child who is constantly joking, but is careful in his choice of words.” He conveys political skill, passion and a kind of social democratic agenda and closeness to the people, explaining:

Our movement is essentially an intellectual one. All officers who hold civilian posts receive only a military salary and have waived all other benefits. Personally, I am a trade unionist par excellence and, as such, an anti-communist; but I believe that work must be organised by trade unions so that it is the workers, and not the agitating leaders, who really benefit most from their work. For this reason, I attach great importance to the National Ministry of Labour, which I have taken over. [...]. In the few days since I started work, I have been able to end labour disputes that have been going on for years. [...]. I am truly committed to ensuring that the country's wealth remains in Argentina so that every Argentinean can benefit more and better from their work.

Labour disputes should be non-violent and peaceful, leading to satisfactory results through negotiation. These are largely unknown words in Argentine history. The interviewer says “I pointed out to him in the interview that, according to the information available to me, the situation of the workers was not as calm and secure as he claimed. He replied immediately and emphatically:

That is all wrong. The situation of the workers in the country is completely under control, not through the use of force, but through arbitration between the parties. Go to the Ministry of Labour tomorrow, and if you wish, I will invite you to a meeting with the leaders of the Argentine workers; but, to be clear, with the real workers and not with the social agitators. Another participant in the interview “sometimes smiles at the outbursts and frankness of Colonel Perón, who says what he means in a very definite, very confident manner, with deep conviction and with the certainty that comes from a clear mind and high ideals.”

However, Perón's goal of forming a grand coalition of social forces failed due to resistance from conservatives and large landowners. This led to Perón's radicalisation. From his perspective, the age of the masses and the end of bourgeois society now seemed to require new forms of politics. With the emergence of Peronism, as it had

been called since the 1943 coup, the influence of Marxism declined, but tensions in society between Perón and the conservatives and within his own ranks increased.

The Third Way The age of worldviews responded to unforeseeable economic and social upheavals with correspondingly radical upheavals in existing ideologies. The liberation of people from their dependencies created freedom for the individual, the entrepreneur and the worker, but also created wealth and poverty, exploitation and isolation, migration and stability through political parties and the nation state. The question of where one belongs gives rise to existential philosophy, which offers the alternative of a way of life as a space-filling individual or a vanishingly small element of a collective.

The third way offered itself as an alternative to the individual and the collective, idealism and Marxism, the USA and the Soviet Union. The community should offer people bonds and solidarity. Perón saw his hour had come. As a minister (1943–46) with groundbreaking social legislation, he quickly became popular. He made contact with the trade unions and mobilised them. In 1943, he came to power in a coup and won the elections in 1946. He founded the Peronist University of the People and gave lectures. He knew that, like a cadre party, he had to build a doctrinaire, principled and quick-witted party. This was achieved with the help of the university. For the election campaign, he founded the Labour Party, which was then renamed the Peronist Party and finally the Justicialist Party, a party of justice. Above all, Perón knew that the working class and the rural poor had no political representation.

After years of strikes and electoral fraud from 1930 to 1943, it was easy to give the lower classes political and parliamentary representation for the first time in Argentina's history, representation that was not excluded by fraud and violence but was based on the social improvements that had already been made. Perón now appeared on the balcony of the Casa Rosada, the presidential palace. All his activities together offered more than the programme and activities of a normal party. Everything was subject to the world view of Peronism. Through his work at the Peronist university, Perón gathered material for the formulation of a world view, which was disseminated in various writings and encompassed the essential aspects of doctrine, community and leadership: "Doctrina peronista" (Peronist Doctrine, 1948), "La comunidad organizada" (The Organised Community, 1949) and "La conducción política" (Political Leadership, 1951).

Perón appeared at the first "Congreso Nacional de Filosofía" (National Philosophy Congress) in Mendoza in 1949, giving the closing lecture on "Comunidad organizada" (The Organised Community). Among the 216 speakers were Ernesto Grassi, Nicolai Hartmann, Karl Löwith, Gabriel Marcel, Luigi Pareyson, José Vasconcelos, Eugen Fink, Ludwig Klages, Benedetto Croce, Karl Jaspers, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Ludwig Landgrebe and Bertrand Russell. Karl Jaspers was unable to attend for health reasons and had concerns about whether his text would be presented accurately.

Luigi Pareyson from Italy promised to make sure it was, Jaspers reported to Arendt on 1 March 1949. She replied on 18 April 1949: "People there are disproportionately more interested in philosophy than here, and as long as you print what and how you write there, in a dictatorship, but not in a totalitarian one, I think concerns are superfluous. "Perón's writings convey a harmonious image of a community based on social justice and offering protection. The organised community is on the third path, i.e. not in one place, but in motion, in a reformist society focused on the future. The third path is not so much of political-philosophical interest as of organisational interest. "Our government's actions do not represent a political party, but a large national movement with its own doctrine that is new on the world political stage."

It responded to the crisis of humanity in a changing world. The "radical upheavals of modern life" must "create the appropriate orientations to compensate for the violent transition to the collective spirit that has shaken humanity."

This involved overcoming "the resentment and hatred that rage in the world to-day, which are unleashed between peoples and between brothers and sisters, are the logical result not of a cosmic path with a fatal nature, but of a long sermon against love."

It is an undertaking similar to the transition from medieval thinking to the Renaissance, in which "material progress must be reconciled with spiritual progress in view of human expectations. [...] When the Thomist school says that the goal of the state is to educate people to live a virtuous life, one senses the enormous significance of this bridge built over the shadows of the Middle Ages."

But this contradicts modern state theory. "Something is wrong in nature," writes Perón, "if it is possible to imagine, as Hobbes does in *Leviathan*, the '*homo hominis lupus*', the state of all against all." Therefore, people need an ethical basis for their actions, but they must acquire it themselves. Hence, there are "peoples with or without a sense of ethics; civilised or savage politics; the projection of orderly progress or delirious mass uprisings. The difference between achieving social victory and drowning in disorder corresponds to the dose of ethics one possesses."

For Perón, justice is the basis of all social action. All other concepts derive from this, such as freedom, ethics, morality and politics. Where democracy can be strengthened in the universal understanding of general freedom and the common good, the individual can fulfil himself, find his spiritual euphoria and the full justification of his existence. Perón remarks, "that of all the good I have done for Argentine society, one thing is undeniable: I have developed a social conscience in the Argentine people."

This required the insight of Thomas Aquinas: "Freedom of will is a prerequisite for all morality." Perón concludes, "only free actions that arise from rational consideration are moral. [...] For the same reason, it is impossible to imagine a free life without ethical principles, just as moral actions cannot be taken for granted in a regime of thoughtlessness or unconsciousness."

Egoism is incapable of such a moral foundation. "It is primarily a denial of values, it is the absence of other values; it is like coldness, which means nothing other than the absence of any warmth. Fighting egoism does not mean taking up an armed stance against vice, but rather a positive attitude aimed at strengthening the opposite virtues." Not resistance or violence, which offer no alternative to the logic of egoism, nor altruism, which always points to its opposite and keeps it alive, but rather the position between the I and the you that mentions both: the we. This requires "the preparatory or theoretical stage of realising the 'I' in the 'we'.

This does not involve forcing the concept of 'we', but rather recognising that the transition from the 'I' to the 'we' does not occur suddenly, as an annihilation of individualities, but rather as a revival of these in their collective function. Violence has no place in this process. "The persistence of violent motives offers the spectacle of a progression towards disintegration through attrition or towards the acceptance of sterile formulas."

The 'we' in participation and cooperation changes the sensory experience. "There is work without joy, pleasure without laughter, virtue without grace, youth without gentleness, love without mystery, art without splendour. [...] Why? This terrible question perhaps still hangs over life today. But it can affect our future if we fail to correctly classify and defend the categories and values of the subject of all life, our concerns and interests, namely human beings." It is the "we".

In Perón's judgement, materialism "leads to Marxism, and idealism, which no longer emphasises man and, in the followers and interpreters of Hegel, leads to the deification of the ideal state, inevitably leads to the insectification of the individual."

In 1950, Perón proclaimed the twenty "fundamental truths" of Peronism, including:

1. True democracy is that in which the government does what the people want and defends only one interest, that of the people.
2. Peronism is popular in nature. Any political circle that is hostile to the people is therefore not Peronist. [...]
6. For a Peronist, there can be nothing better than another Peronist. [...]
9. Politics is not an end in itself for us, but only a means to the good of the fatherland, which consists in the happiness of its children and national greatness. [...]
15. As a political doctrine, Justicialism achieves a balance between the rights of the individual and those of the community. [...].
19. Let us create a centralised government, an organised state and a free people.

The doctrine and view of humanity include the special role of the leader, further elevated by Evita, the unsuccessful actress who presents herself as the representative of the Descamisados, the poor and oppressed, and adds to Perón's already emotional discourse an intensification of anger and indignation. In her book *La Razón de mi*

Vida (The Reason for My Life, 1951), which is required reading in all schools, the outrage and the path to justice and thus to Peronism are masterfully described in short chapters with carefully chosen words:

The issue of the rich and the poor was the theme of my loneliness. I don't think I ever talked about it with anyone else, not even my mother, but I often thought about it.

But I had to go one step further on my path of discovery.

I knew that there were poor people and that there were rich people; and I knew that the poor were more numerous than the rich and that they were everywhere. I was still missing the third dimension of injustice.

Until I was eleven, I believed that there were poor people like grass and rich people like trees.

One day, I heard a worker say for the first time that there are poor people because the rich are too rich; and this revelation made a very strong impression on me."

And of course Evita includes propaganda for Juan Perón:

I know that people are divided into two groups; one, large and innumerable, is that of those who strive for vulgar and ordinary things; and who do not move except along well-trodden paths already trodden by others. They are content with success. The other group, small, very small, is that of people who attach extraordinary value to everything that needs to be done. They are satisfied with nothing less than fame. They strive for the air of the next century to sing its praises and live almost in eternity. [...] The man I met belonged to this class of people.

He was a man of action, which became clear to everyone during the coup and social legislation. "I also learned from him to make everything happen. He is always constructive, both in his conversations and in his behaviour. He always says to me: 'And those who speak so fervently about their teachings never forget to add: Great teachings are worthless if they do not have someone to put them into practice.'"

Perón conceals biographical details. His age is falsified by several years in his youth so that he can begin military training. His place of birth is also not entirely accurate; he also conceals the fact that he was once married and, finally, that his mother was a member of the Tehuelche people.

Despite all the harmony and non-violence, there is also violence in the staging of the doctrine itself. For example, when Evita speaks of the sinister forces that want to destroy her project: "At the same time, he fought against the evocative forces of anti-patriotism and the foreign powers that were determined to continue exploiting the good faith and generosity of our people."

The moralisation of a community can also turn into conformity and oppression, and mass gatherings can turn into revolts or, conversely, into resignation. Perón

therefore advocates the training of middle and upper-level leaders of the Peronist movement in order to counteract possible disorientation.

To stabilise and strengthen Peronism, Perón advocates a fusion of state, party and movement through a kind of unity party and a movement that unites society, trade unions and government into a unified state in the form of an organised community. The principle of plurality is significantly restricted in this context. Freedom of expression, elections, movement and strikes are subject to the organised community and a conformist, anti-liberal communitarianism. If resistance grows against this organised restriction of plurality, the organised community defends itself by restricting democratic, constitutional rights.

Perón still sees this fusion only in its early stages.

We have created an organisation that makes it possible to pursue politics in agreement with the government, because we cannot separate the two completely, as the government is part of politics and politics is part of the government, but each in its own sphere.

Each under its own leadership and both in agreement.

This is, of course, easier said than done. But with practice and respect for these broad guidelines, we will come to carry them out mechanically, without anyone imagining that they can do what they should not.

If everyone participates, in a few years—say twenty—we will have educated the masses, the leaders and the rulers.

The masses are subjects and objects of the actions of the state and government. They need goals and education.

To this end, Perón compiled his book “Political Leadership,” a tome with unsorted short entries, similar to Machiavelli’s “Discorsi.” But while Machiavelli compares his own political experiences with those of Titus Livius in his ten-volume history of Rome, Perón reflects primarily on the practice and tasks of his populist actions, which have no theoretical precursors. Although Perón transfers his military dedication and goal-oriented approach to the political arena, he knows that he cannot act there with commands and execution, but only with rhetorical conviction and a great deal of emotion. “His argument was simple. Perhaps too simple to be conceived by ordinary people, who, as they say, go in flocks like sparrows and fly low.”

To help readers find their way around, the texts are divided into 877 entries and assigned to 85 keywords, from “acción” (action) to “valores espirituales” (spiritual values).

There is no leadership of the masses, no matter how well they may be organised in material terms, unless solidarity has been created through indoctrination.

This can be seen every day in the little ‘caudillitos’ who are still active in Peronism. They do not act in solidarity, they have no sense of justice or Peronist conscience,

nor do they have a social conscience.

Without these two states of consciousness, politics is a very difficult thing. Legalism and Peronism are like a big sack into which everyone puts a little of what they have conquered and what they possess, so that when things are put into this sack, no one can fight for them.

They fight when something 'living' reaches into the sack and tries to take something out.

It should be noted that solidarity is reinforced by this political conscience and in this social conscience.

Those who have no virtues 'should not lead, and they cannot lead, even if they want to or should.'

As far as the masses are concerned, "organising is not about pigeonholing people; it is much more about giving them a sense of purpose and a sense of community. Material organisation is useless without spiritual organisation. If a mass is spiritually organised, its material organisation is of little importance."

Of course, there is also a deformation of leadership, "either through the deformation of leaders who become tyrants when they take power, or that of the middle cadres who develop an appetite and deform their leadership level; but there is also a deformation of the masses, who enter a phase of anarchic mood, as all masses do when they are dissatisfied and not well guided or led by the leadership's auxiliaries."

A look at a teaching unit shows what the leadership is taught in order to stabilise the party, the state and the community:

"The sixth exam topic is the theoretical part. There we discuss and study:

- a) The leader, the vital part, his moral, intellectual and partisan prerequisites;
- b) The theory, i.e. the inert part of leadership. The list of its essential principles, information, secrecy, surprise, unity of conception, unity of action, all factors of leadership. Party discipline, obedience, initiative, economy of forces, continuity of effort, local or circumstantial control, etc.

Forms of implementation: preparation, public relations, propaganda, means of action, strategic implementation, tactical implementation, agents of implementation, methods of implementation. The struggle, its general and limited goals. Strategic and tactical approaches in political leadership.

In 1949, Perón brought about a constitutional amendment that was in line with his policy of justice. A Senate statement said:

The new National Constitution of 1949 placed the people at the centre of the legal system and emphasised the state's obligations in the area of social rights, based on its active role in the nation's economic development and its regulatory and distributive role. Furthermore, the inclusion of new social areas made it possible to

extend citizens' rights by giving the people political sovereignty through the direct election of the President of the Republic, universal and regional free education, and the promotion of culture, social welfare, workers' rights, the family, the elderly, children and other political, social and economic rights.

These changes were reversed by the coup d'état of 1955.

From a socio-cultural perspective, in a lengthy analysis of Peronism in his book "Qué es esto? Catilinaria" (What is this? Catiline's Orations), the writer Ezequiel Martínez Estrada also points to the cultural heritage that Peronism exploits:

The weariness of the people in the face of the ignorance and venality of those in power and, consequently, of the political parties. The discouragement of the workers and the poor, who are homeless, outcasts in a country of cattle ranchers. The degeneration of the army, fattened by idleness, transformed by inaction, active in the armed bureaucracy. The confusion between judicialism and social justice, between the justice of the people and the justice of bandits, between Peronism and communism. Or a heterogeneous conglomerate of angry and desperate people. The bankrupts, whom Cicero and he called the "lost."

The culture is poor, "a conglomeration of exportable remnants of the great European culture," so that the intelligentsia could offer no protection to the "ignorant masses." Thus, "some gave in out of delusion and greed, others out of stupidity."

The Peronist March In addition to the leadership duo of Juan and Evita, the balcony speeches and theoretical writings, the all-encompassing Peronist world also has its own song, "La marcha peronista." It can still be heard today in Buenos Aires at the restaurant "Perón, Perón" every hour on the hour. There are also mugs and T-shirts with prints like in a museum shop.

The march is based on the song of a football club, Club Atlético Barracas Juniors, founded in 1912. It was written by Muffarregui, known as "Turkish Mufarri", and set to music by his friend Ricardo Streiff:

Vamos muchachos unidos / todos juntos cantaremos / y al mismo tiempo daremos
/ un hurra de corazón. / Por esos bravos muchachos / que lucharon con fervor / por
defender los colores / de esta gran institución.

(Come on boys, united / we'll all sing together / and at the same time / shout
a heartfelt hurrah / for those brave boys / who fought so hard / to defend the
colours / of this great club)

The anthem is sung at club celebrations, during carnival and on every other occasion. Until 1948, when a member of the printers' union changed the lyrics:

The Peronist printers / all united we will triumph / and at the same time we will give / a heartfelt cheer / Long live Perón! Long live Perón! / For that great Argentine / who knew how to win over the masses / fighting against capital / Perón, Perón, how great you are! My general, how much you are worth! / Perón, Perón, great leader! / You are the first worker.

The Minister of Education only changed “gráficos peronistas” to “muchachos peronistas” (Peronist boys) and “hurrray” to “grito” (cry), and the Peronist anthem was ready to be sung at every rally.

The lyrics were distributed everywhere, the march was recorded with the actor Hugo de Caril and was played for the first time on 27 October 1949 from the balcony of the Casa Rosada, accompanied by the Domingo Marafioti orchestra.

“Perón did not rise as a demagogic orator, despite his outstanding abilities in this regard, but as a demagogic military man.” And he “inspires the people as a military man and the military as a demagogue. All this through words.” But he was less successful as an orator than as an actor, if one considers his ability to generate sympathy, his art of acting and his ability to make what he portrayed tangible and visible. The actor plays a role, not himself, unless he acts out his own self.

17 October is, alongside 1 May, the second annual occasion for a Peronist mass rally. The date commemorates the resistance Perón encountered after his successful coup from numerous military figures and social circles such as large landowners, conservatives, the Church and the petty bourgeoisie. On 9 October 1945, the military forced him to resign, and on 12 October he was arrested and deported to the prison island of Martín García along with other unpopular politicians. This was preceded on 19 September 1945 by a huge demonstration of the united opposition with more than 200,000 people, the “March of the Constitution and Freedom” against “despotism” and demanding “Perón’s head”. Perón declared a state of emergency, and the prisons filled with non-Peronist military personnel, democratic journalists, university professors and opposition politicians. In order to limit the protests against the military dictatorship, the military dismissed Perón on 9 October 1945.

The military did not anticipate what happened next. The CGT announced a general strike for the 18th, without mentioning Perón, while the residents of the suburbs of Buenos Aires began gathering in large numbers at the Plaza de Mayo in front of the Casa Rosada on the 17th, demanding Perón’s release. The military realised that they were powerless against the crowd and released Perón. He spoke from the balcony and calmed the crowd. In 1946, democratic elections were held, in which Perón was elected with 55 per cent of the vote. 17 October becomes a Peronist holiday (“Day of Loyalty”) in memory of the first public appearance of the poor and marginalised sections of the population.

In 1951, Perón won the elections again, but the following year Evita died of cancer, and in 1955 he was overthrown by the military. The “Revolución libertadora” (Liberation Revolution) eagerly erased the visibility of Perón, Peronism and thus the poor with Decree 4161. “Images, symbols, signs, significant expressions, doctrines, articles and artistic works representative of Peronism” were banned. Words such as “Perón,” “Evita,” “Peronism” and “Justicialism” were not allowed to be mentioned. Naturally, the Peronist march was also banned.

Repression and Criticism What remains hidden behind the shining façade of Peronist humanity and justice is the centralisation of power and the dismantling of fundamental democratic rights. Above all, it is about influencing and controlling public opinion and spreading partisan propaganda.

Evita bought the newspaper *Democracia* in 1947, followed by the state takeover of the newspapers *El Mundo*, *El Hogar*, *Mundo Argentino* and the afternoon papers *Crítica*, *La Razón*, *Noticias Gráficas* and *La Época*. An empire of 13 publishing houses, 17 newspapers, ten magazines and four news agencies emerges, all of which are essentially characterised by the same news and photos in a similar style. Critical newspapers such as *La Vanguardia*, *Provincias unidas*, *Qué sucedió en 7 Días*, *Argentina Libre*, *Tribuna Democrática* and *El hombre libre* are forced to close for sometimes absurd reasons, such as excessive production noise. Press outlets that remain independent are restricted by paper quotas. By the end of 1951, *La Nación* has only six pages. This approach and the arguments used to justify it are reminiscent of authoritarian regimes or the early stages of a dictatorship. Competition and innovation are excluded and journalists are condemned to conformism.

Censorship is also extensive. For example, the tango *Cafetín de Buenos Aires* (1948), which is still popular today, had verses which were considered immoral and its distribution was banned. This is surprising because its poet, Enrique Santos Discépolo, was one of Perón's most prominent supporters, who continued to speak out in his favour on the radio in 1951.

Education and training were controlled in all areas, including schools, universities and institutes. Professors and lecturers who did not sympathise with Peronism were suspended from universities. The writer Martínez Estrada compared Perón's interventions with those of the dictator Rosas. Means of imparting knowledge such as printing houses and libraries were also closed. Public schools become places of intellectual corruption. Those under the age of 25 “know only a world of deceit and bribery. [...] It is the people of tomorrow whose behaviour is not corrected but encouraged in its indignity.”

Numerous employees resign from their posts in solidarity. In the course of 1946, at least one third of the academic staff at state universities is replaced by government supporters with dubious academic qualifications. The new University Act of 1947 prohibits students and teachers from engaging in any political activities; rec-

tors are appointed by the government, and student co-administration and faculty participation are abolished.

The new constitution of 1949 even enshrined indoctrination in higher education. "Universities shall establish compulsory and common courses for the political education of students in all faculties, with the aim of ensuring that every student acquires a basic knowledge of Argentina, the intellectual, economic, social and political reality of their country, the development and historical mission of the Argentine Republic, so as to develop an awareness of the responsibility they have to implement and safeguard the goals recognised and enshrined in this Constitution."

At the heart of this policy was a popular culture for the masses, conveyed through the mass media and the film industry. Perón used quotes from music, literature and colloquial language in his speeches, for example from Martín Fierro and Lunfardo.

In 1952, the right of assembly was restricted. Events could no longer be held, and lectures or classes had to be approved by the police.

Handbooks were written for school teachers on topics such as justicialism, Evita, social justice and the new era in which work was no longer hard but pleasant, the country was no longer associated with gauchos but with progress and the fatherland, the people were heroes, Rosas was not a tyrant and Perón was mentioned in the same breath as the liberator San Martín.

As early as 1944, freedom of assembly and the right to strike were restricted. Protests required a permit; if one was not obtained, they were banned, and the police had to take action against the protesters. The military was immediately deployed against strikers in 1945 and 1946.

Since the movement, the party and the government were intertwined, it was only natural that Evita divided the world into Peronists and anti-Peronists: "I ask the workers to denounce the anti-Peronists," she proclaimed at a rally, "because they are traitors to the fatherland, and I also ask them (the workers, WH) and the officials to take action, because if they do not, we must assume that they too are traitors to the fatherland." Potentially, thousands would be denounced.

Peronism in the 1940s and 1950s was not just a populist movement that conquered part of the population as well as the state and government, but had previously developed from a sect. Martínez Estrada follows Scipio Sighele's distinction between sect and caste. A sect has a common goal, forms a community based on belief rather than ideas, and develops spontaneously. Simmel and Caillois examine secret societies, their primitive stages and their relationship to violence. Sects operate on the fringes of society and against it. They justify their use of violence. The military in Argentina, which only temporarily promotes democratisation processes, stands at a distance from politics and government as an organ of armed violence. Thanks to long-standing sympathies with a political model à la Mussolini, parts of the military are open to sealing themselves off as a secret society or sect.

The G.O.U. is a sect that prepared the 1943 coup but then went public. However, the sect's mentality remained part of the authoritarian structure of society as an organised community, which included leaders and their creed. Thanks to the lack of the rule of law, the organs of repression were used, sometimes illegally, to stabilise power, with arrests and torture, the existence of which Perón denied, as expected. In 1946, Interior Minister Angel Borlenghi had the largest police force in the country at his disposal, with 25,000 men. He had numerous opposition figures imprisoned. The most stubborn among them are taken to a basement of the newly expanded Ramos-Mejía Hospital, one of the largest hospitals in Buenos Aires, where torture became routine. The names of the victims are listed page after page in Gambini and Kocik's book *Crímenes y mentiras* (Crimes and Lies).

If populism defines who belongs to the people in whose name political action is supposedly taken, then this logic also defines who does not belong and is therefore inevitably an enemy of the people. In this case, it was communists and members of the lumpenproletariat, including the indigenous population. Since the institutions were weak and the police and judiciary were not subject to any control, illegal violence was widespread.

In 1951, children playing on an empty lot next to Avenida General Paz found human remains. The disappearance of people had already alarmed the neighbourhood, but it was hushed up by political representatives. Suspicion fell on Roberto Miguel Nieva Malaver, head of the police station, whose job it was to cleanse the area of "elements of bad life." This involved night-time raids with numerous arrests, humiliation and torture. People also disappeared in other places. Sixty years after the events, witnesses spoke out in the report, including Argelia Reyes, daughter of trade unionist Cipriano Reyes, who explained that "there were disappearances during Perón's time." Or Juan Ovidio Zabala, who was tortured in 1951. At the time, they were referred to as "people whose whereabouts are unknown and whose legal status is unclear," according to MP Santiago Nudelman. The young Yolanda J. V. de Uzal, a member of the liberal UCR party, was taken to the Department of Political Order and then disappeared. She was only released thanks to the intense protests of a party colleague.

The report also points out that police terror is being perpetrated in the provinces, and that "specialists" were even being made available to the torturers at the third police station in the capital. Sergeant Ricardo Aguilera was known as "the doctor" because of his specialisation in cruelty. The police chief of Boulogne, Juan Simón Etchart, tortured people while drunk, which led to the death of more than one victim, as his victim Juan Ovidio Zabala recalls. The boxers Alberto and Guillermo Lowell tortured people in the capital, and in Quilmes, Corporal Toledo, Rasseti and Santoro tortured workers such as the merchant Juan Alberto Lanutti, the brewer Mario Aldo Rodríguez and the two construction unionists Ernesto Carlos Borrás and Jac-

into Saltó. In 1945, 65 farmers were brutally tortured in the Chaco gendarmerie by its head, Guillermo Solveyra Casares, and five of them were killed.

Finally, Malaver once again. He is assisted by a wild dog named Tom, who was used to commit unimaginable acts of cruelty. Malaver later admitted to using the dog, but tried to excuse himself by saying that Tom was “wild, but not cruel.” There are Dantesque descriptions of the night-time activities of the animal and its henchmen in the ravines of the northern zone, very close to the president’s Quinta in Olivos. According to El Laborista, the animal was also used to torture prisoners who were tied to trees behind the police station. Agent Moratello, a dog trainer, says he has never seen such a cruel dog. Research has identified several dozen people who were murdered in 1951/52; there are probably many more victims.

The weaknesses of the institutions allow illegal violence and excesses. Peronist MPs were indifferent to the torture denounced in parliament, the press was controlled and the judiciary was under pressure. Felipe Pérez declared in 1954 that “judges who do not agree with Peronist doctrine cannot work in the judiciary.” In 1958, President Arturo Frondizi granted a “broad and generous amnesty” in return for the military allowing elections, in which Peronists were banned from participating.

Perón antagonised the Church by banning the Catholic newspaper El pueblo and simultaneously legalising divorce and prostitution.

After the failed coup attempt in 1951 by General Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, the Minister of Political Affairs and friend of Perón, Román Subiza, drafted an electoral reform that granted fewer seats to the opposition. He secretly distributed a repression plan to the governors to destroy the “traitors to the fatherland” who opposed the internal state of war that had been introduced after the failed coup attempt (a workers’ strike, for example, was considered a challenge). Subiza headed the Secretariat for Political Affairs, which coordinated “domestic policy” with the main goal of ensuring that “all inhabitants of the fatherland should be Peronists,” as stated in a “Political Action Plan” drawn up in the last years of Perón’s government.

Evita described how deeply she felt the division in the country in a final message in 1952:

It was true that Perón, a military leader, attached fundamental importance to the workers of his people. And while the workers organised themselves into the strongest force in the country, the oligarchy, which had also infiltrated the armed forces, prepared the reaction. I witnessed Perón’s hard struggle against the privilege of violence, as hard as the struggles against the privilege of money or blood. I know what he suffered, even though I had the rare and wonderful privilege of being something like the shield against which the attacks of his enemies always shattered.

In mid-April 1953, the mood deteriorates and Perón needs support. In front of a large crowd, he explains his position on the economic crisis, which did not exist in the 1940s, and calls for a fight against those responsible. He begins by flattering those present: "A president who gives advice is more than a president, he is a friend, and that is exactly what I want to be for my people: a friend." He flatters them in a practically unrealistic and politically intolerable manner: "I have always adhered to the first truth of our Peronist catechism, which states that true democracy consists of the government doing only what the people want and defending only one interest: that of the people."

He then names the enemies, the speculators and corrupt officials. To bring them to justice, the government, the state and the people must work together. It is a matter of "demanding justice for all Argentinians" and enforcing it with all severity:

The honest must be defended by all means; the dishonest must be put in prison as quickly as possible [...] If, in order to put an end to evil from within and evil from without, if, in order to put an end to the dishonest and the evil, I must bear the title of tyrant before history, then I will do so with joy. Until now, I have used persecution; from now on, I will use repression, and God grant that circumstances do not force me to apply the most terrible punishments.

In the middle of his plea for comprehensive price controls, an explosion is heard. "Comrades," Perón continues, "these people who spread rumours every day seem to be spreading even more rumours today and want to plant a bomb on us." At that moment, another explosion is heard. "You see," says Perón, "when I announced from here that this was a premeditated plan that was being carried out, I had good reason to say so. Comrades: you can throw many bombs and spread many rumours, but we are determined that you will not get away with it, and in this case, comrades, I assure you that you will not get away with it. We must identify every single person responsible for these acts and apply the appropriate sanctions against them."

Finally, he appealed to nationalism, which is always good for stirring up emotions: "Go home with the thought that almost ten years ago we decided to secure the happiness of our people and the greatness of the nation. Think that we will achieve these goals through economic independence, social justice and political sovereignty."

A little later, on 1 June 1953, he strikes a propagandistic tone that is both trite and violent. He speaks as an ideologue and a military man. The focus is on the bomb attack, for which he blames the liberal UCR party:

You do not know the Argentine people; you do not know the peoples. The lesson that this wonderful people of the fatherland has to teach its own and foreigners will live on in the memory of those who feel worthy of it. When a people is pre-

pared to die for its dignity, it is an invincible people. And, dear comrades, what is at stake at this moment is the dignity of the fatherland itself. Just as we made Braden (US ambassador, WH) bite the dust of defeat in the times we still remember, so will we make all the Bradens who show their faces bite the dust of defeat. Comrades: The social consciousness of the Argentine working class has awakened before the admiring eyes of the world, which regards it either with sympathy or with fear, because it sees in it the example of the liberation of millions of slaves suffering under the whip of capitalism or communism.

Comrades: We must not slacken in our efforts. I have often said that our slogan is clear, and clear slogans are defended with our lives on the battlefield. Every Argentine worker is at his post to consolidate the liberation of the Argentine working people and, if necessary, to fight for the liberation of all the working peoples of the world...

Comrades: We know where the blow is coming from. In light of these ideas, all peoples know where the coup is coming from. But we stopped it, and now we will respond. [...] When it was necessary to strike hard, you let me do so. Now, as always, I ask my people for "la bolada" (the opportunity). I must strike where it hurts, and when it hurts. [...] I ask you, comrades, not to set anything else on fire, not to do these things anymore, because when the time comes to do so, I will go out at your head to burn. But then, if it should be necessary, history will remember the greatest fire that humanity has kindled to this day. [...]

Let us make a place in our memory for all the workers who have died in world history in the struggle for the cause of the proletariat; let us erect in every proletarian heart a monument in the form of an altar to those tenacious, courageous and idealistic men who understood how to give their lives for their comrades."

Five people were arrested as perpetrators of the bombing. One of them, Roque Caranza, became a minister in Raúl Alfonsín's democratic government after the end of the dictatorship in 1955. According to historian Félix Luna, who was himself tortured in 1951, he and Carlos Alberto González Dogliotti confessed to their crime under torture. He had distributed leaflets in support of a railway strike.

Unpopular Intellectuals The bomb attack provided Perón with an opportunity to crack down on the intelligentsia, whom he despised. He had 200 writers, publishers and artists imprisoned for a month, mostly without explanation and without trial. Among Peronists and their supporters, the anti-intellectual slogan "*alpargatas sí, libros no*" (espadrilles yes, books no) was widespread. Students responded with the slogan "*No a la dictadura de las alpargatas*" (No to the dictatorship of the espadrilles). Intellectuals were filled with aversion to Peronism. This only changed with the Cuban revolution from 1959 and the liberation movements of the 1960s.

Among those arrested were the editor of the famous bi-monthly magazine *Sur*, Victoria Ocampo, and the writer Jorge Luis Borges. Ocampo had met Mussolini dur-

ing a visit to Italy and, like many Argentinians at the time, had been very impressed by him. However, when she asked him what role women played in fascism, he replied that a woman's primary duty was to bear children for the state, whereupon she asked him, "But could women also work with men in other ways?" He replied curtly, "No." As an emancipated woman, this abruptly ended any sympathy she had for him.

Her magazine was an opportunity for young writers to establish themselves in the literary world: Julio Cortázar recalls how "[...] she helped us students who were trying to find our way in the 1930s and 1940s, hesitating between so many mistakes, so many miserable institutions and lies." For Octavio Paz, *Sur* is not just a magazine or an institution: "It is a tradition of the spirit... [Victoria] did what no one had done before in America."

Now she was accused of storing weapons for opponents of the regime in her house in Mar del Plata. Apparently without evidence.

She was released through the direct intervention of the writer and 1954 Nobel Prize winner Gabriela Mistral, international pressure, protests by Roger Caillois, Nobel Prize winners François Mauriac and Roger Martin du Gard, writers André Maurois and Jules Romain, and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. On 14 June 1953, the *New York Times* published a letter from the writer and friend Waldo Frank. Together with Aldous Huxley, he headed an international committee for the release of the Argentine woman. When she was finally released, her passport remained with the authorities. She did not regain her freedom of movement until the dictatorship ended in 1955.

At the end of 1955, after the military coup, she reported on her days in prison and the solidarity and humanity among her fellow prisoners in *Sur*. The magazine celebrated Perón's fall with a special edition entitled *Por la reconstrucción nacional* (For National Reconstruction), in which numerous authors called for a renewed reform of the education system and the restoration of the liberal political system.

"As far as I am concerned," Ocampo writes,

[...] it could have been worse – I was imprisoned for 27 days in 1953 without being told why. They searched my house twice (and my magazine once); they searched my cupboards, my drawers; they read my papers, my letters (which referred to the government and had no direct connection to politics) [...] I knew then that the only thing they were after, the only thing they were punishing me for, the only thing they wanted to destroy in me, was freedom of thought. And this realisation seemed all the more serious for the country. During my stay at Buen Pastor, I had discovered, among other things, that material imprisonment is less painful, even less morally dangerous for the innocent than the other prison: the one I had come to know in the houses, in the streets of Buenos Aires, in the air I breathed. This other invisible prison arises from the fear of prison, and dictators know it well. The prisoner is spied on even when he is asleep. I remember one of the endless nights at Buen Pastor. There were eleven of us women in one room. As I couldn't

sleep – I suffered from insomnia, which manifested itself in a concert of snoring – I wondered what time it was. When one of my fellow prisoners saw me sitting up in bed and covering my ears, she was kind enough to come over and ask if I was feeling ill. [...]

It was a gesture of humanity whose gentleness I will never forget and which still brings tears to my eyes. [...]

In prison, at least you had the satisfaction of knowing that you had finally reached rock bottom, that you were living in *reality*. Things had materialised. That was my first reaction: “I am now out of the zone of false freedom; at least I am now in the *truth*.”

Criticism from intellectuals had been expressed long before the repression of 1953. In 1946, Julio Cortázar wrote the enigmatic story “Casa tomada” (The House Taken Over). It is about the creeping occupation of a house whose inhabitants give way without resistance. Is the theme here the takeover of one’s own free space by politics, or the poverty that is increasingly migrating from the countryside to the city and from the suburbs to the centre?

As I stood in front of the bedroom door (Irene was knitting), I heard a noise; it came either from the kitchen or the bathroom; the bend in the corridor muffled the sound. Irene had been alerted by my sudden pause and followed me without saying a word. We listened and heard very clearly that the noises were coming from this side of the oak door, from the kitchen, from the bathroom or perhaps even from the corridor, where it bends, very close to us. [...] “They’ve occupied this part too,” said Irene, and the narrator asked shortly afterwards: “Did you have time to take anything with you?” [...] “No, nothing.” [...] “I locked the front door and threw the key into the gutter so that no poor devil would think of stealing and breaking into the squatted house at that hour.

“My interpretation of this story,” Cortázar explained to Spanish television in 1977, “[...] is the result of a nightmare. [...] There was this feeling of terror that you get in nightmares, without anything being defined. Fear in its purest form. Now, this interpretation, that I perhaps translated my reaction as an Argentinean to the political events, cannot be ruled out. It seems to me to be a possible explanation, but it is definitely not mine.”

Borges wrote the text “La fiesta del monstruo” (The Feast of the Monster) together with Bioy Casares in 1947. It depicts a day in the life of a “*cabecita negra*” (black head, a discriminatory term for migrants from the interior of the country, WH). Although Perón is the “monster,” the story is not only about dictatorship. The “monster” is more than a human being; it is a state in which humanity itself experiences violence and all values are suppressed. It is about the barbarism that still prevails in the provinces

in “Facundo,” but is now advancing on Buenos Aires and dominating the language and perception of reality.

Borges belongs to the “anti-Peronists,” like most intellectuals. He explains his hatred of the government, which he always refers to as “the dictatorship.” Democracy, he says, is impossible in Argentina. He finds neither Peronism nor communism attractive; instead, he is an anarchist in the style of Spencer. He believes in the individual, not the state. And one might add that he detests a movement that gives little space to the individual and abuses language with platitudes and mass emotions. Whether this is accompanied by a disregard for the poor is anyone’s guess. Perhaps it is blindness when he declares in a long conversation with Ernesto Sábató that “we have neither natives nor blacks.” He detests politics. “I believe that no politician is honest. A politician is always looking for voters, and he says what they want to hear. In political discourse, the listeners believe it even more than the speakers. The speaker is a kind of mirror or echo of what others think. Otherwise, he would fail.” Perón thinks so too. Borges considers politics to be what Perón does and what he despises about Perón, and so, along with Perón, he also despises politics.

In the literary magazine “*Sur*,” November–December 1955, Borges published a mocking reckoning under the French title “*L’illusion comique*”:

The dictatorship despised capitalism (pretended to despise it), but copied its methods, as in Russia, and dictated names and slogans to the people with the same tenacity with which companies impose razors, cigarettes or washing machines on the market. This stubbornness, which was obvious to everyone, was counterproductive; the excessive number of images of the dictator led many people to despise him. We have moved from a world of individuals to a world of symbols, which is even more passionate than the former; the conflict no longer exists between supporters and opponents of the dictator, but between supporters and opponents of an image or a name. [...] Even more curious was the political handling of the drama or melodrama. On 17 October 1945, it was pretended that a colonel had been arrested and kidnapped and that the people of Buenos Aires were rescuing him; no one bothered to explain who had kidnapped him or how his whereabouts had been discovered. There were also no legal sanctions for the alleged culprits, and their names were neither mentioned nor suspected.

But his personal involvement pains him more. “In 1946, a president came to power whose name I do not wish to remember,” Borges writes in his autobiography. “Shortly afterwards, I was honoured with a promotion to inspector of poultry and rabbit markets.” Allegedly because he had sided with the Allies during the Second World War. “The next day I resigned.” When Perón returned to Argentina in 1973, Borges was forced into retirement.

The treatment of his family was also painful. On 8 September 1948, his mother and sister took part in a demonstration on Florida Street. The national anthem was

sung, the constitution was celebrated, and leaflets with the initials RUL for *Resistencia, unidad y libertad* (Resistance, Unity and Freedom) were distributed. Resistance against Perón and freedom from the so-called “dictatorship.” Almost all of them were women, many of whom were arrested and accused of “public scandal.” His mother, Leonor Acevedo, well over 70 years old, was placed under house arrest, and his sister Norah, 45, ended up in the Buen Pastor prison.

In 1960, Borges published the story “El simulacro” (The Simulation), which is somewhere between grotesque and circus and is about the staging of a theatre performance with a funeral. The play takes place immediately after the death of Evita, who is portrayed in the production by a blonde doll. She is accompanied by an actor (or simulator) who claims to be Perón. People greet him and pay a fee of two pesos into a piggy bank. The boundaries between theatre and reality become blurred, Perón and Evita are simulacra, no one knows their true identity.

Unlike Borges, Ernesto Sábato believes that everyone bears responsibility for what happened:

Many of us were already ashamed to be Argentine, ashamed to the point of pain and tears. For just as every person, once they reach a certain age, has the face they deserve (since it is shaped not only by their flesh and blood, but also by their spirit, their courage and their cowardice, their greatness and their misery), so too does every nation have the face it inherently deserves, because we are all guilty of everything, and in every Argentine there was and is a piece of Perón.

In his long letter to Mario Amadeo, published as “El otro rostro del peronismo” (The Other Face of Peronism), Sábato laments the crimes of Peronist rule, but differentiates in his assessment of the measures taken. Achieving social justice is a fundamental requirement, he argues. A single observation suffices to prove this:

On that September night in 1955, when doctors, landowners and writers were loudly celebrating the fall of the tyrant in the hall, I saw the two Indian women who worked there standing in a corner of the anteroom with tears in their eyes. And although I had spent all those years thinking about the tragic duality that divided the Argentine people, at that moment it appeared to me in its most poignant form.

For what could better characterise the drama of our country than this almost exemplary double scene? Many millions of dispossessed and working people shed tears in those hard and dark moments. The two crying indigenous girls in a kitchen in Salta were the symbol of a large number of humble compatriots.

Instead of trying to understand the national problem and decipher what was real, inevitable and just in this confused movement, most of the parties and the *intelligentsia* had given themselves over to the scorn, ridicule and *bon mots* of society. This was an underestimation that in no way corresponded to reality, for

while there was much in Peronism that could be despised or ridiculed, there was also much that was historically justified and fair.

Who could disagree with Sábato when he states:

In this complex movement, there was – and still is – something much more powerful and profound than the mere desire for material goods: there was a legitimate longing for justice and recognition in the face of a selfish and cold society that had always forgotten them.

He thus addresses the indispensable importance of feelings, which not only exist alongside rationality in every human being, but also permeate and shape rationality. It is poets and writers who know this world and, like Sábato, notice how much “there was not only base passions and purely material desires in the Peronist movement, but also a genuine spiritual passion, a para-religious belief in a leader who spoke to them as human beings and not as outcasts.” Sábato, who knew how closely civilisation and barbarism are linked, knew that ideologues, as ardent followers of reason, would fail in their attempt to establish a rationalist culture. In Germany, the Enlightenment and totalitarianism operated in a common environment.

It follows that politics should take the same path that 20th-century philosophy has already taken with existentialism and phenomenology: “a return to concrete human beings, to flesh and blood, a synthesis of the scattered limbs that rationalist dissection has left us. A political synthesis that, if necessary everywhere in the world, is particularly necessary in our country: both because of the barbaric character of our immediate tradition and because of the excesses of our newly rich enlightened class, who, as is always the case with imitators, emphasise the master’s faults instead of passing on his virtues.”

Borges, on the other hand, condemns any attempt to understand Peronism like Sábato and Martínez Estrada as indirect praise of the “tyrant.”

The past is not yet past. Time and again, one encounters former prisoners in the same prison in San Telmo. The journalist Inés Menéndez Hopenhayn learnt quite by chance from her grandmother that she had been arrested in the autumn of 1954 and imprisoned for six months. She was interrogated but given no information as to why she was in custody. Based on the questions she was asked, she suspected that it was her anti-Peronist stance that an informant overheard. She was not organised and has never been involved in anti-Peronist activities.

The guards were nuns from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd order. The female students were housed on the ground floor, while communists were kept on the upper floor, with whom all contact was forbidden.

During her imprisonment, the grandmother was allowed to continue studying medicine, and her parents provided her with specialist books. “The book on patho-

logical anatomy,” says the granddaughter, which her parents had asked for so that she could study for free and take the exam, contained drawings of human bodies. When the nuns examined the book critically, they were horrified. “They considered the contents of the book immoral. As a result, she lost a year at school.”

They went in and came out again without warning. One fine day in March 1955, three female comrades (including my grandmother) were called and told that they were being released. At that very moment, the doors were opened and they were left standing on the street. No money for the journey home, no explanation and no notification to their parents. My grandmother went to a bar, where, according to her, other dismissed prisoners were already there to ask to use the telephone. The people in the bar knew what was going on. She used the telephone and her parents came to pick her up.

Some of the former female students still meet in the former prison, that has been converted into a museum. The grandchildren are trying to understand all the details. The terrible dictatorship that began in 1976 has pushed the events before 1955 into the background. “We are looking for fictional heroes or enemies,” explains the granddaughter,

... and forget that both those who were vindicated and those who were not vindicated existed side by side. Peronism was misused for many things, but the good thing about history and these biographies is that they allow us to move away from the reinterpretations that are made of history. Mistakes are denied in order to whitewash ideologies or contributions that have been made for the good of our society. Fortunately, in the history of our country, there is the life story of each and every one of us, which allows us to discover what the historiographies hide. The grey stories are perhaps the clearest.

Exodus Perón’s power was not only used to nationalise the media and subject it to intensive control, but also to draw up blacklists of cultural figures who were banned from working if they did not sign a declaration of loyalty. Evita was responsible for compiling some of the names of people she had had dealings with, including Libertad Lamarque, Inés Edmonson, Nelly Ayllón and Iní Marshall. The procedure was not made public, but the public noticed that individual artists were dropped from a theatre play and then more and more, as was the case with the play “Prontuario” in autumn 1947. Since those who were dismissed did not want to sign the declaration of loyalty and could not find work, some of them emigrated, such as María Rosa Gallo, who went to Chile, or Oreste Vaiglia to Montevideo. Others went to Mexico, Europe and the USA. There is evidence that jealousy, love affairs and hurt feelings resulted in the exclusion of those concerned. The reasons are petty, the consequences dramatic.

Among the internationally renowned artists were the conductor, composer and musician Osvaldo Pugliese, who was not allowed to perform, and the musician Atahualpa Yupanqui, a supporter of the Justicialist Party, whose right hand was broken in his home so that he could no longer play his guitar. A gang of thugs also broke into Waldo Frank's hotel room and beat him up. The historian Felix Luna was arrested and tortured. The brilliant constitutional lawyer, advisor and confidant of Perón, father of the 1949 constitutional reform and probably also the author of "Comunidad organizada", Arturo Sampay, was accused in 1952 of unspecified crimes in connection with the governor of Buenos Aires, Domingo Mercante. He fled to Paraguay disguised as a priest. It remains unclear whether the young Astor Piazzola, musician and composer of innovative tangos, was on the list.

Perón and his followers' anti-science stance was spectacular not only with regard to the natural sciences, but also to Argentina's Nobel Prize winners. Argentina has had five Nobel Prize winners to date: Carlos Saavedra Lamas for peace policy (1936), Bernardo Houssay in physiology and medicine (1947), Luis Federico Leloir in chemistry (1970), Adolfo Pérez Esquivel for peace policy (1980) and César Milstein in medicine (1984). Peronists and the military were not shy about harassment here either. Houssay lost his research position at the university because of anti-Peronist statements and continued his research at his private institute. Esquivel was tortured by the military during the last dictatorship, and Milstein preferred to work in England, not only because of the good working conditions.

Serving the people and building an organised community for the good of all actually meant dividing society ever more deeply. The opposition was openly excluded. To achieve this, the ruling party had to resort to ever greater control and exclusion and, as discontent grew, to violence. Representation declined, anarchy increased, as did the propensity to violence.

In a comprehensive final lecture, Nobel Prize winner Houssay criticised the backwardness of the Argentine university system, whose principles can also be criticised in other countries: learning and teaching only for exams, lack of state support for research institutions, failure to stimulate curiosity and a thirst for research, enthusiasm and perseverance among students.

Science can only flourish in an atmosphere of freedom, while in times of oppression it stagnates or regresses. Freedom of discussion, research and expression is essential. The university must be the most important centre for the discovery, coordination and dissemination of knowledge, while at the same time ensuring the intellectual and technical training of specialists and the majority of researchers. It must awaken in students the scientific spirit and the principles of research so that doctors can identify and solve the medical and health problems of their working environment.

When I was dismissed from my post in 1943, hundreds of students asked me to give

them advice. I immediately told them about some of the forces that had shaped my life: love for my country, love of freedom, personal dignity, a sense of duty, dedication to science, dedication to work, respect for justice and for my fellow human beings, affection for my patients, students and friends. Have high ideals and remember to achieve great things, because if life is always modest and only part of what you desire is achieved, if you dream big, you will achieve much more. Do not forget that all the great achievements of the present are only the realisation of youthful dreams.

After Perón's overthrow by the "Revolución Libertadora", persecution continued, this time by the anti-Peronists. People were not only persecuted, but also condemned to silence and invisibility. Decree 4161, passed in 1958 but not ratified until 1963, prohibited any public mention of Peronist leaders, which naturally included Perón and Evita. Shortly after the coup, the former presidential residence was demolished by those in power in an attempt to erase history.

Power and Values Literary scholar Beatriz Sarlo describes the significance of violence and mythologisation in the constitution of society using Borges' fantastic literature, in particular his story "El informe de Brodie" (David Brodie's Report, 1972). These stories present "a disturbing mixture of fictional reportage and philosophical commentary". It is a political philosophy in the realm of narrative, which possibly has a healing role through its distance from events and the creation of meaning. This is particularly true when politics and history are in crisis and no orientation can be gained from immediate experience.

In these stories, Borges observes that the ideological and cultural values of society are based on blind power, arbitrary decisions or myths. These are socio-psychological questions if one wants to determine the inner cohesion of society and thus the reasons for the stability or weakness of values, or rather the change in values. His stories are set on the outskirts of cities with a reworking of the gaucho tradition. In the absence of formal law, violence takes the form of a code of honour. This codified violence is thus deeply rooted in Criollo culture and is also considered to be part of South America's destiny. Duelling, for example, is an undisputed means of settling disputes or establishing justice.

This society conveys the image of a kind of heroic, primitive and rural dystopia. And, according to Sarlo's interpretation, it is governed by a catalogue of virtues consisting of personal dependencies and concrete services or obligations that are given contractual character through vows and culminate in personal loyalty to the *patron* or other leaders. "Without this kind of bond," explains Sarlo, "rural society would tend to disintegrate into anarchy."

For, and this is the second inseparable aspect, the representatives of the state have less power than the lords and therefore represent weak institutions. The mem-

bers of this social structure vainly reject urban modernisation and, in retrospect, heroize the now disappearing world of Martin Fierro, who is also bidding farewell to a world that is coming to an end.

With the change in the economy, living conditions and values also change. Since violence is not merely a form of action but, like all forms of action, is subject to moral evaluation, the change in social values and the opportunity to gradually replace anarchy and violence with strong institutions and deliberation are of interest.

Since there was no quantitative social research in the 19th century and well into the 20th century, literature is helpful. After the world of the gauchos and caudillos, pre-modern rural powers and legends no longer fit in with the emergence of a rural and urban proletariat. A period of hopeful immigration begins, but it leads to a second phase of disappointment and failure.

Anarchism, imported from Europe or brought with them, served as the political response to this. It continued the aversion to the state, but at the same time opened the way for world views, with liberalism being of only limited appeal.

The next point of reference was fascism, a fusion of caudillismo, movement, state and military, in the ideologically and organisationally weakened form of Peronism. Its ideological values of community as a people and the will of the people, social justice and unity of movement and leadership were the strongest movement ever seen in Argentina. Although the values of the people and justice continue to exist in "Kirchnerism," a social democratic form of Peronism, after the end of the dictatorship in 1983, it is now more moderate and more committed to the principles of a democratic constitutional state.

It is interesting to compare opinions and values. First, the results of opinion research conducted over 40 years by Voices and World Values. These showed that family and work remained the highest positive values, while the importance of religion declined sharply. Mistrust of institutions, especially those linked to the political system such as parliament, the judiciary and political parties, has increased, as has mistrust of the media, while the armed forces and universities continue to enjoy a high and even growing level of trust.

There is widespread support for democracy in general, but little approval of its performance. After decades of unfulfilled promises and a failure to listen, a wide gap has emerged between citizens and their representatives, leading to a confrontation between friend and foe. This has led to a rise in the popularity of hybrid forms of government, such as those with a strong leader, because they do not have to take parliament into account to the same extent. Similarly, governments led by experts are enjoying increased support, while military governments are largely rejected, which is interpreted as a strengthening of the parliamentary system. Ideologically, the right has gained ground, a trend that is more pronounced among young people. Unlike a few years ago, they valued freedom more than equality.

As for the future of the country, there is little hope for improvement. Rather, the widespread view is that the situation will worsen over the next 10 years in terms of poverty, insecurity, economic problems and employment.

According to Sarlo, a figure like Otto zur Linde in Borges's work is searching for orientation; he not only moves between the different levels of National Socialism, but also grapples with the arduous task of determining what is considered right and wrong in society.

However, questions about fundamentals and values remain unanswered. Therefore, the "Report of Doctor Brodie" about the Yahoos radically returns to square one in order to show the relativity of values.

The "Yahoos" have no internal conflicts like modern societies. They know no contradictions between nature and culture, do not know the distinction between cause and effect, are free from philosophical and scientific considerations, use only words that have general meanings and are free from strong definitions, which prevents them from discussing potentially conflictual topics such as government or religion. They have a legal system that, unlike ours, is not based on evidence and argument, so that judgements are made immediately after the crime is alleged. Compared to Christian nations, they are primitive, but at the same time they have solved the question of order in society once and for all.

However, alongside the relativity of values, there are also limits to the temptation of a perfect order, namely the terrible consequences it can entail.

Anomie So far, we have been talking about anarchy, the weakness or absence of rule. Argentinian President Milei describes himself as an "anarcho-capitalist" who wants to abolish government in favour of the economy. Anarchy means weak institutions, in the positive sense of anarchist movements, a far-reaching withdrawal of state institutions in favour of direct and federated democracy, and in the negative sense, the weakness of the rule of law and human rights, the separation of powers, democratic legitimacy and transparency. While anarchy refers to the political dimension of institutional weakness, anomie refers to the social world and the undermining of social norms, laws and binding rules. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim introduced the concept to describe the lack of clear standards to guide behaviour in times of social change, while the Robert K. Merton adapted it to refer to the strain on the behaviour of individuals when accepted norms conflict with reality.

The deep division in Argentine society has resulted not only in violence, but also in anomie and anarchy: Buenos Aires and the interior, large landowners and the landless, wealth and poverty, conservatives, populists and liberals, the population, politicians and the military. Such contradictions invite violence and occasionally dictatorial intervention when they come to a head.

On a macroeconomic level, Julio Godio explains the anomie with the coexistence of a productive culture and a pensioner culture, which have manifested themselves

in the three phases of economic development since 1900: the agricultural and export economy and the liberal state, the nationalist-industrial paradigm and state capitalism founded in the mid-1930s, which corresponded politically to Peronism, and finally the financial rentier economy with a minimal neoliberal state. The hope for economic advancement, if not alongside the United States, then at least alongside Canada, Australia or New Zealand, is fading.

This raises the question of what values accompany anomie. In Argentina, self-interest and opposition to authority are central. In an article in *La Nación*, Carlota Jackisch, programme director of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Buenos Aires, examines anomie in Argentine society using a number of examples. She mentions the meeting between two diplomats in Berlin in 1938, the German von Weizsäcker and the Argentine ambassador Labougle. Von Weizsäcker asks his Argentine colleague how it was possible that groups of Nazi agitators were able to operate in Argentina for six years without any reaction from the Argentine authorities. He replies: "Because Argentina is a country where, in general, everyone does what they want." This is still true today, Jackisch says, citing traffic violations. Every driver runs a red light once a day, every bus driver twice an hour, and Argentina has the highest rate of traffic fatalities in the world.

Added to this are violations of building regulations, shoddy food and drug manufacturing, falsification of professional titles, failure to adhere to timetables, pollution of public spaces and the payment of bribes to circumvent regulations.

According to Gallup Argentina, Jackisch says, almost a quarter of the population is willing to bribe police officers to avoid a fine, not bill for work in order to pay less tax, and obtain fake sick notes. Half of Argentinians do not consider returning found money to its owner.

It is not the absence of norms that explains Argentina's "anomic" character, but rather the contempt for normativity on the part of large sections of society. It is therefore common, Jackisch continues, for people to gather in front of a police station where someone has just been arrested to demand his release.

Solidarity exists with those who commit crimes. The spectators in a packed football stadium cheer a manager who has raped a minor. A drug-addicted footballer appears in an anti-drugs campaign; when he is besieged by journalists, he shoots at them with a shotgun. No sentence is enforced because those in political power believe that a majority of the population would vote for his acquittal.

It is not surprising that the judiciary is not perceived as independent and is therefore increasingly losing prestige. Anomie is on the rise.

For Peter Waldmann, the structural weakness of Latin American states is most evident in their monopoly on taxation and violence, which is being challenged by parallel activities. The most anomic state is one that neither relinquishes its claim to power nor is able to exercise it. The state becomes a source of disorder and insecurity, it confuses the issue of responsibilities, is weak in enforcing its authority,

is undermined by arbitrariness and deviations from norms, and is unable to guarantee public order and security. The problem is not so much the abuse of power as a general sense of insecurity. According to Waldmann, the states of Latin America are deficient in this respect, as measured by Jellinek's theory of sovereignty. Without equality before the law, there can be no unified national community; without state sovereignty, there can be no effective enforcement due to group interests and corruption; and without state sovereignty, there can be no *raison d'état* or orientation towards the common good due to pervasive partisanship.

The shortcomings cited by Waldmann also highlight the fundamental differences between the European and Latin American traditions. The latter are primarily characterised by the following deficits: no egalitarian justification for freedom; no absolutist bureaucracy; no internal unification enforced by external threats; no disciplinary institutions such as the military and factories; no pre-absolutist model of negotiation and contract; and, finally, the ambiguity of republicanism and personalism, as well as clientelism in politics.

According to Waldmann, there are also social factors, such as large areas with less contact between Creoles, greater social differences, the fear among whites of liberalisation, the lack of a leading bourgeoisie, the lack of political experience of the founders of the states, the insufficient authority of the constitutions and, finally, the practice of intolerance and particularism. From a legal perspective, an individual does not appear as a citizen, but as a person embedded in relationships; equality before the law is less important than integration into social obligations; the individual is part of a network; the public and private spheres are mixed; there is widespread mistrust of all authorities; and laws are ultimately understood as restrictions on individual freedom.

We have already examined some of these points and can wholeheartedly agree with Waldmann. This is particularly true of his reference to Tocqueville, who noted that the customs of a community are as important as its laws. The only thing missing from Waldmann's analysis is the phenomenon of violence.

Finally, in his "Five Theses on Argentine Political Culture," constitutional law expert Valdés cites not only the well-known discrepancy between social and political rules and legal norms, but also conscious, self-serving deviations from social norms, as well as passively experienced grievances such as disillusionment and hopelessness, resulting in increased emigration and fragmented solidarity, which in turn leads to feelings of humiliation. Finally, he summarises all the critical points into a fundamental behaviour pattern, which he calls Neanderthal society, in which people refrain from innovation and change and know about the wheel but not how to use it.

Mentality In a seven-part series of articles in 2001, the newspaper *La Nación* lamented a prevailing mentality that was the main cause of deficits in various

areas. While experts and the public continue to worry about how to overcome the ongoing economic crisis with special budget items and tax increases, it is not so much money that is needed, but rather the determination to enforce existing laws, improve education “and regain the values that Argentine society once had.”

The series of articles laments that “one of Argentina’s tragedies is not knowing that you don’t know anything,” that corruption favours the mafia, that there is a lack of decency and respect for others and for common property, the environment is being ruthlessly damaged, a misunderstood freedom after the dictatorship allows everything, from politicians to civil servants to entrepreneurs, including the ordinary people.” Everyone “does what they want and stop doing what they should,” while the promotion of education, science and research only serves election campaigns, otherwise it is considered an unnecessary luxury.

Furthermore, there is a prevailing frivolity, a tendency to avoid difficulties and focus on simple things. The extent to which a mentality influences economic, governmental and political action can be demonstrated by comparing regional differences and the use of corresponding metaphors (Acemoglu, Lakoff)

What does it mean to change mentalities? They encompass more than customs or behavioural norms; they include intellectual and emotional orientations, but also integrate customs and values. The historian and mentality researcher Philippe Ariès defines mentality as the collective unconscious.

Collective because it is the common property of the entire society at a given point in time. Unconscious because it seems self-evident, like the platitudes of morality and conformism or prohibitions. These are expressions of feelings or fantasies. [...] The history of mentalities would then be the underground search for nameless wisdom: not for wisdom or truth, but for the practical rules of reason that govern the everyday, familiar relationships of communities with each individual, with nature, with life, with death, with God and with the afterlife.

There are numerous examples of the power of mentality in everyday life and science. Looking at Russia, Eastern European scholar Martin Schulze Wessel points to the connection between state failures such as the disastrous “hostage rescue” in Beslan in 2004 and the Russian population’s indifference to the Ukrainian Kursk campaign. This indifference is characterised by a lack of solidarity and a sense of belonging, as well as a lack of social and political integration. Without these, “the collective consciousness in Russia is an ideal breeding ground for imperial ideologies.”

For Durkheim, integration and disintegration are crucial for stability or instability and anomie. Integration means the constant, dynamic, and essentially life-long process of bringing together the members of a society. This applies not only to the members of a society who have been present for generations, which is always

undergoing more or less profound change, but also to the migrants who arrived in Argentina between 1880 and 1930.

The liberal Spanish philosopher and writer Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) also travelled to Argentina twice, in 1916 and 1928, to study the local mentality. His third trip took him into exile in Argentina after the victory of Franco's troops from 1939 until 1942.

His motto, "I am myself and my circumstances," points to his interest in a social-psychological view of society. In his essay "La nueva sensibilidad" (The New Sensibility), published in "La Prensa" in Buenos Aires in 1916, he describes the two most striking characteristics of the Argentine people: their ability to attract people from other countries, ethnic groups and cultures, and their ability to integrate them all.

When he returned in 1928, he immersed himself in the depths of the Argentine mentality and recorded his findings in *La Pampa... Promesas* (The Pampa – Promises) and *El hombre a la defensiva* (Man on the Defensive, both 1929). In the first essay, he draws on his experience of a trip to Mendoza through the vastness of the pampas. From its borders, it appears as a place of promise, so that the essence of Argentine life is perhaps a promise. The pampa is nothing but abundance, the wheels of the mechanical mills there appear as wheels of fortune.

But when the promises are not fulfilled, as we have already seen in the metaphors of failure, the Argentinean is stunned. The soul of the Creole is filled with broken promises and suffers from radical dissatisfaction. Ortega observes that the Creole does not care about his actual life, but spends it outside himself, in the other, in the promised life, and is therefore, perhaps more than any other human being, dominated by the feeling of a life that has slipped away unnoticed.

This contradicts the expectation of a great future as a nation, which is increasingly proving to be an illusion. "The Argentine people are not content with being just one nation among others: they want a sublime destiny, they demand a proud future for themselves, they do not want a history without triumph, and they are determined to rule. It will succeed or it will not, but it is extremely interesting to observe the historical development of a people with an imperial vocation." A pure illusion that can only be maintained by denying reality.

In his second essay, Ortega expresses his astonishment at the development of the state under Irigoyen's government. It appears to him to have grown stronger, as in Prussia, but at the same time rigid, disconnected from social spontaneity, that is, from the labour movement and its demands, which it seeks to enforce through strikes and demonstrations. A perfect state that has become a powerful machine, like the Roman Empire that fell in its time.

Ortega observes the self-image and self-presentation of the Argentinians, the mentality into which all new arrivals, the young generation and immigrants are integrated and integrate themselves. It is the image of the narcissist that the Argentinians create for themselves: "Argentinians live attentively, not 'for' what their lives

actually consist of, not 'for' what they are as people, but 'for' an ideal image they have of themselves. [...] It is not a precise idea composed of such and such characteristics. [...] They will rejoice in the self they have found and no longer seriously concern themselves with realising their potential."

It is not so much money that is lacking, but the determination to apply existing rules, better education and the restoration of values that Argentine society once possessed, according to the series of articles in *La Nación*.

Similarly, Ortega advocates working on oneself to make it possible to "change collective morality, the type of values we hold dear, the norms of virtue and ways of being." In response to the many criticisms of his image of Argentina, Ortega replies: "The point is that I owe a significant part of myself – situations, passions, profound experiences, thoughts – to Argentina." He is moved by the other within, a variant that confuses and fascinates him, both Ortega y Gasset, and the author of these lines.

Violence Football The anomic state not only exhibits institutional defects and deviations from the rules, but also allows more violence, which is anomic behaviour. In his dissertation "Figurations of Violence - A Civilisation Theory Comparative Study of Violent Football Spectators in England and Argentina," author Oliver M. Kossek concludes that the civilisational process (Elias) is more advanced in England than in Argentina.

According to this, violence by football spectators is closely linked to the respective social, political and historical developments. While football has immense social significance in both countries, the forms of fan violence differ considerably.

In England, violence in the context of football matches developed in particular through hooligans from the late 1960s onwards. These groups acted according to an internal code of conduct that allowed violence but restricted and regulated it to the immediate vicinity of football matches. These developments should be seen in the context of the stability of the country, which developed into a prosperous consumer society after the two world wars, where the state's monopoly on violence was largely accepted. This also applied to the requirement to respect the lives of others, despite all the brutality.

In contrast, in Argentina, violence by organised fan groups, the *Barras Bravas*, appears to be less regulated and often arbitrary. These groups use violence not only in a sporting context, but also for political and power-political goals. This uncontrolled violence reflects the country's unstable political and economic situation, which is characterised by frequent changes of government, military dictatorships and economic crises. The state security forces enjoy less trust, and violence is sometimes seen as a legitimate means of enforcing interests. The significance and development of anomie and violence can thus be clearly seen in behaviour in various areas of society. And, according to Kossek, just as with state institutions, the lives of opponents within the spectator ranks are not always respected, and deaths occur.

Perón's first phase in power integrated a large part of the population without resorting to dictatorial practices. However, hopes of overcoming violence faded. Society was so steeped in violence that it was hardly surprising that Perón's opposition was persecuted and his government was eventually overthrown in a coup. Until Perón's return from exile in 1973, the country was in an unstable situation moderated by the military, with the Peronists working to seize power.

Republican Customs This book repeatedly echoes criticism of and alternatives to the society of violence, without there being space here for a detailed examination. However, it should be pointed out that there are fascinating alternatives and that resignation is completely out of place.

Even if the structural and mental anchoring of anomie and behaviour is strong and changes only slowly – if there are any impulses for behavioural change at all – it still makes sense to ask how, from a political science perspective, the existence and symbiosis of anarchy and violence can be overcome, and with it the existing material interests in maintaining the structures of anomie, violence and anarchy.

The example of stable republicanism shows that this is possible, but rarely achieved. It is based on the two indispensable aspects mentioned at the beginning: strong institutions and a republican civil society. Since a desirable society cannot be “manufactured” without provoking excessive violence, we are left with only examples of republican communities that have apparently emerged by chance and by broad consensus.

An outstanding example of the emergence and principles of a civil society is the northern Italian city of Siena. In the 13th century the bourgeoisie abolished the rule of the nobility and introduced a republic that lasted for seventy years and increased the city's wealth. In the Hall of the Nine, where the city's affairs were conducted, there are still large frescoes by Ambrogio Lorenzetti depicting good and bad government and the consequences (1338/39).

The frescoes depict the rule of justice alongside political rule, both of which are linked by a unifying rope representing the citizens. The virtues are also depicted, with peace (*la pace*) sitting in a relaxed pose. It is not individuality but community that is in the foreground, and it is not anomie that prevails, but virtues and laws that guide the actions of citizens and government. The consequences for town and country are visible in the form of prosperous town houses, lively trade and the arts.

The republican awareness that laws and virtues can easily be destroyed and therefore require constant practice is the reason for depicting bad government and its consequences in a drastic manner. Such a government has transformed itself into an inhuman, devilishly animalistic form, justice lies bound at her feet. The city houses are in a ruinous state, fraud and robbery are the order of the day, and the fields outside the city are burned.

Between 1200 and 1350, there were lengthy and detailed discussions about republican government in the early Renaissance, inspired by the ancient thinkers Salust, Seneca and, above all, Cicero, and recorded by Brunetto Latini in his *“Livre du tresor”* and by other authors.

According to Quentin Skinner, all texts have in common the preservation of peace as the highest goal of good government, a life of harmony and tranquillity for everyone, the rejection of the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of the common good, the primacy of the common good over individual well-being, and two fundamental conditions: an elected government and a virtuous rule that places peace at the centre of communal life.

Under the painting is written:

Where this sacred virtue (justice) reigns, / it leads the many souls to unity, / and these, thus united, / attain the common good for their lord. / He, in order to govern his state, decides / never to turn his eyes away / from the splendour of the faces / of the virtues that surround him. / Therefore, in triumph, taxes, tributes and domination over the land are presented to him; / therefore, without war, every civil effect comes into being – useful, necessary and joyful.

About bad government it is said:

Where justice is bound, / no one will ever agree on the common good, / nor will they abide by the law, / so that tyranny gains the upper hand. / This, in order to satisfy its wickedness, / never wants to and never will act in disagreement / with the filthy nature / of the vices that are here with it. It banishes those who are willing to do good and surrounds itself with all those who intend to do evil; it always defends those who coerce or rob and those who hate peace, so that its entire country lies neglected.

The Republic of Siena collapsed after a relatively short time, not through its own failings, but through the plague, which killed two-thirds of its inhabitants. With the subsequent re-feudalisation of the republics in Tuscany, crises and wars were the order of the day.

What is interesting here is the emergence of a civilising order. It was promoted by self-governing associations of free citizens and landowners as well as guilds, thus creating something like a corporate identity. Finally, municipal administrative offices were established for the first time. The institutionalised republic of citizens took over the state, monopolised power and changed customs. The “process of civilisation” described by Elias (1939) took place. Elias traces it from the Middle Ages to well into modern times and reveals the profound changes in personality and social structure that took place over this long period. In the case of Siena and Argentina, the time frame and potential for change have been much shorter since indepen-

dence. But Elias assumes a continuous process through which change takes place. This involves both values and mentalities that reveal individual ways of thinking, judging and behaving and become established in habitual patterns. They all develop under the influence of the socially prevailing values and behaviours, consolidate and then change again in part. In Siena, there have been 70 years of republican practice, certainly another 30 years of preparatory practice by individual civic institutions, as well as reading about antiquity. That is about three generations. But they were not enough to successfully counteract a return to feudalism.

In the United States, the republic was saved from the anti-republican forces of the Civil War and its aftermath. William James, the psychologist we have already heard about in connection with Argentina's independence, sees the reason for this in the dominant republican habits. In the speech already referred to, he explains the conditions for maintaining a stable republic:

Our great Western republic had been a unique anomaly from the beginning. A land of freedom, as it proudly called itself, with slavery enthroned at its centre and ultimately dictating the terms of unconditional surrender to every other organ of its life – what was this but a lie and a terrible contradiction? For three quarters of a century, it nevertheless endured, held together by politics, compromise and concessions. But in the end, this republic was torn in two.

The consequences of the civil war have not yet been overcome, neither in William James's time nor today. "Democracy is still being put to the test," he explains:

The civic spirit of our people is its only bulwark, and neither laws nor monuments, neither warships nor public libraries, nor great newspapers or booming stock markets, neither mechanical inventions nor political skill, nor churches or universities or civil service examinations can save us from decline if the inner secret is lost. This secret, which is both the secret and the glory of our English-speaking race, consists of nothing more than two common habits, two deeply rooted habits that have been transferred to public life – habits that are so commonplace that they do not require rhetorical expression, but are nevertheless perhaps more valuable than any others that mankind has ever acquired. They cannot be emphasised or praised often enough. One is the habit of maintaining good humour towards the opposing party when it has won fairly, resulting from practice and discipline; the other is the habit of meeting with fierce and merciless rejection any person or group of persons who transgress the legal limits of fairness or disturb the public peace.

Returning to Argentina, after reviewing the scenes and epochs of violence, the question arises of the potential for non-violence, for pacification. However, there are no indications of a far-reaching change in values and mentality.

However, there has been virtually no republican practice of politics and power in Argentina, as in Latin America as a whole. Instead, there is a fundamental propensity for violence. In the following chapter, we not only return to the world of violence, but also encounter its increase on both sides, that of the military and that of the guerrillas, until it reaches an unprecedented explosion.

9 The Escalation of Violence

Operation Massacre | Anti-Peronists | Peronist Resistance |
Uprising in Córdoba | Rise of the Montoneros | Trelew |
Failure of the Montoneros | Humour

Operation Massacre

10 June 1956, in the early hours of the morning. Location: a repulsive rubbish dump, criss-crossed by ditches that are full of water in winter and filled with unburied animal carcasses in summer; in between, mountains of tin cans and scrap metal. [...] The moment has come. This is proven by a brief, unforgettable exchange [...].

“What are you doing to us?” asks one.

“Keep running,” is the answer.

“We are innocent!” several shout at once.

“Don’t be afraid,” comes the reply, “we won’t hurt you!”

From this point on, the reports break up into fragments, twelve or thirteen tangled balls of panic.

“Operation Massacre” was researched and written by Rodolfo Walsh, an Argentine writer and journalist of Irish descent who was murdered in 1977 during a much larger massacre.

His research does not conceal anything, but remains visible as a permanent stain on the military. In the year before this massacre, the Perón government was overthrown by the military under the leadership of Eduardo Lonardi, who was replaced shortly afterwards by Pedro Aramburu. The coup was euphemistically called the *Revolución Libertadora* (Liberation Revolution). After the French Revolution, the 20th century was the century of social, political and anti-colonial revolutions and, as here, of restorative or even reactionary revolutions. Every coup was justified as a revolution.

The coup initially failed. Naval aviators bombed the Casa Rosada in the hope of capturing Perón, and the Plaza de Mayo, but missed him and instead killed over 300 people in the attack, which lasted several hours. The coup succeeded on its second attempt a few weeks later. Perón fled abroad and lived in Madrid for 17 years un-

til his return in 1973. Evita's body was kidnapped in order to deprive the population of a central object of identification. The aim of the "revolution" was to ban all Peronist organisations and to incorporate all other political forces by forming an advisory council consisting of leading representatives of the UCR, the Socialist Party, the Progressive Democratic Party, the conservative National Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Party. The Peronists were not allowed to participate in the elections organised by the military in 1958 and 1963.

On 9 June 1956, a group of officers and non-commissioned officers led by General Valle decided to overthrow Aramburu's dictatorship. The uprising failed, and eighteen military personnel and fourteen civilians were shot dead. Peronism described this uprising as part of the Peronist resistance, even though the leaders were not Peronists. The Peronist resistance then revolved around demands for Perón's return and the return of Evita's body. In "Operation Massacre," Walsh uses witness testimony to prove that the shooting of the men without charge and before martial law came into effect was unlawful.

A new phase of violence began. As we have seen, the early civil wars and genocide of the 19th century were initially replaced by violence against workers and trade unions. While the military coups and governments up to 1955 were only interested in resolving tensions between competing powers, mostly between the UCR, Peronism and representatives of the large landowners, this changed fundamentally with the bloody coup of 1955. For the first time, the public sphere was bombed in the Plaza de Mayo, killing more than 300 people, injuring around 700 and imprisoning thousands after the takeover.

Illegal repression thus became an integral part of the measures of oppression and a political instrument in the years that followed. The dictators who ruled from 1976 to 1983 intensified these measures in a barbaric manner. Torture was used to obtain the names of further suspects, regardless of whether they could be considered guilty or innocent, and systematic disappearances were used to eliminate all evidence and witnesses.

Operation Massacre is a true account written using the techniques of fictional crime novels. It was published seven years before Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the classic work of new journalism, but it was largely ignored outside Argentina. This new way of showing reality, mixing factual, specific, and moral, universal truths, is really effective because it gives you the facts but doesn't leave the reader cold.

Authors combine these two levels to varying degrees. The Argentine Miguel Bonasso, for example, combines the torture centre ESMA in Buenos Aires with a fictional character in his non-fiction novel *Recuerdo de la muerte* (Memory of Death, 1988). Javier Cercas contrasts the particular significance of factual truth with universal truth in his work, for example in his novel *Anatomía de un instante* (Anatomy of a Moment, 2014) about the failed military coup in Madrid on 23 February 1981, or in *El impostor* (The Impostor, 2014), who invented his imprisonment in Nazi

concentration camps. In his reconstructive novel *Seven Seconds* (1988), Don DeLillo undertook speculative research with documentary pretensions about the assassination of John F. Kennedy and his assassin Lee Oswald. He describes himself as part scientist, novelist, biographer, historian and existential detective.

We find another way of connecting different disciplines in Hannah Arendt, but also with the aim of giving facts moral content. In her work on totalitarian rule, she explicitly writes a political analysis in the form of historical events, but in the face of human outrage, she refrains from writing *sine ira et studio* with the dispassionate objectivity of science. There is a remarkable parallel in her work between the portrayal of the Jewish woman Rahel Varnhagen's search for her independent self and the search of the disoriented sections of the population for their place in a disintegrating society in the first decades of the 20th century. Varnhagen's search led to self-awareness as a pariah, but for the modern masses the search led to their surrender to totalitarian movements.

"Operation Massacre" is so impressive because of its clear and concise informative language, because the dry description of the killing and the sober journalistic research create such a moving atmosphere.

The military dictatorship that had been in power since 1976 had Walsh in its sights, but did not take any action against him. It was only when he published an open letter to the military junta on the first anniversary of the dictatorship that he was visited on the same day. Walsh knew that he would be abducted, tortured and disappeared. He therefore carried a pistol with him and was shot dead in a firefight. "He got away with death," as the writer Leo Federmaier puts it. We know how and where Walsh died. But his body disappeared, and he too belongs to the newly created species of the disappeared, whom the military refer to as "*disposición final*," or final disposal. "It's a military term for discarding useless things, such as worn-out clothing," Videla explains at a press conference regarding the disappeared. "As long as this is the case, the disappeared are an unknown quantity. If he reappears, well, then he will receive treatment X. And if it turns out that he has not disappeared but is dead, he will receive treatment Z. But as long as he is disappeared, he cannot receive special treatment. He is an unknown quantity, a disappeared person, a disembodied being; he does not exist, neither dead nor alive; he has disappeared."

In his open letter, Walsh denounced the crimes of the dictators with cutting clarity, not in abstract terms, but on the basis of concrete deeds and figures:

What you have destroyed [...] is the possibility of a democratic process in which the people could have eliminated the abuses that you have perpetuated and exacerbated. [...]

You have restored the flow of ideas and interests of the defeated minorities (in the last elections, WH) that hinder the development of productive forces, exploit the people and undermine the nation. Such a policy can only be enforced for the time

being by banning parties, interfering with trade unions, muzzling the press and introducing the most brutal terror that Argentine society has ever experienced. [...]

Fifteen thousand disappeared, ten thousand prisoners, four thousand dead, tens of thousands of people in exile are the bare figures of this terror. Since the normal prisons are full, you are setting up virtual concentration camps in the country's most important garrisons, to which no judge, lawyer, journalist or international observer has access. The military secrecy surrounding the proceedings, which is cited as necessary for the investigations, turns most arrests into kidnappings, allowing for unlimited torture and shootings without trial. [...]

More than seven thousand habeas corpus petitions were rejected last year. In thousands of other cases of disappearances, appeals have not even been filed because it is known in advance that they are useless, or because no lawyer can be found who dares to file them after the fifty or sixty lawyers who had filed them were themselves abducted. [...]

Seventy shootings after the bombing of the Federal Security Agency, 55 in response to the bombing of the La Plata police headquarters, 30 for the attack on the Ministry of Defence, 40 in the New Year's Day massacre following the death of Colonel Castellanos, and 19 after the explosion that destroyed the Ciudadela police station. They are part of 1,200 executions in 300 alleged combat operations in which the enemy suffered no injuries and the forces under his command suffered no fatalities. [...]

The discovery of thirty-four bodies in Buenos Aires between 3 and 9 April 1976, eight in San Telmo on 4 July, and ten in the Luján River on 9 October were not made public. They form the backdrop to the massacres of 20 August, in which 30 bodies were found 15 kilometres from Campo de Mayo and 17 in Lomas de Zamora.

However, according to Walsh, the repression not only affected the political sphere, but also the standard of living of the population.

In one year, you have reduced workers' real wages by 40%, reduced their share of national income to 30%, increased the number of hours a worker needs to work to pay for a family's basket of goods from 6 to 18, thereby reviving forms of forced labour that no longer exist even in the last colonial strongholds.

They have frozen wages while prices are rising at breakneck speed, abolished all forms of collective redress, banned assemblies and internal commissions, extended working hours, raised unemployment to a record 9% and promised to increase it even further with 300,000 new layoffs. They have rolled back production conditions to the beginning of the industrial age, and when workers have tried to protest, they have branded them as subversives and kidnapped entire groups of delegates, who in some cases have turned up dead and in others have not turned up at all. [...]

Food consumption has fallen by 40 %, clothing by more than 50 %, and the

consumption of medicines has practically disappeared among the lower classes. There are already areas in the greater Buenos Aires area where infant mortality exceeds 30%, a figure that puts us on a par with Rhodesia, Dahomey or the Guianas. [...]

Half-lit cities, entire neighbourhoods without water because monopolists are plundering underground water resources, thousands of blocks of houses turned into a single pothole because you only pave military districts and decorate the Plaza de Mayo, one of the largest rivers in the world polluted along its banks because the partners of Minister Martínez de Hoz dump their industrial waste into it, and the only government measure you have taken is to ban people from bathing. You have also had no luck with the abstract goals of the economy, which you usually refer to as "the country". A decline in gross domestic product of around 3%, foreign debt of \$600 per capita, an annual inflation rate of 400%, an increase in money in circulation of 9% in just one week in December, and a decline in foreign investment of 13% are also world records, the rare fruit of cold calculation and gross incompetence. [...]

One billion eight hundred million dollars, equivalent to half of Argentina's exports, for security and defence in 1977, four thousand new jobs for federal police officers, twelve thousand in the province of Buenos Aires with twice the salary of an industrial worker and three times the salary of a school headmaster, while in secret the salaries of the military themselves are increased by 120% from February onwards, prove that in the realm of torture and death, the only sector of the Argentine economy where production is growing and where the price per guerrilla killed is rising faster than the dollar, there is neither frost nor unemployment ...

Walsh concludes, aware of his imminent murder:

These are the thoughts I wanted to convey to the members of this junta on the first anniversary of its ill-fated government, with no hope of being heard, with the certainty of being persecuted, but faithful to my long-standing commitment to bear witness in difficult times.

Walsh had been a member of the Montoneros since 1973 and survived to see his daughter María Victoria, also a member of the Montoneros, die during a street fight in 1976, six months after the military coup. His second daughter, Patricia, entered public life after the dictatorship as a left-wing Peronist politician, ran for the Argentine presidency in 1999 and 2003, and is a member of parliament and the Buenos Aires city government.

However, Walsh's claim that the actions of the Montoneros did not cause any casualties is not generally true of the attacks he mentions. From the spectacular assassination of Aramburú to the murder of trade union leader and Perón confidant Rucci, the Montoneros carried out significant assassinations, but also suffered casualties on their side in confrontations with the police and military. We will look at the

details later. The conservative trade union leader and Perón confidant Rucci had too much influence. Juan Gelman, a leading Montonero, explains in language unworthy of the great poet: "The thing with Rucci happened in the belief that putting a corpse on Perón's table would balance his political game between the right and the left."

Anti-Peronists In the 1950s, there was great hostility towards Peronism among liberal-conservative intellectuals and students. They founded the anti-Peronist "Comandos Civiles" (Civil Commando Units), in which radicals, conservatives, democrats, Christian democrats, socialists, left-wing intellectuals, Catholic nationalists and Catholic youth groups formed an anti-Peronist front. They came mainly from the upper and middle classes. Their role model was the French "Maquis," that fought against the Nazi occupation. They revered death in battle, considered themselves the "vanguard of the revolution," but were supplied with weapons, explosives, and military training by the military. They were organised in secret cells of 10 to 20 fighters, used aliases, secret printing presses and medical care, and were trained in the use of weapons, explosives and eavesdropping. When the military uprising against Perón began in 1955, the Central Committee in Buenos Aires carried out sabotage operations on eleven radio stations. In Córdoba, the epicentre of the military uprising, the *Comandos Civiles* were heavily involved in clashes with the police and government troops. There were reports of between 1,500 and 3,500 armed youths on the streets accompanying the rebel military units.

As early as 1946, leading representatives of the Sociedad Rural (Agricultural Society) of large landowners and the UCR in Corrientes plan an assassination attempt on Perón during his visit to this province, but it fails.

In 1951, a group of students planned an assassination attempt that was dramatically modelled on the execution of Nazi leader Heydrich in Prague and, because of their age (all under 20), was called "Operation Baby." Many years later, one of the conspirators described the intellectual background in an interview with Aldo Duzdevich, a journalist, politician and later guerrilla fighter with the Montoneros:

In 1945, when Peronism emerged, we saw Perón as the reincarnation of Nazi fascism. It was almost a natural continuation of the European conflict. And if we were on the winning side, we couldn't allow "the bad guys" to take control of our country. At university, I became involved in some anti-Peronist groups with the idea of overthrowing the government.

Perón was to be attacked on his morning drive to the government palace with a jeep loaded with explosives. The preparations were discovered and the group arrested. In 1971, the former conspirator visited former President Perón in exile in Spain. Perón appeared before the remorseful man like a familiar confessor, ready to forgive him: "I said to him, 'I don't know if you remember, General, but I took part in the Babies'

Conspiracy.' Perón patted me on the shoulder and replied, 'How could I forget, my son! When Jorsiomo, the son of a good friend of mine, was there! Boys' stuff! [...] Come in, my son, sit down!'"

In 1952, the police foiled a plot orchestrated by the military to attack the president's residence in Libertador and Tagle with armoured trucks. During the successful coup in 1955, naval aviators dropped more than a hundred bombs on the government district, killing and injuring several hundred people, as already mentioned. Among them were about 60 passengers on a public bus.

Over the years, many of these young anti-Peronist activists became radical Peronist activists and joined the Montoneros. One of them, Gustavo, told Aldo Dudzevich:

I belong to the circle of wealthy families or the oligarchy of the 1940s and was educated by the Jesuits. They sent me to Inmaculada de Santa Fe, where Jorge Bergoglio (later Pope Francis, WH) taught in the 1960s. It was a school founded by the Jesuits in 1610 and had a long tradition. I remember that when I was at Inmaculada, we marched in blue coats with muskets on our shoulders on national holidays. Although we were children of the oligarchy, the priests took us to hospitals and slums to help people. [...] Of course, the atmosphere at school was very anti-Peronist.

Just as the Inmaculada had formed "Comandos Civiles" in 1955, in the mid-1970s the "wealthy" families stopped sending their children to the Inmaculada because they considered it a "cradle of the Montoneros."

"When I went to university, all my friends were anti-Peronist," Gustavo continues,

[...] we were the children of the oligarchy, our entire family and social environment was very anti-Peronist. Perón was synonymous with everything bad, he was a thief, a dictator. [...] We were afraid that they would expropriate our fields. They were to be expropriated. [...]

I also remember that on the day of the bomb attack on 16 June, we gathered on a corner near the Plaza de Mayo, wearing white armbands; we didn't know exactly what was going to happen, but around 11 o'clock we were ordered to disperse.

In the days after the coup, I had to accompany the gendarmerie during a raid against a trade unionist in the suburbs; I remember how the women cried. Another time, during a bus drivers' strike, we were called together to drive buses; we went in pairs, armed with .45 pistols. [...]

I continued my studies, graduated and devoted myself to my profession. Perhaps because of the frustration over everything that followed the liberation revolution, I, like many other young people, began to change our perception of reality. This was not an individual act; several of my friends evolved in their thinking and un-

derstanding of history and politics. As for me personally, my profession brought me into close contact with workers. I began to discover the reality of modest, hard-working people; the difficulties they faced in supporting their families, the tragedies that many of them experienced. The Christian teaching of “putting yourself in the other person’s shoes,” which the Jesuits of the Inmaculada instilled in me in my youth, made me think and showed me new ways of thinking and acting.

Peronist Resistance The political landscape in Argentina is always confusing. Whether it’s the liberals of the UCR, the Peronists or the trade unions, they are always divided into different factions, more left-wing or right-wing. This is also the case for the military, who needed a failed coup attempt in June 1955 and another successful attempt in September to unite against Perón.

We have already heard that the intelligentsia, students, university staff and journalists were opposed to Perón and supported this coup. Anyone who wanted to be radical could not join the existing realpolitik Peronist movement, but had to clearly distance themselves from the Peronists in government. There was still the legacy of fascism from the 1920s to the 1940s. Walsh was also briefly a member of this group. From 1944 to 1945, he was a member of the extreme right-wing *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista* (Nationalist Liberation Alliance).

When Perón is overthrown, the military bans the Peronist movement and elections are held in 1958, Arturo Frondizi from the radical wing of the UCR has the best chance of winning the presidency by agreeing with Perón to secure the Peronist vote in return for pursuing social policies that are acceptable to the Peronists. As the military retained control of political affairs during Frondizi’s presidency, it also successfully forced Frondizi to resign in 1962.

Meanwhile, a global shift to the left is taking place: the Cuban Revolution, the independence of Algeria after a bloody liberation struggle in 1962, and the decolonisation process with independence and guerrilla movements. These dominate the discourse on freedom and social justice. The first guerrilla group to refer to Perón was the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional-Movimiento Peronista de Liberación* (National Liberation Army-Peronist Liberation Movement), founded in 1959, which was popularly known as “Uturuncos” Los after the myth of the indigenous people in northern Argentina, a mixture of humans and jaguars. They caused a stir with a raid on a police station to seize weapons, but soon disbanded.

The Argentine and Cuban revolutionary and minister Ernesto “Che” Guevara contacted Frondizi to discuss an anti-imperialist front. In 1964, he founded the “Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo” (People’s Guerrilla Army) in the Andes in northern Argentina. The first fighters of this unsuccessful guerrilla organisation were trained in Cuba and led by the Peronist Jorge Masetti, Guevara’s second in command.

Masetti had worked for the Latin American press agency Prensa Latina. In the mid-1940s, he was also a member of the ultra-right-wing “Nationalist Liberation Alliance,” as were Walsh and journalist Rogelio García Lupo, who worked with him at “Prensa Latina.”

Under the influence of the liberation movements, numerous right-wing radicals and anti-Peronists in Argentina switched sides in the 1960s and became left-wingers or left-wing radicals who joined the Peronist movement. Perón now had a movement behind him that consisted of several movements and increasingly ranged from the far right to the far left. As a military man and tactically astute politician, he generally held the guerrillas in high esteem. Anything that supported his Third Way was welcome. When Guevara was shot dead in Bolivia in 1967, he wrote:

It is with deep sadness that I have received the news of an irreplaceable loss for the cause of the peoples fighting for their liberation. Today, the most extraordinary figure of the Latin American revolution has fallen as a hero in this struggle: Commander Che Guevara has died. His death tears my soul apart, for he was one of us, perhaps the best.

Decades later, it emerged that the letter had not been written by him, but by a small group of left-wing Peronists. Perón, however, did not deny it.

In his critical book about the “armed arrogance of the Montoneros,” the journalist and democratic socialist Pablo Giussani, born in 1927, describes his enthusiasm for Mussolini as a young man:

At the age of 15, when Stalingrad, the collapse of the German-Italian forces in Africa and the coup d'état of 4 June 1943 in Argentina took place, I had a picture of Mussolini at the head of my bed instead of the Christ who presided over those of my friends: that classic and imposing profile with the tense jaw, the aggressive chin and the flashing gaze in the shadow of the black helmet.

My last words before going to sleep and my first words after getting up were the ritual “*saluto al Duce*,” which I uttered with my right hand raised and in a firm stance.

Not all right-wing extremist movements dissolved into Peronist factions. A legacy of fascism remained in the form of a nationalist student union founded in 1935, which in 1957 gave rise to the Nationalist Movement of the Tacuara. (Tacuara is a sort of bamboo lance used by the Guaraní people during their struggle for independence against the Spanish troops). The history of this movement is marked by changes of allegiance and shifting ideological positions. It operated in Argentina between 1957 and 1966 and included Falangists, fascists and neo-Nazis. It was closely linked to the Peronist movement, and its goal was to establish a national syndicalist state and combat communism and Judaism. To this end, it propagated a nationalist,

Catholic, anti-communist and anti-Semitic ideology and despised liberal democracy. Its members were mostly young people from the upper classes. One of the activists was Rodolfo Galimberti, who later became a member of the Montoneros. In this role, he kidnapped the twin heirs to Argentina's largest conglomerate Bunge & Born, and demanded a ransom of 60 million dollars.

The Nationalist Movement was responsible for numerous terrorist attacks, including bombings of Jewish institutions. Forty-three terrorist acts were recorded in 1963. Violence was deliberately used as a means of mobilisation. The programme adopted in 1958 stated that its goal was to form a revolutionary aristocracy that would use an uprising to establish a corporatist and Catholic state whose government would be appointed by the trade unions, thereby replacing parliament. The Catholic Church and the armed forces were to play a decisive role and promote a "warlike way of life" and "Catholic morality." Among the historical role models was the dictator Rosas, but not, of course, the Enlightenment figure Sarmiento.

In the 1960s, the movement experienced internal tensions and divisions. Some members began to turn to Marxism and left-wing Peronism, leading to the founding of the "*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara*" (MNRT). This group distanced itself from the anti-Semitism and anti-Christianity of the original "Tacuara". One of its best-known members was Dardo Cabo, who became famous through Operation Condor, in which he and seventeen other activists hijacked an Aerolíneas Argentinas plane in 1966 to take it to the Falkland Islands and raise four Argentine flags. He became one of the most important leaders of the organisation "Descamisados" (The Shirtless Ones), who allegedly murdered trade unionist Augusto Vandor (Peronism without Perón) in 1969. Years later, he became editor of the magazine *El Descamisado*, one of the most important unofficial media outlets of the Montoneros at the time. Cabo was murdered in 1977 while in custody by members of the army.

Other former members of Tacuara collaborated with the right-wing Peronist death squads known as the Triple A (*Alianza Anticomunista Argentina*) in the 1970s or worked directly for the secret service during the dictatorship. These included Felipe Romeo and José Miguel Tarquini, the publisher and editor-in-chief of *El Caudillo*, the official organ of the Triple A.

At just 27 years of age, Juan Manuel Abal Medina was appointed secretary general of the Peronist Party (1972–1974) by Perón. In the 1960s, he was a member of the GRN, the Nationalist Guard of Restoration, which was even more aggressively reactionary and anti-Peronist than Tacuara. His younger brother Fernando surpassed him as the first leader of the Montoneros and murderer of General Aramburu, who had staged a coup against Perón in 1955.

In 1962, the Arab League sought cooperation with Tacuara to mobilise against Israel. Tacuara was suspected of being financed by the League, but participated in anti-Semitic smear campaigns.

Tacuara was involved in numerous violent actions, including the murder of Jewish activist Raúl Alterman. These events led to public outrage and a tightening of repressive measures. After its leaders withdrew in the 1970s, the movement remained in existence and left a lasting influence on right-wing extremist currents in Argentina. Finally, after several debates on the role of violence, with up to a hundred participants, the foundations for the founding of the Montoneros were laid in 1968 at a meeting of the magazine *Cristianismo y Revolución*.

Uprising in Córdoba The uprising of students and workers in the city of Córdoba, who demanded better working conditions and spoke out against the dictatorship, was a mythical event. It embodied the possibility of protest, the reward for courage, the alternative to decades of tolerance and oppression in a country that had only one answer to every question: violence.

At the end of the 1960s, social and political radicalisation increased. The “Cordobazo” was a two-day strike and with protests across society involving students, workers and trade unionists. It prompted the ruling Onganía dictatorship to prepare elections in 1970, leading to the return of Perón in 1973. Córdoba is the second largest city in Argentina and was growing rapidly at the time. As an industrial centre with a large automotive industry, it has a strong workforce, which in those days was led primarily by the legendary trade unionist Agustin Tosco.

The shift to the left in those years also included the Catholic Church’s turn to liberation theology and its work in poor neighbourhoods, so that the churches too demanded social improvements and the withdrawal of the military. All organisations were divided into moderate and radical groups, such as the legalistic “General Confederation of Labour” (CGT) and the minority of radical trade unions in the energy, printing and media sectors, “Luz y Fuerza” and “Gráficos”.

When an active strike was announced, many workers left their factories and headed for the city centre. The police tried to stop the marches and fired tear gas, and later live ammunition. Fires were lit to disperse the clouds of gas, and the police launched rapid attacks against the demonstrators, who in turn armed themselves with stones and tools.

The protests were further fuelled by plans to extend working hours and unrest with fatalities in other cities. The unions were coordinating their activities with each other and with students and local residents. The demonstrators armed themselves with ball bearings to throw at police horses, Molotov cocktails and “Miguelitos” (nails placed in rubber bands), as well as cats to distract the police dogs. A 37-hour general strike was called, and demonstrations from various directions moved towards the centre.

After just two hours, the police had lost control of the western part of the city and ran out of tear gas and fuel. The first person was killed. The dictator sent in the army, which imposed a curfew that no one obeyed, and set up a summary court. Civilians

also fired shots, presumably armed members of the “Tacuara”. On the third day, the population surrendered. 104 people were sentenced by the summary court, including Tosco to eight years. Thirty people were killed, 300 injured and two thousand arrested. The court martial imposed sentences of between three and eight months.

After 16 months, Tosco was released. He was one of the rare, fearless grassroots democrats for whom general assemblies were more important than representative bodies. His orientation was therefore anti-bureaucratic, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist. His opponent in the CGT was José Ignacio Rucci, about whom he says: “Rucci and his disciples are prisoners of their commitment to the powerful, prisoners of the guardians who provide them with the political apparatus, prisoners of a prison from which they can never escape: that of submission and humiliation.”

In the same year, Onganía granted an amnesty, but the union leaders were sidelined or, in one case, murdered. Tosco was threatened by the Triple A and did not dare to leave his hiding place to seek medical attention for an illness. He tragically died of blood poisoning.

Tosco was exceptionally selfless, transparent and free of any vanity or self-centredness, which is unusual for anyone in such a prominent position. He always saw himself as a representative of the grassroots. Aware that his end was near, he wrote a loving letter to his son, expressing his regret that he would not be able to bring him the football he wanted for his birthday.

Osvaldo Bayer met him at the CGT organisational congress in 1956:

A congress chaired by a navy captain, Patrón Laplacete, no less. No less. The armed forces with the arrogance to dictate the lives of workers. Argentine realities. But there was also this 26-year-old labour leader who said with such clarity and civil courage: No, gentlemen, this is not the way. Not with bombs, not with bullets, not with prisons, not with uniformed dictatorships. But with assemblies and marches through the streets. At the age of 27, he was already secretary general of Luz y Fuerza de Córdoba.

Such people deserve to be remembered with a monument, not dictators and perpetrators of genocide. “A staunch enemy of trade union bureaucracy. For him, that was precisely where the cancer of the labour movement lay: the lack of grassroots democracy, caudillismo, privileges, favours, in short, corruption,” recalls Bayer. “One of the most incredible and just rebellions in the history of our people.” When a group of guerrilla leaders managed to escape from a high-security prison in Rawson, “he refused. He believed more in the strength of his comrades in the factories, who would force the military dictatorship to finally release him.” Tosco’s return to Córdoba was a triumph. “He will remain a trade union leader who worked first and was a leader second, without extra money or a car with a driver. His line was clear: an alliance

with grassroots Peronists and a courageous rejection of the demagogic and corrupt populism of the Peronists.”

A thousand people attended his funeral. When the speeches began, the police fired on the mourners from the surrounding rooftops and streets, in the tradition of the “Semana Trágica” (Tragic Week). A living legacy of barbarism that had become the norm.

Where democracy can hardly ever fully develop, politicians are controlled by the military, and bureaucracy, corruption and class snobbery reign supreme, ultimately no one is responsible for anything and there seems to be no way out of poverty and economic hardship. Somebody like Tosco appears to be an unreal ideal figure from the another world. He stands up for his views and puts his life at risk for his values. In contrast with Tosco, the society is like a night that envelops us in darkness. Biblical, because there are no nuances. Because the focus is always on the whole, on domination and servitude, on life or death. The Enlightenment can illuminate the darkness as mere illusion. The fact that this Enlightenment contributes more to the liberation of thought than to freedom of movement is due to the effective political lack of freedom in which it arose. Kant still cloaked his sympathies with the French Revolution in vague terms. Tosco’s radical practice – not just his point of view – towards bureaucracy, representation and domination, on the other hand, lights the way forward. The liberation of the military from its domination mentality, of politics from its corruption, and of backward entrepreneurs from their irresponsibility requires a civil society that presents practical alternatives.

A half-democracy is no democracy at all.

The commander who suppressed the uprising, General Lanusse, succeeded Onganía. His attempt to keep the upcoming elections within narrow limits by means of a “Great National Agreement” failed.

Rise of the Montoneros On the political level, the shift to the left in society led to the emergence of a left-wing “Revolutionary Tendency” (TR) within Peronism with the guerrilla organisations “Revolutionary Armed Forces” (FAR), “Peronist Armed Forces” (FAP) and “Montoneros,” named after the popular militias of the liberation struggles against Spain. In 1969/70, the Montoneros advocated the return of Perón and, at the same time, a return to the “original,” left-wing and nationalist Peronism of the early years.

Trelew A decisive event in the radicalisation of the guerrilla organisations and military forces was the Trelew massacre in southern Argentina on 22 August 1972, in which 16 prisoners, members of the Trotskyist “Revolutionary People’s Army” (ERP) operating in rural northern Argentina, as well as members of the FAR and Montoneros, were murdered by the military. Of the approximately 200 political prisoners, a group managed to escape from Rawson prison, including the leader of the ERP,

Santucho, and Vaca Narvaja from the leadership of the Montoneros. Due to communication problems, it was not possible to transport the originally planned 110 prisoners in three trucks to the nearby airport in Trelew. After a long wait, only six prisoners were finally able to escape, including the two leaders and Marcos Osatinsky, also a leader of the Montoneros, Enrique Gorriarán, co-founder of the ERP and involved in the assassination of the former dictator of Nicaragua, Somoza, Roberto Quieto, a leader of the Montoneros, and Domingo Menna, a leader of the ERP, took off by plane and fly to Santiago de Chile, where they were granted asylum by the Allende government. Nineteen other prisoners finally organised three taxis, but arrived too late at the airport. They informed representatives of the press and the judiciary and demanded that the military return them to prison without endangering their lives. The Peronist "Justicialist Party" declared: "We demand respect for the human rights of the political prisoners in the Rawson prison unit and take responsibility for their physical integrity, which is threatened by repressive measures."

Arguing that calm has not yet been restored in the prison, the group was taken to the "Almirante Zar" naval air base. Seven days after the breakout, the prisoners were led out of their cells at night and shot with submachine guns. Seven of them were still alive and were taken to a hospital, where they were not treated. The wounded were taken to another hospital and survived.

Tosco recalls:

At 5 p.m., it was practically certain that all nineteen comrades had been killed at the naval air base. Those were hours of great drama. We all crouched down and held on to the bars above the cell window facing the interior of the cell block. There were silent faces. Others cried in deep pain and anger. Some shouted and cheered for each of the fallen and for the guerrilla organisations, for the working class, for the revolution and for the country.

In the evening, a simultaneous guerrilla tribute was prepared in the six sections where the political and social prisoners were housed. Spontaneously, each of them recounted aspects of the lives, beliefs and personalities of the fallen until all were complete. Afterwards, several of them took the floor, condemning and denouncing the murder and holding the dictatorship and the system responsible for the crime. Then the names of each individual were called out loud, and each time there was a lively and unanimous response: "Present, until victory forever!"

The various party marching songs were sung collectively. Everything fell silent. The guards ordered everyone to go to bed. No one slept that night. The memory of the fallen martyrs, the image of each one, the heroic example of each one filled the imagination, stirred the emotions and gave further indication of the hard and glorious revolutionary path that the working class and the people will follow until their complete and final liberation.

Just as after the suppression of the uprising in Patagonia, the military officer responsible was shot dead in front of his house in Buenos Aires, in this case the counter-admiral responsible, Hermes Quijada, was shot dead in the centre of Buenos Aires by Víctor José Fernández Palmeiro of the ERP from a motorcycle. The military officer's chauffeur then shot the assassin.

Paco Urondo recounts the events in his book *La patria fusilada* (The Execution of the Fatherland). It consists of a long joint interview with the three survivors in 1973, nine months after the massacre. Perón's deputy, Héctor Cámpora, won the first elections after eight years of dictatorship, and granted amnesty to political prisoners. On the evening before their release, Urondo spoke in cell No. 2 in Villa Devoto from 9 p.m. until 4 a.m. the next morning, surrounded by euphoric prisoners who sang, shouted slogans, painted graffiti on the walls and made banners. The three survivors, now also released, are Alberto Miguel Camps, member of the FAR, María Antonia Berger, FAR, and Ricardo René Haidar, "Montonero". That evening, happiness was already tinged with tragic misfortune. They were determined to return to the FAR and the Montoneros and go underground. They had embarked on a path of disaster and continued to follow it. They did not live long: Camps was shot dead in a confrontation with the police in 1977, Berger disappeared in 1979 and Haidar in 1982.

And Perón sits in exile in Madrid. While reform-minded military leaders take power in Peru and Panama in the 1960s, his return to Argentina in 1964 fails. When Perón takes off, President Illia intervenes with the Brazilian government. They do not allow Perón to continue his flight after a stopover in Brazil and force him to turn back. Perón has to wait another nine years before he can finally return to Argentina. His hopes for a Third Way are then dashed.

Failure of the Montoneros The uncompromising revolutionary attitude attracts intellectuals in particular. Rudolfo Walsh, the writer Haroldo Conti, who is one of the first to disappear, the cultural politician Paco Urondo, the poet Juan Gelman, who survives in exile, and others. And also those with strong moral and religious convictions, such as Juan Manuel Abal Medina's brother Fernando, who became the first leader of the Montoneros, kidnapped and murdered Aramburu, and was killed shortly afterwards in a firefight with the police. Mario Firmenich is the new leader. Both men associated with the influential left-wing priest Carlos Mugica, whose focus was on fighting poverty. However, he strictly rejected violence, which did not protect him from being murdered, presumably by the Triple A.

During the mass demonstrations marking Perón's return in June 1973, violent clashes broke out at Ezeiza Airport between the left-wing Montoneros and the conservative wing of Peronism; approximately 500,000 people gathered there, and 13 people were killed and hundreds injured in a shootout. Until then, Perón had pursued a policy of vacillation, sometimes praising the Montoneros, sometimes condemning them. In response to a letter sent to him by the Montoneros via Rodolfo

Galimberti, he made it clear that he had no criticism of the newly formed guerrilla movement of young Peronists. On the contrary, he welcomed their uprising, writing: "I recommend what has been done." Juan Manuel Abal Medina recalls that:

Perón himself circulated a remarkable letter, which he sent to the Montoneros, explaining that it was completely wrong for him to have expressed his displeasure at an event that was supported by the vast majority of the Argentine people. [...] The only group that had contact with the general outside the organic structures of the movement were the Montoneros. They had direct contact with the general and had a lot to do with Isabel.

It was the great upsurge of ideas of social justice that prevailed in the world and gained strength in our country after the Cordobazo. At the national level, the majority of political and social forces had endured a long period of persecution and ostracism. These phenomena came together and led to the explosive 1970s, when the general demands in Argentina were reflected in more violence in a society that had been violated by military governments and civilian puppet governments of the armed forces and the oligarchy. Peronism lived through this period with the firm conviction that the cycle of prohibitions had to be broken at all costs. This created a favourable environment for the proposal of armed struggle.

At the same time, neither side wants to lose the other: the Montoneros do not want to lose Perón because of his popularity, and Perón does not want to lose the Montoneros because of the unity and clout they bring to all Peronists. In 1971, the Montoneros sent a letter to Perón asking for his support for the armed struggle:

We are concerned about some reports we have picked up that we are thwarting your immediate political plans. It goes without saying that it is not our intention to hinder your leadership of the movement as a whole, which you exercise for the better progress of the movement as a whole. Unfortunately, our actions are aimed at demonstrating the only strategy we believe to be correct, without generally having tactical links to other sectors of the movement.

We believe that your clarifying statement about this hypothetical contradiction between your plans and our actions is necessary not only for us but for the entire movement.

The Montoneros declared that they thought little of an electoral strategy. "We will remain active in order to demonstrate that the armed struggle is the only strategically correct method of seizing power, and we therefore believe that it would be appropriate for the various fronts of the movement not to interfere in the presentation of the armed struggle as a strategic option."

Perón responded: "I agree completely with everything that has been done and recommend it to the Montoneros," without addressing the question of the murder

of a traitorous comrade or the murder of trade union official Alonso, which was allegedly falsely attributed to the Montoneros. According to the Montoneros, this had found broad support among the population and was therefore justified. Perón encouraged the Montoneros to view the weakness of the military in a positive light:

The dictatorship may be very strong, but its real danger lies in its inherent fragility [...] in today's army, the majority of non-commissioned officers are on our side. In the officer corps, twenty percent are well disposed towards us and twenty percent against, the rest are indifferent.

Perón then makes his perspective on political action clear and seems to differ little from the Montoneros:

As in the all-round struggle we are waging, we must not miss the opportunity to push this factor forward in order to ensure that the surface organisations, which also have their importance in the eyes of public opinion and contribute to the struggle with activities that cannot be ignored, especially in the situation in which the struggle is taking place, also contribute to the "revolutionary war" so that, as I say in the assessment, everyone fights as they are able to fight. If you read the assessment, the resolution and the considerations, you will see that we are basically in complete agreement; it could not be otherwise. That is why our movement has an organisational structure that broadly meets these requirements: a surface organisation that also wages the struggle on the surface through the Peronist party for men and women and the trade union branch, through the actions that can be carried out. This requires a plan of provocation, a plan of intimidation, a plan of boycott and, finally, a plan of sabotage. These plans involve all elements of the surface organisations of the Revolutionary Workers' Movement, such as the activist groups that wage the "revolutionary war." The organisations responsible for the "revolutionary war" have absolute independence in their leadership and are coordinated more than anything else by their goals. It is obvious that everything can function better if there is at least some coordination in favour of the unity of action that every struggle needs.

However, shortly afterwards, the contradictions between the Montoneros and Perón, who had shifted to the political right, increased and finally led to their public expulsion from Peronism by Perón on 1 May 1974. The reason: "stupidity and idiocy," from which Peronism had to free itself. "A liberation, not only from colonialism, which has plagued the republic for so many years, but also from these infiltrators who work from within and are treacherously more dangerous than those who work from outside, not to mention that most of them are mercenaries in the service of foreign money." In response to these insults, the Montoneros withdrew from the May rally to avoid violent confrontations. This emptied half the square.

When Perón and others visited Perón in 1973, he told the following story: “It’s about the owner of a bazaar who gives his son a gift, but instead of handing it to him, he leaves it on a mezzanine floor. The son climbs a ladder to reach it, and when he is at the top of the ladder and reaches out to grab it, the father pulls the ladder away from him.” Perón ended the story with the words: “As you can see, you can’t even trust your own father.” He gives no explanation for this, but it is easy to imagine him as a father and the Montoneros and other organisations as his sons.

The shift to the right is accompanied by a wave of terror sweeping through the country. Between July and September 1974, there are 220 attacks by the “Triple A” – almost three per day, 60 murders, one every 19 hours – and 44 seriously injured victims. In addition, there are 20 kidnappings, one every other day. The armed forces remain neutral towards these acts, but are already preparing for the “dirty war”.

The struggle for hegemony and majorities within Peronism gave public appearances, slogans and chants their special significance. The photos in the newspapers of the “Montoneros,” “El Descamisado,” “La Causa Peronista” and “Evita Montonera” mostly show singing demonstrators accompanied by a row of large drums, whose muffled sound is amplified in the street canyons and gives the demonstrations a mystical undertone.

This goes far beyond simple populist rhetoric about the “Peronist people.” In the form of the Montoneros, this group enters into a kind of public dialogue with Perón, offering praise or criticism, especially at public rallies. responds to his criticism with the declaration of loyalty “Juventud presente. Perón, Perón o muerte” (The youth association is present. Perón, Perón or death). “Vamos a hacer la patria peronista, vamos a hacerla montonera y socialista” (Let’s make the fatherland Peronist, let’s make it Montonero and socialist). The left-wing Peronists propagate an alliance with Chile and Cuba, “Fidel, Perón, un solo corazón” (Fidel, Perón, one heart), and invoke the mystified legacy of Evita, “Si Evita viviera sería Montonera” (If Evita were alive, she would be Montonera). “Evita está presente en cada combatiente” (Evita is present in every fighter). Nationalism is more important than democracy: “San Martín, Rosas, Perón para la liberación” (San Martín, Rosas, Perón for liberation), here the independence fighter, the dictator and the populist stand together in a united front.

Over time, Perón’s shift to the right hardened the demands against the growing power of the right wing within Peronism. “Qué pasa, qué pasa General, está lleno de gorilas el gobierno popular” (What’s going on, what’s going on, General, the people’s government is full of gorillas). “Vea, vea, vea, qué manga de boludos, votamos a una muerta, a una puta y a un cornudo” (Look, look, look, what a bunch of idiots, we’re voting for a dead woman, a whore and a cuckold) – Evita, Isabelita, Perón. “Isabel presente, el pueblo está caliente” (Isabel, present, the people are hot). – “Rodrigo, boludo, buscate otro laburo” (Rodrigo, you idiot, find yourself another job (Celestino Rodrigo, Minister of Economy)). “Se va acabar, se va acabar la burocracia sindical” (We’re done with it, done with it, the union bureaucracy). “Rucci, traidor, saludos a

Vandor" (Rucci, traitor, greetings to Vandor). Vandor had already been murdered by the Montoneros, Rucci soon followed him. And "Montonero, el pueblo te lo pide, queremos la cabeza de Villar y Margaride" (Montonero, the people ask you, we want the heads of Villar and Margaride). Alberto Villar and Luis Margaride are police officers and lead the "Triple A".

After Perón's death in 1974, the Montoneros went underground again and fought against Isabel's government and then against the junta that seized power in March 1976. The Montoneros suffered heavy losses, and their leaders went into exile.

By 1978, the Montoneros had largely been destroyed. When the leadership called for a return to the country and a resumption of the struggle in 1978, there was fierce controversy among the exiles. Galimberti and Gelman rejected the "counteroffensive" as suicidal. As a result, they were sentenced to death by the Montonero leadership using tried-and-tested Bolshevik methods. Gelman left his exile in Europe and moved to Mexico, where he was granted citizenship, effectively entering a second, double exile. The sentence was not carried out. Many of those who followed the call for a counteroffensive were killed. Some of them had previously placed their children in a kindergarten in Cuba.

Programmatic goals were meagre and took a back seat to the orientation toward violence. This was also the case in Cuba, it is explained apologetically, as the conquest of power was more important than preliminary considerations about the future society. Since Peronism seemed to provide guidance to all groups, it could easily operate with a vague idea of socialism, opting for either a vague nationalism in view of long-standing foreign dependencies or corporatist socialism. This leads back to an authoritarian state. The Montoneros therefore tried to win over circles within the military, such as the commander-in-chief of the army, General Jorge Carcagno, who led the suppression of the Cordobazo but maintained a distance to the United States.

In order to awaken a "patriotic conscience" in the military in a practical way, the Montoneros together with the First Army Corps carried out the so-called "Operativo Dorrego" for three weeks in October 1973, during which 800 members of the "Peronist Youth" (in which the large majority of Montoneros were members) and nearly 4,000 military personnel carried out clean-up work after devastating floods in the province of Buenos Aires. Military circles supported the idea of civil-military convergence in order to overcome the Cold War mentality and the national security doctrine. However, this did not overcome the existing and increasingly accelerated spiral of violence. In 1973, the ERP alone carried out 185 assassinations.

When the military staged another coup in 1976, some Montoneros considered supporting it, but they soon realised that the insufficiently studied conditions of the Cuban and Chinese revolutions could not be replicated and that cooperation with the military would not be well received.

While initially the focus had been on the "people," it later gave way to the "nation." The latter is the subject of a grandiose and illusory alliance policy with the mil-

itary and parts of the bourgeoisie, as well as illusory geopolitical ideas according to which a distinction must be made between American and European imperialism in the struggle for national liberation. Argentina could receive European support for national reconstruction in the event of a possible triumph of European imperialism over American imperialism.

Marx and Arendt were aware that one cannot “make” a revolution. For Marx, the contradictions between productive forces and production relations intensify until they finally tip over (with a little help), enabling the development of a new social order. For Arendt, it is not the coffeehouse revolutionaries who establish the new society, but the actors without authorship who spontaneously set themselves in motion and institutionalise their actions in the form of councils. In the best case, the communicative formation of power that takes place in the process resists violence. Such a development is rare, albeit spectacular and memorable, as in the case of the founding of freedom in the United States or temporarily during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. However, the vast majority of liberation movements in the 20th century increasingly followed the example of the French Revolution, which descended into boundless violence, or the avant-garde rule of the Bolsheviks, who liquidated all those who acted spontaneously in a council revolution. Violence triumphed over power. The 20th century was a century of violence and wars, with the accompanying theories of violence by Sartre and Fanon, not by Camus or Arendt. Violence and wars constitute the fundamental experience of the generation of 1968, and thus also that of the “Montoneros.” The social orders established by violence are ones of violence that no one wanted except those who envisioned their future as violent rulers. First glorified as emancipatory, but in the end they are still dictators like Castro or Ortega in Nicaragua, for whom the former leader of the Montoneros, Firmenich, now works, not as a revolutionary, but as an economist, and not out of revolutionary zeal, but because he receives no pension in Argentina or Spain, where he worked for only a few years until retirement.

Roberto Perdía, No. 3 in the Montonero leadership, wrote an 800-page work shortly after the end of the dictatorship and the Montoneros, in which he primarily recapitulates the events in order to provide historians with eyewitness information. It is well known that such testimonies, despite all efforts at objectivity, remain subjective and require further perspective. He makes some self-critical remarks in the volume, but these remain very mild compared to the much more critical stance taken by Juan Gelman in a long interview.

Perdía considers the decision to go underground in 1974 to have been a mistake because it did not lead, as hoped, to an “accelerated revolution”. Furthermore, the self-image as an avant-garde overlooked the consequences of isolation. In view of the heavy losses, which left only a small minority of the leadership alive – 27 people from Vaca Narvajas’ family alone were killed – 20 members gathered in Mexico to discuss issues of self-criticism. In Bolshevik parlance, this involves increasing indi-

vidual performance in line with party tasks and subjugating individual party members. But in Mexico, it was certainly about the line of the organisation. In the Bolshevik leadership model of democratic centralism, a line is formulated by the Central Committee and then returned with slight changes after consultation with the individual levels and finally adopted in plenary.

In a study of critical discussions in four Peronist groups of different orientations, Daniela Slipak finds points of criticism that coincide with those of Perdía and Gelman: a self-isolating avant-gardism, the immobility of a bureaucratising apparatus and a militarisation that overshadowed all politics.

In view of the losses, Perdía also rejected the 1978 counteroffensive, at least in retrospect years later. In a macabre move, the Montoneros offered to support the military in its campaign against the Falkland Islands, which belong to Great Britain. Once again, the strategy was to ally themselves with parts of the army and the bourgeoisie against imperialism. No one cared that the attack was contrary to international law.

Gelman's precise criticism is quite different. Perhaps this is because, like Walsh and Urondo, he is a journalist and therefore knows how to analyse issues critically and strip characteristics and constellations of their superficiality. Gelman also criticises the isolating avant-garde, and as a former member of the Communist Party, he notices that even among the Montoneros, there is hardly any reflection on strategy and tactics alongside an authoritarian, dictatorial life within the organisation. But dogmatic omniscience coupled with ignorance is a sure path to defeat.

Gelman cites the example of a popular worker in a large company who represented his colleagues and could call for powerful strikes when necessary. Eventually, he joined the Montoneros and found himself in the initiation phase. His superior in the Montoneros asked him to prepare a strike. The worker knew the mood was not right for this. He refused. For the worker, the other workers were colleagues, subjects; for the "Montonero", on the other hand, they were pawns in a game.

Added to this is a superficial knowledge of the revolutionary movements that are taken as models. For example, the mistaken assumption that Castro conquered Cuba with a few men from the Sierra Maestra. This not only led to voluntaristic action, but also maintained a fatal superficiality, believing, according to Gelman, that whoever had the tanks also had the power. In such cases, there is a lack of understanding of what power actually is.

Such thinking is characterised by superficial study and a "bureaucratisation of thought" that stops at nothing, no matter how absurd. A friend and member of the Communist Party told Gelman how party members in the 1930s talked about the task of establishing Soviets. The model was the Russian navy, but where were they supposed to find sailors in the interior of the country near the Andes? "This friend was a fighter in Mendoza, and he explained to me the big problem he had. 'You know what that meant, for us' he said, 'because there were workers, few, but there were

some. Farmers, many, soldiers too, but sailors, where the hell were we going to get them, stuck as we were in the Cordillera?" We must not only learn, says Gelman, but also unlearn, overcome bureaucratic thinking. This, combined with inexperience and lack of preparation, has always led to fatal actions.

Finally, there is a cultural influence that determines the actions of individuals. In Firmenich's case, it is his Catholic upbringing, which gives him a mission, without further explanation. Gelman refers only to Thomism, according to which the spirit triumphs over the body. In this context, that would mean sacrificing bodies for the unexplained goals of socialism. "St. Thomas spoke of individual salvation and lifted the soul out of the sacrifice of the body, and people like Firmenich formulated a similar concept, but on a revolutionary level that focused on the hallucination of pretence in order to forge fighters of steel, revolutionary fighters on a completely individualistic and, as you said, messianic basis."

If we now combine all the critical aspects of the behaviour of the Montoneros with Slipak's observations, we can discover a constellation: the particular form of authoritarianism of the Montoneros in society. This authoritarianism is expressed in the special role of obedience: "We are not here to discuss, but to obey," and here we encounter the special role of violence. This is consistent with bureaucratic thinking, which corresponds to the formal logical thinking of the motto "whoever says A must also say B". The rules must be followed; after all, the Montoneros are an army.

Humour When a group of revolutionaries decides to take up the fight against a dictatorship or authoritarian government, it is striking that the more violent and terrifying their repertoire of action is, the more humourless and serious they are about their work. Where they rob people of their dignity, their freedom and their lives, they present themselves as judges or avengers over the human community. There, they cannot play a humorous role; it is a matter of life and death and, of course, authority. Anyone who laughs at this undermines the seriousness of the situation and the chances of success of the action, and is therefore condemned to death and executed. The small West German terrorist organisation "Red Army Faction" (Baader-Meinhof Group) killed and was decimated in firefights. Hardly anyone supported them. They were therefore powerless and inevitably lost the power struggle with the state. Collective suicide was their last autonomous act of violence, directed only against the actors themselves. In the world of terrorism, humour can only be imagined as cynicism or schematism.

If a regime loses support, then power shifts to the population, and this shift can be accelerated by humour. The Czechoslovakian writer Vaclav Havel wrote critical plays and eventually penned an existentialist proposal for resistance in the form of non-conformist action and non-conformist speech. No violence, no attack on the government, but simply an "attempt to live in truth." That was his recipe, the act

of doing nothing, of following one's inner voice, of not doing what the authorities demanded.

Such behaviour, in its openness, does not follow any logical consequence. It provokes astonishment, judgement and laughter, reactions to unexpected contradictions. Laughter based on the recognition of a situation under circumstances other than the usual ones. The joke as a sudden realisation. Etymologically, the word 'wit' is related to wisdom. The joke is a form of insight, and a good joke has something of wisdom in it.

Humour, on the other hand, is a moderately critical mood that includes laughter, shapes comedy and is detached from all forms of inevitability of logic and execution. Independent judgement is an indispensable activity in this context. It is difficult to imagine a violent revolutionary as a humorous person. What would someone like Che Guevara, who publicly advocated the use of nuclear weapons, laugh about? He would be accused of frivolity and endangering the cause by his comrades and excluded from the revolutionary process.

Humour and wit destabilise dictatorship by pluralising opinions and ensuring they are positively received by the population.

During the dictatorship in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, some critical intellectuals continued to work despite the terror and general threat to magazines, including the magazine *Humor*, founded in 1978. In its founding year, around 150,000 copies were sold, in 1980 around three million and shortly before the defeat of the dictatorship in 1982, four million. The magazine is not affiliated with any party; it addresses issues in a way that, in retrospect, can only be described as bold. It denounces censorship and the banning of artists and provides a platform for threatened culture. The front page is adorned with a caricature, often of a ruler of the junta, accompanied by a critical statement. Humour defied the ban on discussing politics and reported on politicians who criticised the junta's actions and called for a return to constitutional order. It also anticipated the discourse that the media would use in the case of the attempted conquest of the Falkland Islands only after it had failed.

Under these difficult circumstances, the magazine relies on the support of its readers. "Humour is the counterweight to so much madness, despair and death," says Mona Moncalvillo, who is responsible for the reports. An editorial states: "This magazine is made by comedians. Not by politicians, not by social activists, not by money-hungry chroniclers. Simply by humourists who praise what they think is good and attack what they think is bad with their only weapons: the typewriter."

Journalist Norberto Firpo explains: "The history of humanity shows that it is not the media that bring down governments, but their own incompetence, the lack of professional commitment of their leaders and their tendency to use their gift of authority in a corrupt and all-encompassing manner."

There are numerous cartoons in the magazines, as well as humorous comments and jokes. For example, in the first issue in 1978, the same year as the World Cup in

Argentina, there is the imaginary notebook of coach César Menotti. In addition to the multi-page stories, there are also numerous short texts, such as the one on “The lesson of the German people: Life, books, films, television, radio and television have given us examples – excuse me, I forgot to mention magazines – of perseverance, effort and sleepless nights (but with the desire to sleep) in search of a better future and a happy tomorrow. The German people, so self-sacrificing and hard-working, once had to change their mentality in order to rebuild a country in ruins. This is how the German miracle came about. And thanks to the German miracle, Germany became what it is today.”

During the dictatorship, around 35 trials were brought against “Humor,” but surprisingly, the same number of trials were brought during the democratic government of Menem later on. “Menem’s friends sued me for libel and slander, and so I spent most of my time in court,” recalls Andrés Cascioli.

“Would you make that choice in this hypothetical election of life?” (Jorge Garayoa)

The magazine is not censored, even though it says, for example: “What if one day fate confronted us with the long-awaited ballot box waiting for our votes? What if there were no more repression, I mean, no more absurd prohibitions?”

There are repeated complaints about the economic misery: “If yesterday the baker’s children around the corner could become teachers, today, through a strange symmetry of national economic ups and downs, the children of teachers can, with a little luck, become bakers.” (Guillermo Saccomano)

But it also states bluntly:

We must talk about those who have disappeared. Those who fall into the mud must be punished. Police or military officials who have gone too far in the repression must go to prison for such excesses that violate human rights. And they must bear witness so that the collective pain of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo does not continue to circle around the pyramid on Thursdays in the future democracy. A government of the people does not deserve to inherit the pustules of the military government.” (Enrique Vázquez)

Peronism and the radicalism of the UCR are criticised in equal measure. An appeal is made to the personal responsibility of each individual.

Is democracy possible in Argentina? We must begin to answer yes loudly. Even if that means locking ourselves in the bathroom to shout yes. I believe that to make democracy possible, we must dare to be ourselves again and not what others expect of us. We must start walking on our own two feet, without stepfathers, without appeals to dead leaders, without claims about strong presidents or similar nonsense. We must break once and for all with the deeply rooted stupidity that Argentina needs a leader. (Enrique Vázquez)

A magazine like *Humor* was also read by younger people, such as the future writer Sergio Olgún, when the military attacked the Falkland Islands.

The new issue of *Humor* came out, and there was an article by Jorge Sábato entitled “El patrioterismo” (jingoism, WH) or something like that, and it was like a revelation, and I realised that something was happening here that didn't exactly correspond to what the media was selling me at the time. I was 15 years old, and it was very important for me to understand this. It was also the beginning of my understanding of how so many things work, politics on the one hand, the media on the other, the possibility of thinking differently from the masses, and that was largely what the magazine *Humor* published.

There are serious texts that criticise the dictatorship. But there is also humour that lets off steam. The atmosphere is relaxed, less so the jokes that ridicule the authorities. Havel's motto, to try to live in truth, meant, for example, that the owner of a vegetable shop no longer complied with the requirement to hang a banner in his shop window on 1 May with the slogan “Proletarians of all countries, unite!”. He himself no longer believed in the content or the meaning of the act. But since the authorities no longer believed either, the act went unpunished. The unexpected courage of the ordinary man, the clear call to follow one's own truth, and finally the simple act with a great effect can make us laugh and already engage in dialogue with our own truth.

10. The Seven Deadly Sins of a Guerrilla

1. Hubris | 2. Spectacular Murder | Gibraltar | Fatigue |
 3. Spreading Fear and Creating Cohesion by Murdering One's Own Comrades | One of the Best | Revolutionary Justice | 4. Being a Victim Hero | Two Bodies with Martyr Status | 5. Cyanide | Paco Urondo | 6. Indifference |
 7. Succumbing to Triumphalism | To the Short End
-

Deadly sins usually lead to downfall, not only political but also moral. There are seven that, illustrated here as an example for the Montoneros, can determine the fate of a modern guerrilla movement.

The first sin is succumbing to hubris/the fascination of violence; the second sin, wanting to become famous through a spectacular murder – the Aramburu case; the third sin, spreading fear and creating cohesion by murdering one's own comrades; the fourth sin, stylising oneself as a victim and achieving martyr status when it is no longer enough to be a positive hero; the fifth sin is preserving the sect through self-sacrifice and escaping the price of revealing information under torture by taking deadly cyanide; the sixth sin is indifference towards the victims; and the seventh sin is succumbing to one's own propaganda.

These sins usually occur together, albeit in different combinations and with different meanings. The fascination with violence determines thoughts and actions, including hubris, hero worship and so on. Hubris, in turn, determines the extent of the fascination with violence.

The First Deadly Sin – Hubris / Succumbing to the Fascination of Violence In ancient Greece, hubris referred to the danger inherent in human existence of overestimating oneself, which is counterbalanced by nemesis, or poetic justice. A cautionary example is Icarus, who flew too close to the sun with his self-made wings despite all warnings, causing his glued wings to melt so that he fell into the sea and drowned.

But no revolutionary is impressed by this. The liberation movement wants the extraordinary, the overthrow of the government and the political and socio-eco-

monic system. It must therefore radically break with the existing power structures in terms of its actions, thinking and propaganda. The goal is nothing less than the creation of a new world. To be like God is the claim, hubris the corresponding attitude, violence the means, heroes and martyrs the embodiment of these sins. Hybris is therefore the most important attitude, which is also evident in all other attitudes. Together, they form the ethos of the liberation movement, regardless of whether it is a violent revolution like Lenin's or a more moderate one like the one involving liberation theology in Nicaragua.

As the armed wing of Peronism, the Montoneros are eager to go underground. Propaganda messages are published in their magazine *Evita Montonera*:

3 March, Santa Fé

A combat group of Peronist militias blew up a railway depot in Rosario where 500 tonnes of sugar had been stored.

4 March, San Juan

A Montoneros combat group fired an MP at the house of Antonio Polenta, managing director of Peñaflor....

7 March, Santa Fe

The Montoneros combat group led by Constantino Razzetti executed police doctor Jorge Rail Capitanelli, a well-known torturer and direct collaborator of the forces of repression. (*Evita Montonera*, 1/4, 1975).

There are also reports of the lives and deaths of the heroes.

When he learned of the planned operation, he decided to take the lead. He assumed the role of commander and died in the fight. Comrade Lewinger recognised that one of the essential ways to respond to the repression in Mar del Plata lay in the military sphere. He maintained this conviction until the end. His life and death are an example of this. (*Evita Montonera*, 10, 1975)

After the bloody defeat, leader Mario Firmenich explained:

When we went underground, we expected [...] that the coup would take place immediately. But it did not happen. There was a political strategy behind the coup, known as the 'ripe fruit' strategy, which consisted of keeping Isabel's government in office until society had had enough, until the calls for a coup became louder. This put us in a situation where we had gone underground and yet a political process was underway – with repression, with violence, with a civil war in which anyone on the street could be killed – but nevertheless a political process. And since we had not gone underground solely for personal self-preservation, but as part of an organisation that claimed to have a political strategy, we could not have a polit-

ical strategy that ignored the existence of a parliament, a space for freedom of the press, the existence of regular elections, etc. So in a sense it became necessary to take a step back from the idea of going underground and building legal political structures. (Firmenich at Pigna)

At the same time, he explains the indifference to human fate and suffering in a way that fits with hubris: "The goal of a political organisation is not to save people, but to seize power at the lowest possible cost."

Violence also affects those who perpetrate it. A 16-year-old girl wanted to plant a bomb in a police station on her birthday in 1977 and was blown to pieces by it. Gius-sani dedicated his book *Montoneros. La superbia armada* (Montoneros. The Armed Arrogance) to this young woman, Adriana, and wrote in an epilogue to the book:

She had left home under a pretext and promised to return to the party her parents were preparing for her sixteenth birthday. [...] Adriana was killed by an illness that was not only inflicted on her. An evil that decimated a large part of a generation and still haunts the survivors. That is why I feel compelled to identify it and help ensure that it is recognised wherever it rears its head in all its alienating and monstrous forms. [...] Amidst the great massacre that Argentina has suffered in recent years, Adriana's death is one of the few exceptional cases where the military regime cannot be held responsible. Why do I choose this particular death to focus my dedication and indictment? Does this choice signify a reluctance to condemn a regime that wiped out thousands of young people like Adriana?

I think it is clear from what I have written so far that I am repelled by the ideology that dominated the actions of this military regime, by the perverse practices that derived from this ideology, and by the unpleasant personalities in which these practices were concentrated. But coincidentally, the military regime is not the subject of these reflections, any more than the equally reprehensible Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot or Pérez Jiménez.

The responsibility of the military for their crimes is clear:

Unlike those of the military regime, which are exposed to general revulsion, these others are protected and concealed by a prestigious revolutionary phraseology and by a particular state of consciousness that generates in a certain enlightened middle class a tendency to share, understand or excuse any irregularity committed in the name of the revolution.

Giussani cannot support this. He wants to address the errors and their causes among the armed youth and thus his own transgressions as a fascist in his youth.

I think with horror of Adriana's tragic end and of the personality of the person who may have programmed her for this sacrifice. When I try to give this personality a

face and a name, I find among its possible identities that of Paco, my old and dear friend Paco Urondo. The extent of a condemnation does not diminish when I see this face; it only becomes more painful. For Paco's face reveals other faces, which are materially further removed from this child murder, but equally committed to the culture that made it possible. Faces that include mine and those of an entire generation that, in a frenzy of literary frivolity, proclaimed the dialectic of machine guns, which was later to be appropriated by their children in less bookish terms.

Even 40 years after the end of the dictatorship, many find it difficult to see the whole iceberg, as Giussani says.

His daughter Laura, born in 1960, said that she had only two goals at the time: to graduate from high school at 17 and to become a martyr of the revolution. "It sounds like a fairy tale, but yes. When the Montoneros said that 70% of the activists would die, but that the remaining 30% would be enough to achieve the goal, I had no doubt that I would be one of those who would give their lives to build a just world."

Eduardo Pereyra Rossi, at 33 the youngest surviving leader of the Montoneros, was one of the last to be murdered shortly before the end of the dictatorship. He left behind poems such as this one:

Hoy es el día / Mañana no sé / Hoy es el día para hacer / Lo que hay que hacer
 Hoy es el día para soñar / Mañana no sé / Si vale la pena esperar / Todo un día, no sé
 Hoy es el día para luchar / Mañana no sé / Si vale la pena para esperar / Todo un día no sé
 Mañana será el día / Lo sé / Que vale la pena / Lo sé

Today is the day / Tomorrow I don't know / Today is the day to do / What needs to be done
 Today is the day to dream / Tomorrow I don't know / If it's worth waiting a whole day, I don't know
 Today is the day to fight / Tomorrow, I don't know / If it's worth waiting a whole day, I don't know
 Tomorrow will be the day / I know / That it's worth the effort / I know

After heavy defeats, the Montonero leadership published a meagre self-criticism in 1983 at the end of the dictatorship, which was not further explained and mistakes were played down in view of the noble goal of a people's democracy, which was also not described in detail: "Along with these correct approaches, there were mistakes, which we do not deny, but we affirm that such mistakes were made in the struggle to defend sovereignty, the popular sovereignty of the democratic system and the sacred interests of the Argentine nation."

The distancing of the vanguard from its followers is not a new issue, but it is not perceived as one of the main causes of failure due to an illusory assessment of reality. "In practice, it happens that our theory is miles ahead of reality. When that happens, the vanguard runs the risk of becoming a lost patrol," Walsh remarks laconically.

The end does not justify the means, and the claim that no militaristic sentiments were harboured is clearly intended to reduce the distance between the members and the population:

All of the above shows that when the fighters of the "Montonero" Peronism had to resort to armed resistance, they did not do so out of a militaristic and even less out of a terrorist desire, but in obedience to the constitutional duty that obliges all citizens to arm themselves for their defence and for legitimate self-defence in the face of state terrorism. [...] The "Peronist Montonero Movement" believes and asserts that violence is pointless in the face of a government that fully respects constitutional rights and guarantees. [...] The "Peronist Montonero Movement" will act and try to ensure that the next constitutional government is the one that wins the elections. It will begin and end its period of cooperation peacefully and without political agendas or prohibitions for anyone. [...] It is the responsibility of all of us to form it.

Republican political scientist Natalio Botana laments the inability to look at the past with self-criticism:

One of the biggest problems in Argentina is the lack of self-criticism. It is very weak. And since those responsible for the Montoneros show no remorse, we are facing a decline that we have seen in recent years [...], the country has always moved between partial amnesty, pardon, forgetting and a lack of self-questioning and recognition. Somehow, over time, the era of political violence in this country came to an end [...]

In Argentina, there was no appeal for a republican democracy. A government of violence prevailed. There were very few who defended the ideal of democracy, as was the case after 1983. [...] They (the Montoneros, WH) want to be portrayed as idealists and dreamers.

Daniela Slipak examines the reasons for dissent within the Montoneros, which manifested itself in four short-lived new groups: "La columna José Sabino Navarro" (1972–1975), "La Juventud Peronista Lealtad" (1973–1974), "El Peronismo Montonero Auténtico" (1979–1980) and "Montoneros 17 de Octubre" (1980–1982). The critiques are essentially consistent with those of Perdía and Gelman, but are more radical on the question of violence. This is linked to militarism, a mystified military authoritarianism. Not only is the isolation of the avant-garde noted, but also a reason for it is given, namely the legitimacy of a popular rebellion, which contrasts with the

illegitimacy of *foquismo*, the armed actions of the avant-garde. Criticism is levelled at the superimposition of the political by the military; violence has taken on a life of its own. Internal discussions, possibly dissent, are suppressed with reference to the “rules”. The answer is: “This is not a place for discussion, but for obedience.” Ultimately, it remains unclear who the people actually are and what Peronism is.

Overall, the leadership is criticised for its behaviour, its contempt for its members, censorship and sanctions, as well as the loyalty it demands and the accusation of treason when this is not forthcoming.

One of the tragic aspects of the Argentine Guerrilla War is that its dogmatism and coldness stand in stark contrast to the sensitivity and subtlety of the eloquent and cultured writers and journalists such as Haroldo Conti, Rodolfo Walsh, Paco Urondo, Juan Gelman and Osvaldo Bayer. Gelman published Urondo's last poems and wrote in his introduction, “Words”:

When we remember the polemics of the 1960s in this time of passion, when some sought revolution through their writing and others gave up writing for the sake of revolution, we recognise in all its significance what Paco, Rodolfo and Haroldo showed us: the profound unity of life and work that a writer and his texts can achieve. For Urondo, there was no gulf between experience and poetry: “I took up arms because I am searching for a just word,” he once said. He often corrected his poems, but he knew that the only true way for a poet to correct his work is to correct himself.

He was and remains one of the most courageous and lucid poets of the Spanish language, fighting with less complacency against the impossibility of writing. He also fought with and against a social system that was so violent as to create suffering so that the whole world could enter the history of joy. For him, the two struggles were one. Both wrote him, and in both he remained written.

Rodolfo Walsh wrote to him about this suffering in a letter in 1976, not long before the death of both men:

The deeper you look and the more quietly you listen, the more you perceive the suffering of people, the misery, the injustice, the arrogance of the rich. The cruelty of the executioners. So it is no longer enough to look, it is no longer enough to listen, it is no longer enough to write.

The Second Deadly Sin – Spectacular Murder On 9 May 1970, retired general Pedro Aramburu was kidnapped and a few days later his murder was announced. No one knew who the perpetrators were, but rumours soon spread that the newly formed armed group Montoneros was responsible. In no time at all, the group became famous, just as intended. But it took until 1974 for the Montoneros magazine to publish “La Causa Peronista” in the form of a long conversation between the leading

cadres Mario Firmenich and Norma Arrostito, which included a confession and a detailed description of the course of events. It was the last issue of this magazine before the Montoneros went underground while Argentina was still a democracy. The look back at the first act forms a bracket around the descent into the illegality of armed struggle. Political struggle is replaced by military struggle, paving the way for a bloody civil war. Only when the Montoneros guerrilla movement was destroyed did the survivors find critical words for what was a misguided decision. With the passage of time, it became clear that the temporary influx of members had blinded them to the misjudgements of the situation. This included the hope that the rapid transformation of the wild mob into an army would give them greater significance and enable them to wage a war of liberation under the protection of international law, which would protect them from possible state terror.

The report by a guerrilla fighter about the spectacular assassination of a leading opponent is another example of hubris. The Montoneros wanted to take revenge on Aramburu, who successfully led a coup against Perón in 1955. They wanted to bring justice and declare themselves representatives of the entire people, in whose name they wanted to dispense justice in a self-appointed prison. At the same time, however, they wanted to mock civilised forms of justice and the balance between politics and morality. This also gave the impression that this was a process that had been practised before, that it is a reference in the narrative of the modern revolutionary liberation of mankind.

“La Causa Peronista” lifted the veil. Three goals are explicitly stated: first, to present themselves to the public as a powerful and fearless organisation; second, to show the most intelligent of the coup plotters “the path to true justice”; and third, to find the exact whereabouts of the body. The leading representatives, Mario Firmenich and Norma Arrostito, recall:

Mario: Aramburu’s execution was an old dream of ours. We planned the operation in early 1969. It was about the principle of popular justice – redress for the murders of June ‘56 – but we also wanted to recover Evita’s body, which Aramburu had had disposed of.

But we had to let time pass because we hadn’t formed the task force yet. In the meantime, we worked quietly: Aramburu’s execution was to mark the organisation’s public debut.

At the end of 1969, we thought it was possible to carry out the operation. In the course of the year, the coup plot led by Aramburu to replace the military regime weakened by the Cordobazo had been added to the original motives.

Because of the political significance of the event and the importance we attached to our own actions, we approached the operation on an all-or-nothing basis. The initial group of “Montoneros” was putting all its eggs in one basket with this event.

Arrostito: The entire “organisation” consisted of twelve of us, including those from Buenos Aires and those from Córdoba. Ten of us were involved in the operation. In the early 1970s, we began compiling a file without any further information. To obtain addresses, names and photos, we went to newspaper archives, mainly at *La Prensa*. In the magazine *Fernando*, I found interior photos of the apartment on Calle Montevideo. This gave us an idea of what it might look like inside.

M.: But we put the most effort into the external file. The building where he lived is opposite the Champagnat School, and we found out that there was a reading room or library on the first floor. So we sneaked in and wanted to read there. The one who initiated this method was Fernando, who was quite cheeky. More than reading, we looked out of the window. We only stayed for a short time, half an hour or an hour. No one ever asked us anything.

A.: That was where we saw him for the first time, up close. He always came out around eleven in the morning, sometimes earlier, sometimes later, sometimes not at all. We saw him three times from Champagnat.

Then we saw him from the corner of Santa Fe Street, taking turns. We came every five minutes to form relays. We had to do it that way because there was a policeman standing on that corner, a blond, chubby one, and we didn't want to attract attention.

M.: We varied our approach during the investigation. The first idea was to pick him up on the street when he went for a walk. We thought about using one of those cars with curtains on the windows and covering the windows on each side with a suit. We thought about it for a long time until we rejected the idea and decided to go in and get him directly from the eighth floor.

To do this, we needed a good “key.” The best excuse was to pretend to be officers. Fat Maza and another friend had been high school students and therefore knew how the military behaved. Fat Maza even liked it; he was a real militiaman and began to teach Fernando the movements and commands. They rehearsed together.

A.: They bought some of the clothes at Casa Isola, a military tailor's shop on Avenida de Mayo, next to Casa Muñoz. Fernando Abal was 23 years old, Ramus and Firmenich were 22, Capuano Martínez was 21. That's where they bought the badges, the caps, the trousers, the socks, the ties. To buy some things, they even pretended to be Boy Scouts. A retired Peronist officer donated his uniform: he felt sorry for us, even though he didn't know what we wanted to use it for. The problem was that it was too big for Fernando. I had to act as a seamstress to adjust it to his body. We threw the cap away – it was a bit of a flop, it danced on his head – but we used the jacket and the badges.”

How did you get into the house?

M.: One thing we noticed was that Aramburu had no guards, at least not from the outside. Later, it was said that Minister Imaz had withdrawn them a few days before the kidnapping, but that's not true. In the five months we spent investigating, we never saw an external guard or patrols. Only the doorman looked like a policeman, a stocky, dark-haired man.

Someone thought: if he doesn't have security, why shouldn't we offer it to him? It was absurd, but that was the excuse we used.

The country. In those days, when the operation was taking shape, someone thought of repairing Montevideo Street, one of those light or gas repairs they always do; who knows. What is certain is that half the street was torn up, right next to his house. And we had to erect a protective wall there. [...]

M.: Ramus drove the Chevrolet pickup with Norma beside him in the passenger seat. In the back seat sat a colleague dressed as a priest, and I wore a police corporal's uniform.

A.: I wore a blonde wig with light highlights and was well dressed and wearing a little make-up. [...]

One companion stayed on the seventh floor; the lift door was left open for support. Fernando and El Gordo rode up one more floor. They rang the bell, standing stiffly in military posture. Fernando was even stiffer because of the "Metra" he was carrying under his olive-green *pilotin* raincoat.

They were greeted by the general's wife. She invited them in and offered them coffee while they waited for Aramburu to finish his bath.

Finally, he appeared, smiling, impeccably dressed. He drank coffee with them while listening with pleasure to the young soldiers. Maza's accent immediately struck him: "You're from Cordoba." "Yes, General." The pleasantries lasted a few minutes while the coffee cooled and the weather grew cooler, and the two tall boys stood and stood and stood, until Fernando's cutting voice said:

"My general, you are coming with us."

Just like that. Without further explanation. At nine o'clock in the morning.

And if he resisted? Then we would kill him there. That was the plan, even if none of us were left alive.

M.: But no, he walked peacefully between Gordo Maza, who put his arm around his shoulder, and Fernando, who gently pushed him with the Metra under his coat.

He probably didn't understand anything. He must have thought that someone had got ahead of him in his planned coup, because he still had no doubt that his kidnappers were military men. [...]

He sat on the spare wheel. He didn't say anything, perhaps because he didn't understand. I grabbed his wrist with a twist and felt it slip, give way. Maza, "the priest,"

Flaca and another comrade got out at Pampa and Figueroa Alcorta and took the bags with the uniforms and some of the iron. [...]

In all my years of service, I can't remember an easier escape route than this one. It was a walk in the park. [...]

We crossed the Luján River on an old wooden bridge between Luján and Pilar, where no one drives. If the alarm had been raised immediately, we would probably have escaped anyway, because the route was perfect. It took us eight hours to cover a distance that can be done in four, but we didn't drive into any villages or stop to eat or refuel. That's what the taxi was for, a legal taxi that brought us supplies.

Aramburu didn't speak the whole way, except when his companions had to search for the canister in the darkness. "Here it is," he said.

At 1 p.m., the radio began to talk about the "alleged kidnapping." We were already halfway there. [...]

We took Aramburu to a bedroom, and that night the trial began. We sat him on a bed and Fernando said to him:

"General Aramburu, you are being held by a revolutionary Peronist organisation that will put you on trial."

Only then did he seem to understand. But all he said was:

'Very well.'

He was calm. If he was nervous, he had it under control. Fernando photographed him sitting on the bed without his coat and tie, against the bare wall. But the photos didn't turn out because the film broke on the first shot.

A tape recorder was used for the trial. It was tedious and exhausting because we didn't want to pressure or intimidate him, and he took advantage of this by delaying his answers to every question, replying, "I don't know," "I can't remember," etc.

The first accusation we made against him was the shooting of General Valle and the other patriots who had risen up with him on 9 June 1956. At first, he pretended to deny it. He said he was in Rosario when it happened. We read him, syllable by syllable, the decrees 10,363 and 10,364, which he had signed, sentencing the military rebels to death. We read him the chronicles of the executions of civilians in Lanús and José León Suárez.

He gave no answer. Finally, he admitted: "Well, we made a revolution, and every revolution shoots counter-revolutionaries."

We read him the press conference in which Admiral Rojas accused General Valle and his men of being Marxists and amoral. He exclaimed, "But I didn't say that!" He was asked if he agreed with him anyway. He denied it. He was asked if he was willing to sign it. His face lit up, perhaps because he thought it was over.

"If that were the case, they would have asked me at home," he said, and immediately signed a statement denying that he had slandered Valle and the revolutionaries of '56. This statement was sent to the newspapers, and I believe it was published in *Crónica*.

The second point in the trial against Aramburu concerned the military coup he was preparing, for which we had evidence. He categorically denied this. When we gave him precise details about his connection to an active general, he said that he was “just a friend.” It was impossible to get anything out of him with the tape recorder running. But as soon as the tape recorder was turned off and he was having a meal or a break with us, he admitted that the regime’s situation was no longer tenable and that only a transitional government – which he saw himself leading – could save the situation. [...]

In any case, I believe the subject of *Evita* came up on the second day of the negotiations, on May 31. We naturally accused him of stealing the body. He was frozen. With a pouting mouth and gestures, he refused to speak and signalled that we should turn off the tape recorder. Finally, Fernando turned it off.

“I cannot speak on this subject,” said Aramburu, “because of a question of honour. The only thing I can assure you is that she has a Christian burial.”

We insisted on knowing what had happened to the body. He said he couldn’t remember. Then he tried to negotiate: he promised to have the body turned up at the right time, on his word of honour.

We persisted. Finally, he said, “I should remember.”

“Fine, remember.”

It was already getting dark. We took him to another room. He asked for a piece of paper and a paper clip. He wrote before falling asleep. When he woke up the next morning, he asked to go to the bathroom. There we found several torn pieces of paper written in shaky handwriting.

We went back to the courtroom. We questioned him without a tape recorder. He told us the true story: *Eva Perón*’s body was in a cemetery in Rome, under a false name, in the custody of the Vatican. The documents relating to the theft of the body were in a safe deposit box at the Central Bank in the name of Colonel Cabanillas. He could say no more because his honour prevented him.

It was already the night of June 1. We informed him that the court would be hearing his case. From then on, no one ever spoke to him again.

We tied him to the bed. He asked why. We told him not to worry. In the early hours of the morning, Fernando informed him of the verdict:

“General, the court has sentenced you to death. You are to be executed in half an hour.”

He tried to persuade us. He spoke of the blood that we young men would shed.

When the half hour was up, we untied him, sat him on the bed and tied his hands behind his back.

He asked us to tie his shoelaces. We did so. He asked if he could shave. We told him there were no utensils. We took him through the inner corridor of the house to the basement. He asked for a confessor. We told him we couldn’t bring a confessor because the roads were being monitored.

"If you can't bring a confessor," he said, "how will you get my body out?"

He took two or three more steps forward.

"What will happen to my family?" he asked.

They told him that they had nothing against them and that they would give them all his belongings.

The cellar was as old as the house, seventy years old. We had used it for the first time in February '69 to bury the confiscated rifles from the federal shooting range in Córdoba. The ladder was wobbly. I had to step forward to help him down.

"Ah, they're going to kill me in the cellar," he said.

We went down. We stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth and stood him against the wall. The cellar was very small and the execution had to be carried out with a pistol. Fernando took on the task of executing him. The boss always had to take the greatest responsibility. He sent me upstairs to hammer on a vice with a wrench to muffle the sound of the shots.

"General," said Fernando, "let's continue."

"Go ahead," said Aramburu.

Fernando fired the 9-millimetre pistol into his chest. Then he fired two shots with the same weapon and with a .45. Fernando covered him with a blanket.

"No one dared to uncover him while we dug the hole where we wanted to bury him." Then we found what he had written on the night of the 31st in his coat pocket. It began with an account of his kidnapping and ended with a description of his political project. He described his kidnappers as well-meaning but misguided young Peronists. In his opinion, this confirmed that Peronism as a whole would resort to armed struggle if there was no institutional solution for the country."

Every targeted murder tears down the barriers of civilisation and is a step towards a barbaric world. Each subsequent murder becomes easier to commit. But since sooner or later the civilised world will hold the barbarians to account, concealment is the best option. The best way to do this is to kill one of the perpetrators, onto whom the crimes of the others can be pinned. Of the three people involved in the execution, Firmenich, Abal Medina and Arrostito, none of them allegedly fired the fatal shots. Shortly afterwards, when Fernando Abal Medina was killed in a shootout with the police, Firmenich rose to become head of the Montoneros and claimed that Fernando Abal Medina had shot Aramburu.

Although the use of another weapon has since been proven on the body of the deceased, there is no evidence pointing to two of the three participants.

The brother of the alleged perpetrator, Juan Manuel Abal Medina, said in an interview: "I saw him very agitated. He seemed calm, but there was something inside him. Then he said to me: 'Killing is terrible, it's monstrous,' or the other way around: 'It's monstrous, it's terrible.' It was clear that the killing had not been good for him. He pressed me on my shoulders, I squeezed his hands, and he got out of the car. That

was the last time we saw each other.” The alleged confession of an alleged perpetrator, which is primarily propaganda but denies the act.

The confession is veiled. But this does not diminish the hubris. The scientist Pacheco explains loudly:

There is no doubt that the Montoneros, with their successes and mistakes, are among the great deeds that our people, or at least parts of Peronism, have been able to accomplish. If, in every era, we must try to wrest tradition from the conformism that seeks to subjugate it – as Benjamin emphasises – then it is of fundamental importance to accept anniversaries as emblematic as the half-century that has passed since the emergence of the Montoneros as a challenge to find in this past the spark that can ignite all the hope for the great work of economic, political and cultural transformation that the damned of the earth still deserve to be the protagonists of.

Great deeds. And Firmenich explains in an interview how nobly the death squad behaved: “No, we did not humiliate him, we respected him to the point – I have even said this before – that we did not feel the need to prevent a man who was about to die from tripping over his shoelaces because he was tied up. No, we respected him and even prayed for him publicly. And that’s where I learned that you shouldn’t hate your enemy.” “But you murdered him,” the journalist Neustadt objects to this hypocrisy. No, is the polished reply. “That was not a decision made by us,” Firmenich claims, “but by the people. It was a decision of the people”; a populist phrase that allows one to sidestep personal, moral and political responsibility in a familiar populist manner. “And with reference to the violent coup of 1955 and the suppression of a Peronist resistance in 1956, Firmenich absolves the ‘Montoneros’ of any guilt, because ‘that is the sad thing about it, because we cannot talk about this situation without talking about the bombing of the Plaza de Mayo, without talking about the shooting of General Valle.’”

“May I ask you a favour?” Neustadt interjects. “Never represent the people in this way again. I beg you.” Firmenich replies: “I also want the people to never again feel the need for revenge, as I did.”

Juan Manuel Abal Medina is more honest and accepts no excuses. Justifying the physical elimination of one’s opponent as a lesser evil:

... was widespread in Argentina at that time. And it was under the influence of this conviction that all the guerrilla organisations emerged. Not only that, but the violence that was widespread throughout Argentine society at that time was analysed and criticised by many people involved in those events. [...] For Peronism, then as now, Aramburu’s death was not an assassination, but an execution. Aramburu was not seen as the great enemy of Peronism, but as the murderer of comrades. In his persona, perhaps unjustly, the person responsible for all the violence

against Peronism was personified. [...] In a publicly available letter, General Perón approves the operation and calls it “an act of justice desired by the entire Peronist people.” I believe that crimes committed in a political capacity must always be condemned, and I condemn the crimes of the Montoneros organisation.

Another aspect plays a role here, which was already discussed in Chapter 5 in connection with Martín Fierro's world of gauchos and their violence: pre-modern punishment. Beatriz Sarlo sees a connection between revenge, passion and concreteness in the 19th century, which is replaced in the 20th century by the concept of justice, intellectuality and abstraction. Not everywhere, and not everywhere completely. Argentine history is full of events that indicate the inadequate transition from the age of revenge to that of justice. The fact that the coup plotters kidnapped Evita Perón's body in 1955 not only served to prevent opposition pilgrimages, but was also intended to demonstrate their power to stop at nothing, not even sacred places and symbols. “Aramburu's death was not a murder staged as a trial, not a genuine defence of the idea of justice, but revenge carried out with the added evidence of a conviction.”

Of course, the Montoneros are proud of their successes in the fight against the state apparatus and list the victims they inflicted on the police in the second half of 1976 after the dictatorship began. In their magazine “Evita Montonera” they report: On 17 June, the assassination of the head of the federal police, General Cesáreo Cardoso; on 2 July, the bombing of the roof of the headquarters of the federal police security department, killing nine officers; on 12 September, an attack with a car loaded with explosives, killing eleven police officers and two plainclothes police officers. On 9 November, the headquarters of the Buenos Aires provincial police in La Plata was blown up, killing a senior police officer and wounding eleven ordinary police officers. Finally, in December, the Montoneros ended the year by placing explosives in the Ministry of Defence during a conference on counterinsurgency. More than 30 officials were injured, and eleven high-ranking military officers and intelligence service officials were killed in the explosion.

This is not just about fighting the state authorities, but also about raiding police stations to seize weapons and kidnapping people for ransom. The reactions of those attacked are swift and devastating. The losses of the Montoneros are very high. In 1979, the question arises: Who were the Montoneros? The extremely reckless counteroffensive in 1978 by infiltrators returning from exile costs three-quarters of them their lives.

Only when the victims of the guerrilla movement are honoured without resentment and mutual recrimination can the path to a non-violent society be taken.

Gibraltar Particularly curious constellations arise in the war over the Falkland Islands. According to the Chinese Three Worlds Theory of the 1970s, the countries of

the Third World should join forces with the smaller developed countries against the superpowers in order to become independent and thus allow greater scope for emancipation movements. In Argentina, this means gaining independence from the United States and also from Great Britain, which had controlled Argentina's economy and politics since the 19th century.

The Montoneros now want to apply this logic to the military and in the war against Great Britain.

When the Argentine military dictatorship attacks the British Falkland Islands in 1982, Prime Minister Thatcher strikes back hard, invoking international law. Under pressure, the Argentine military commissions two experts from the camp of their arch-enemies, the Montoneros, to blow up a British warship in the port of Gibraltar. The terrorists enter Spain, pick up the explosives at their embassy and settle in Algeciras with rental cars and hotel rooms within sight of Gibraltar. But no suitable ship arrives, either because they are too small or because they are oil tankers whose cargo would contaminate the large bay and outrage the environmental movement. Weeks pass until the weekly cash payments for cars and rooms arouse suspicion and the hotel informs the police. Madrid knows about the plot through wiretapping of the Argentine embassy, but wants nothing to do with it and promptly flies the foiled assassins back to Buenos Aires.

The operation is reminiscent of the amateurish counter-offensive. In "Operation Algeciras," just about everything is done wrong. Like drug dealers, the Argentinians pay for hotels and rental cars in cash for weeks, they only have a tourist map of the area, no accurate military maps, and even the forged passports arouse suspicion among the authorities.

Fatigue Ultimately, the attempt to save the reputation and existence of the Montoneros also failed. Firmenich, Perdía and Vaca Narvaja took turns trying to characterise the actions of the guerrillas as resistance in defence of democracy or as a civil war. At the beginning, during the transition to democracy, the resistance thesis prevailed, but later it was seen as a civil war, without renouncing the democratic right to resistance. Firmenich was sentenced to 30 years in prison for murder until Peronist President Menem granted a general amnesty for guerrillas and military personnel. Firmenich espoused the idea of a "flashing" civil war that had existed since 1955, which, like the flashing light on a vehicle, flares up again and again. Unlike Perdía and Vaca Narvaja, Firmenich was in favour of a grand national pact instead of a democratic party system. The multi-party society should give rise to a "National and Social Liberation Front" based on a pact between "the working class, the popular movement and the national entrepreneurial class against the oligarchic-imperialist alliance." After studying economics in Spain, he described this national unity in his doctoral thesis as an alternative to the liberal economic model.

Like most survivors, Vaca Narvaja definitely wanted to end the fratricidal confrontations.

"I sense a weariness," explains Juan Manuel Abal Medina, "a very healthy reaction by Argentine society to the violence. I hope and believe that it will now be possible to achieve civilised forms of coexistence, and I believe that this is a central goal of the next government. Society must be demilitarised. Not just that of the military officers of the armed forces. We must demilitarise trade union and political life. We must banish arrogance from Argentine society. And I believe that this is something that all Argentinians in their right mind, after the absolute madness that all this has become, with the incredible climax regarding the Malvinas (Falkland Islands, WH) that there is no reasonable Argentinian who does not share these ideas. I believe that this time it will be possible."

What remains is the dispute over the unfortunate wording of "two demons" (Alfonsín), which, in the form of guerrilla warfare and state terrorism had plunged the country into a bloody conflict. In comparison, state terrorism caused far more victims, and the guerrilla forces did not torture or murder sympathisers of the opposing side, kidnap anyone, throw them out of aeroplanes into the sea or invent the category of "disappeared persons". Their murders were limited to representatives of the repressive forces and representatives of the state. Whether the victim figures are accurate or exaggerated, 30,000 victims by the military and around 17,000 by the guerrilla group, as claimed by the "Centro de Estudios Legales sobre el Terrorismo y sus Víctimas" (Celtiv), or whether this is being used for party politics, is irrelevant. Every person kidnapped or killed is one victim too many. And the silence of the former guerrillas about their victims is inappropriate. Take, for example, the murder of businessman Soldati and his driver on the open road, when several Montoneros fired at the car and attempted to plant another bomb under the stationary vehicle to explode 20 minutes later when the police arrived. However, the bomb exploded in the hands of the perpetrator.

Nevertheless, this latest outbreak of violence, which is hopefully the last, is accompanied by the long-overdue democratisation of the country. Violence has overcome the perpetrators of violence. As is usually the case, hubris has led to their own downfall.

The Third Deadly Sin – Spreading Fear and Creating Cohesion by Murdering One's Own Comrades Two murders of members of the EGP (Guevarist Popular Guerrilla Army) founded by Che Guevara in 1964 are particularly spectacular. The EGP mainly attracted members of the Communist Party who were disappointed with its bureaucratic internal workings. The EGP was led by Jorge Masetti, a successful journalist who was the first to interview Castro and Guevara in the Sierra Maestra in 1958, who founded the news agency "Prensa Latina" and was second in command to Guevara, who was formally the leader. The guerrilla group was supposed to operate with

30 men in the rugged, mountainous area near the Bolivian border, but remained isolated and was eventually largely wiped out in a confrontation with the police. From then on, it played no further role. The reasons for its failure are Masetti's erratic authoritarian leadership style, the low importance of politics in relation to military matters, and the isolation and harsh living conditions. A former member of the guerrilla, group psychiatrist Héctor Jouvé, considered the mental state of many members to be unstable.

The murders served to maintain the cohesion and survival of the group under difficult conditions. They were glossed over by a set of prohibitions used to feign legitimacy. Further details can be found in the "Provisions on Revolutionary Justice" of 1972 and in the "Code of Revolutionary Criminal Justice" of 1975. These stipulate the death penalty for homosexuality, high treason, exploitation of the civilian population, sexual abuse, robbery and other offences.

Pupi Rotblat's "offences" consisted of fainting spells, asthma attacks, disorientation in the terrain, and nervous breakdowns. When he asked to be allowed to return early from a patrol, his comrades suspected that he was trying to escape and feared that he would betray them. He was therefore sentenced to death and murdered with a shot to the head. Bernardo Grosswald, another guerrilla fighter and former bank employee, also could not endure the military climate and training. He did not adhere to military discipline, did not wash, cried frequently and masturbated several times a day. This was enough to warrant a trial, a death sentence and murder.

In an interview, Hector Jouvé explained the background:

- Why was the EGP's military code so strict?
- Because in Cuba they said that the fighters had to be galvanised. If there were homosexuals, I think they also had to shoot them. It was a copy of the code used in Cuba. Camilo Cienfuegos and Che shot some of them.
- What changed after the shooting of "Pupi"?
- I was against it. My brother and Gringo Canelo were there. I didn't take part in the tribunal and refused to give him the coup de grâce. "If you don't obey, I'll shoot you too," Masetti said to me. "Do what you want," I replied.
- Was there a pact of silence about the shootings?
- I couldn't see any improvement in the group. That prompted "Pirincho" to desert as well. Those of us who were there knew what had happened. Just like the second shooting, where I was Grosswald's defender. They killed him on the spot because there was nothing to shoot him with. He was masturbating and delaying the march of the column. It's true that choosing this boy was extremely stupid. A boy who was short-sighted, really short-sighted! And he had flat feet. [...]
- Did the criteria change after the shootings?
- They let a lot of people go.
- Why were they so strict with "Pupi" and "Nardo"?
- It was arbitrary. It was as if the group would function better if you did that. Not

because the others influenced the group, but because you had to take care of it. It was a message to both sides; the idea was that if you shot one person, the others would change and put more energy into things. None of those who were shot were fighters, they were candidates. And they had physical difficulties keeping up with the pace of the column.

The Montoneros also had their “traitors” and the consequence of the death penalty. Since the leadership believed that torture could be endured, they did not accept the thesis that a statement was forcibly extracted by the enemy, but rather that it constituted voluntary treason.

In 1975, Fernando Rubén Haymal was arrested. He was a specialist in building hiding places for weapons, money, documents and also hostages, who were held in so-called people’s prisons. This technique was invented by the Uruguayan Tupamaros. Under torture, Haymal confessed to having been involved in such constructions and revealed so many details that 36 Montoneros were eventually arrested, including the “high-ranking officer” of the Montoneros, Marcos Osatinsky.

One of the Best Haymal is released and tells other members that the military threatened to kill his family. The Montoneros, however, claim that 95 percent of those tortured refused to testify. After thorough investigation, the Montoneros concluded that Haymal was a traitor and, according to the so-called Revolutionary Justice Code, he was sentenced to death for treason, causing torture, humiliation and the death of Osatinsky. Since he was once again a free man, it was not difficult to capture him. No trial was scheduled; instead, he was immediately murdered with two shots. He was then tied up and dragged behind a car until his body was almost unrecognisable, before being dumped on a pavement.

Although only the families of the victims of state terrorism received compensation of up to 100,000 euros, Haymal’s family also received compensation.

Finally, the Montoneros condemned one of their best, most popular members, Roberto Quieto, often referred to as number three or even number two. Born in 1938, he was about ten years older than most of the members. He grew up in a working-class family and graduated with honours in law. Like many others of his generation, he was among the critics of the Communist Party. They founded new parties and guerrilla movements such as the Vanguardia Revolucionaria (VR) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). Quieto joined the ELN and underwent military training in Cuba twice in 1966. With the death of Guevara, the members turned away from the ELN and towards the cities. Quieto became co-founder of the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Like the founders of the Montoneros, but earlier, Quieto also carried out a spectacular action to make his organisation known: in 1969, an attack was carried out simultaneously on 16 stores of a supermarket chain. The target

was obvious: one of the millionaire shareholders of the Rockefeller family, Nelson Rockefeller, was visiting Argentina as an envoy of President Nixon.

In 1971, Quieto was kidnapped, but thanks to public awareness and protests by lawyers, his abduction was recognised as a legal act. Quieto was back and imprisoned in Rawson. There, in 1972, he and five other leading members of the FSR, PRT-ERP and Montoneros staged the spectacular escape mentioned above, which took him first to Chile and then to Cuba. Sixteen other prisoners who did not manage to escape were shot by the military in their cell block during the Trelew massacre. Quieto was later involved in the merger of the FAR with the Montoneros, which made him the second-in-command. With the establishment of democratic conditions in 1973 under Cámpora, he represented the Peronist strategy of “national reconstruction and liberation,” which was to be led by a Peronist movement. Its main force was to be the working class, which would take the first step towards building socialism in Argentina.

In 1974, the Triple A death squad published a list of people to be murdered, including Quieto. In the two years between Perón's death and the military takeover, scientist Marín counted 639 people killed or wounded in “anti-subversive” actions and just as many, 624, in actions carried out by “subversives”. In total, there were 8,509 armed incidents during this period, half of them in 1975 alone. That year, there were 359 disappearances. (Izaguirre)

Quieto supervised the “execution” of Alberto Villar, the police chief of Buenos Aires, in 1974. He was accused of stealing the coffins of the “martyrs of Trelew,” who had been buried in 1972 at the headquarters of the Justicialist Party in the capital. Villar boasted of having “a box for every Montonero.” Quieto was also the leader of the kidnapping of twins Juan and Jorge Born from Bunge & Born carried out by Galimberti, as already mentioned. At the same time “Triple A” murdered the left-wing lawyer Ortega Peña, at whose funeral 350 people were arrested.

In December 1975, while the country was still under democratic rule, Quieto was arrested again by members of the First Army Corps and the federal police in plain clothes. How long he was tortured to obtain information about the Montoneros is not known, nor is the date of his death.

Revolutionary Justice Marxist friends such as Juan Carlos Portantiero and José Aricó were aware of Quieto's strong opposition to the increasing militarisation of the Montoneros. This included the attack on the second largest barracks in the country, where the 29th mountain infantry regiment in the province of Formosa, to seize weapons, resulted in 28 deaths, including eleven Montoneros. Quieto did not support this action internally, even though it was carried out in a manner worthy of a film, with a scheduled flight hijacked in Buenos Aires to transport the attackers there and back.

Quieto also disagreed with the assassination of the liberal former interior minister of the dictatorship, Mor-Roig, who intervened to support Quieto during his arrest. Quieto did not rule out the possibility of withdrawing from the Montoneros. Thus, the suspicion that Quieto passed on information under torture and must therefore be sentenced to death became a decisive issue in the power struggle within the “Montonero” leadership of the Argentine National Liberation Army. This trial was unjustifiable, not only legally but also politically and morally. If Quieto had made significant statements under torture, this would have had obvious consequences, as Quieto was responsible for military affairs. The trial therefore suggests that it was about the rivalry between the two leaders. The author Gillespie characterises Firmenich as intellectually mediocre, pragmatic, rather cynical, a poor strategist who was useful to the Montoneros in Argentina at certain stages in their history, but who had little charisma and is therefore never a true leader of the people.

Evita Montonera reports on the revolutionary judicial proceedings in the Quieto case. It states:

In the first days of the year, the National Leadership requests the National Council to initiate a revolutionary trial against Roberto Quieto “for breach of duty as a revolutionary who fell into the hands of the enemy.” A few weeks later, in view of evidence that Quieto had passed information to the enemy, the National Leadership requested that he also be charged with treason [...]. In February, the Revolutionary Court was established, which as its first measure decided to strip Quieto of his rank of revolutionary lieutenant colonel and to sentence him in absentia. [...] Even speaking under torture is an expression of serious selfishness and disregard for the interests of the people. [...] According to the Revolutionary Court, this series of liberal and individualistic behaviours has its origins in R. Quieto’s practices, particularly in poor decisions regarding problems in his family life [...] [The verdict follows] On the basis of all this, this Revolutionary Tribunal has found Roberto Quieto guilty of desertion in the line of duty and treason, taking into account the aggravating circumstances of the crimes, and proposes degradation and the death penalty, to be imposed in a manner and at a time yet to be determined.

Firmenich explains in an interview what the verdict does not say. The trial against Quieto is not about him personally, but about the case. It serves to establish a precedent for behaviour in the face of the coming repression. “We do not allow denunciation; it does not seem reasonable to us that someone should denounce another, even if the torture can be very terrible.”

The criticised behaviour of the Montonero leadership, particularly authoritarianism and detachment from the masses, is evident in practice. The murders within the organisation corresponded to this behaviour. They were primarily intended to serve as deterrents. If one compares them with bourgeois laws, they are also pun-

ishable by penalties for non-compliance. The difference to revolutionary violence, however, is that bourgeois society has largely abolished the death penalty and a plurality of lifestyles is possible. The administration of justice is anchored in the limitation and control of law and politics. Such a bourgeois or republican system of freedom does not exist in a guerrilla movement. A liberation movement that aims to overthrow the political order allows freedom only within the limited framework of struggle and liberation. It strongly criticises, as in the case of the Montoneros, the principles of liberalism, not as a category of economic activity, but as a category of morality, of the creation of a new human being. In doing so, however, the movement adopts the behaviours, mentalities and values practised in the society it criticises and fights against.

Even after the demise of the Montoneros, Firmen seems to dream of a new human being:

It was not just about a new society, a change in structure, a change in the legal framework or a mere change in ownership of the means of production; it was about a new society in cultural and spiritual terms as well. A society that would produce a new human being, and this new human being was the future of society. The revolutionary fighters were to approach this new human being or even embody him. (In an interview with Pigna)

That is why there can be no liberalism. In a long statement on this subject in *Evita Montonera* No. 3, March 1975, it says:

Liberalism is extremely harmful in revolutionary organisations. It is a corrosive agent that breaks unity and solidarity and generates inaction and desertion. [...] The liberal does not tolerate anonymity. The liberal opposes organisation, any form of organisation or criticism, because he defends his selfish individuality. And when forced to do so by special circumstances and wanting to defend himself against his inaction, he becomes a permanent critic who never offers solutions and ultimately isolates himself. The liberal resists addressing his personal problems. He separates his political life from his private life. He does not want to reveal the facets of his life that he has no interest in changing, even if he knows that it is necessary and that the whole would demand it.

Liberalism is the main enemy of the armed avant-garde organisation, and the demanded unity of private and political life embodies its totalitarian claim. Political and moral life must follow revolutionary principles that define an “uncompromising, obedient, self-sacrificing, effective and convinced fighter” whose private life also supposedly follows revolutionary principles and is committed to “marital fidelity, monogamy and heterosexuality.” (Slipak) Just as the avant-garde construction bears Leninist traits, so the internal criticism and self-criticism bears Maoist traits.

The Fourth Sin – Being a Victim Hero / Styling Oneself as a Victim and Achieving Martyr Status When One Is No Longer Able to Be a Positive Hero

In addition to the avant-garde and the masses, one of the central elements of a dictatorial liberation movement is the figure of the martyr. He dies for the cause and the movement. He is a special kind of hero, whose lowest form is the example, the role model, and whose exaltation is the hero and ultimately the dying hero. Every political movement has at least one such figure. He is known by name, remembered through texts, images and reports, and also glorified and mystified. His birthplace or grave becomes a place of pilgrimage.

Martyrs serve to mobilise the masses. As chairman of the Montoneros, Firmenich calls out to the 40,000 people gathered in the Atlanta stadium in August 1973: “Today we commemorate the death of all our martyrs, the struggle of an entire people and the example of that great revolutionary who still enlightens us and guides our struggle, Comrade Evita.”

A group of Montoneros wanted to carry out an attack, but the bomb they brought with them killed activist Alicia Camps instantly, as we already know. It is October 1973, and democratic conditions prevail in Argentina. Perón won the elections in September with an overwhelming majority. It can hardly be claimed that the bomb defended democracy. An obituary is published in the Montoneros’ weekly newspaper, *El Descamisado* (Oct. 1973, No. 20, p. 8)

Alicia “Elena” Camps: Present

You were and remain in the memory of all your comrades who knew you, and also those who did not know you.

You were not yet 24 years old, but you had already fought and fought hard. You were the first to die in your organisation: DESCAMISADOS.

Elena: today and always, together with Evita and all our fallen comrades, you are still present in us, you are still calling out: WE WILL WIN IN ONE YEAR OR WE WILL WIN IN 10 YEARS, BUT WE WILL WIN!

A cynical and bombastic text that turns victims into heroes and sacrifices heroes, victim heroes, hero victims. The dead woman is addressed as if she were in a limbo between life and death; she is dead but still present. She can thus be used for an ideological appeal for cohesion. Look, this is what an exemplary fighter looks like. Sacrificial death is the highest means, it serves the goal best. She would have liked to live, but she couldn’t decide that for herself. She wanted to be a heroine, but not a suicide bomber, not even a suicide attacker. The bomb exploded uselessly. At least the dead must still serve an ideological purpose. She was simply clumsy, a heroine out of clumsiness. We can use her well as a martyr. She did not die in battle with the enemy, but because of her own clumsiness. This is concealed; instead, she is honoured as the first of a whole graveyard of heroes. The fact that she and the future dead are united

with Evita in the realm of the dead gives the whole thing a civil-religious veneer. After all, the prospect of victory within ten years at the latest has been dashed. Not only is everything futile, but it is also, from the outset, a high-risk endeavour based on a reckless sedative: "It'll work out somehow." The strategy, based exclusively on violence and isolating them from the rest of the Peronists and the population, blinds the Montoneros to reality. The illusory "counteroffensive" has only filled the heroes' graveyard further.

Norma Arrostito, who was involved in the murder of Aramburu, behaved in an exemplary manner. She was imprisoned in the ESMA and remained alive for a long time in order to identify other detainees, according to the futile hopes of the military. She was no traitor, but thanks to her political and military presence, she was "an important element in the development and strengthening of our party." At times, she was the most wanted woman in Argentina. "Today she has fallen to the bullets of the dictatorship, but she is still with us in her relationships with the MST and through her example."

Moustache is another positive example. In view of his death, he is being added to the gallery of exemplary figures. "Moustache is certainly dead, and we must learn to turn such defeats into victories. The enemy is a specialist in lies; we must be specialists in truth. The enemy steals lives, labour and even illusions. And we must take all that back."

The lives of those who died in battle are exemplary, so death through a positive act is beautiful, the cause is just, and therefore even in death, promotion is justified. Combat groups are given names. Heroic deeds are extremely risky and unexpected actions, such as the aforementioned raid on a barracks.

The escape from prison in Rawson and the flight to Chile in a hijacked plane seems heroic, but the fact that not everyone was able to escape and that some were taken from their cells by the military and murdered gives the story a tragic aspect. Similarly, the fact that those murdered were not leading representatives of the ERP and Montoneros, such as Santucho and Vaca Narvaja, who managed to escape, leaves a bitter aftertaste. The only heroes are those who successfully escaped. Those who were murdered could not escape; they are neither heroes nor martyrs, nor did they die in battle, but were liquidated while defenceless.

The fact that the three survivors of the Trelew massacre were killed years later during the "counteroffensive" is tragic, given their history.

The attack on the aforementioned second-largest barracks of the 29th Mountain Infantry Regiment in the northern province of Formosa in October 1975 was more amateurish than heroic. The goal of capturing as many weapons as possible was far from achieved, with only 50 weapons seized. This was less than hoped for.

A 40-page report by the Montoneros recounts the daring undertaking:

The battle begins: The soldiers – armed or unarmed – refuse to obey the order to surrender. They put up fierce resistance everywhere, some of it suicidal. Instilled with a mythical fear of the “extremists, drug addicts, angry ‘soldiers’ who kill without mercy. [...] To get an approximate idea of the intensity of the attack, one must assume that there were about 60 people on both sides firing simultaneously with FALs, pistols, machine guns, the heavy MA machine gun and grenades. [...] There was strong resistance, which slowed the advance of the platoon and allowed most of them to escape through the streets. [...] The use of grenades decided a fight of three against more than thirty in our favour.

TAKING OVER THE SERVICE COMMAND This is done by the commando platoon without any major difficulties by disarming the guard. There, the armoury is broken into and more than 50 FAL rifles and an FAP machine gun are found, which we immediately put into operation.

RESULT OF THE ATTACK ON THE BARRACKS In the attack on the barracks, we lose all of platoons 2, 3 and 4, with the exception of, two comrades who are able to retreat from the guardhouse. This fact significantly changed the operation... The approximately thirty soldiers armed with FALs who started the shooting were joined by officers and non-commissioned officers from the neighbourhood and at least five other soldiers who were on guard duty ten minutes after the attack began. The shooting is impressive and it is difficult to keep track of where exactly the shots are coming from, how many of them are shooting and what kind of weapons they are using. In addition, we were left defenceless on the side from which the main counterattack came, while they reinforced their positions to advance on us, and we should add here that at this point, five of the six vehicles used in the attack had already been put out of action by enemy fire.

The Montoneros killed in the attack are buried in a mass grave nearby. About 20 survivors are murdered by the Triple A before and during the short military dictatorship established shortly afterwards.

In view of the heavy losses, slogans calling for perseverance and heroism are issued during the dictatorship. “Today, less than two years after the gorilla dictatorship began, only eight months after that call, we feel not only deep pain in our hearts, but also hope, the daughter of the heroism of the people, and the satisfaction that an unstoppable process has been set in motion.” (Movimiento)

In the end, however, a “Montonero” is chosen as a martyr: the leading member, Sabino Navarro. Perhaps only they can be martyrs. The path to martyrdom begins with a firefight with the police, from which he escapes seriously wounded. Three years later, Evita Montonera writes:

After wandering through the Sierra de Alta Gracia for days, Negro Sabino ordered his comrade to leave him alone and flee. It was not a request, it was an order. One of those orders that Negro rarely gave. It was an order to disappear and leave him to his fate. His companion obeyed, believing that Negro would fall down on the

spot. Sabino had a wound on his leg and another in his chest. He had a fever and his wounds were bleeding constantly. He had also been without food or water. Shortly afterwards, the comrade was caught by the police and forced to retrace his steps. When they arrived at the place where the leader of the “Montoneros” had been left behind, they found no one. The Negro had escaped again.

It was his last courageous act, the one that people remember most. El Negro walked more than ten kilometres alone, almost unconscious from fever. He was weak and exhausted from blood loss. Almost completely powerless, El Negro fell down a slope and lost consciousness. Death overtook him. It was 1 August 1971.

No one knows where Navarro ended up. The Montoneros task one of their comrades with finding him. He finds the death certificate and the grave in Córdoba. Officially, the body was exhumed because the grave had not been paid for. The comrade spoke to the cemetery staff. They knew that the coffin of a woman named Machado had been buried on top of Navarro's coffin. They dug and found Navarro's body. His hands were missing, apparently severed to establish his identity.

Negro was back among us. At the sight of his companion, who had endured three years of uncertainty and pain, I had a lump in my throat. But I looked at Negro's children, whom he loved so much, those children who were proud of their heroic father [...], and I was happy. Happy and certain that Negro's sacrifice had not been in vain.... A corpse that the enemies of the fatherland had hidden for three years. [...] We have already saved Negro. We will also save Evita, the standard-bearer of the people for more than twenty years, and we will bring her back to her Descamisados, no matter what it takes.

The family fears that Navarro will be heroized as a martyr, which would inevitably lead to his expropriation from his family.

An outstanding example is Marco Osatinsky, who was allegedly betrayed by a comrade. Osatinsky was the organiser of the escape from the prison in Rawson. It was “his great masterpiece,” according to Evita Montonera.

He always knew when something was needed. Generous and open, he always had the right answer. Comrades went to him for advice on family problems. He was always a role model. His partner was exemplary. He never separated family life from militancy. It was important to him to integrate these aspects. He was not only respected for his abilities, but also very much loved. In short, he was a true leader.

Arturo Lewinger, a senior officer in the Montoneros, is also described as particularly warm-hearted. He is supposed to be a role model, but all that remains is the memory of a “fallen hero”:

(He) always built a sensitive relationship with his comrades; he took the time to talk to those who had problems, to support them, to give them backing. He was not someone who made concessions, but he had a lot of respect for his comrades; this enabled him to achieve a leadership style that was less and less centralised and more focused on teamwork.

Two Bodies With Martyr Status The first is the body of Evita Perón, the second that of Fernando Aramburu. This may seem surprising, as neither of them are martyrs according to the definition just given. Evita is a martyr because she lost her battle against cancer while fighting for her “Peronist people.” She, who was able to stir the masses into emotional turmoil from the balcony of the Casa Rosada, despite her advancing illness, which, incidentally, was kept secret from her by her husband and the doctor treating her, gave her best,

After Evita’s death in 1952, Perón plans to build a large mausoleum to serve as a place of honour for distinguished Argentine personalities. Perhaps similar to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington or Kubicek’s in Brasília. Time passes. The body is embalmed and placed in the CGT trade union building. The next coup, carried out by Aramburu and others in 1955, is inevitable. As soon as it took place, the military transported the body away to prevent it from becoming a place of pilgrimage. It is known that two additional wax figures were made alongside the embalmed body. To verify the authenticity of the corpse, a finger was removed. It was the real one. The corpse was stored in a military armoury for a while. Aramburu commissioned Carlos Moori Koenig, the head of military intelligence, to do this. Koenig placed the body in the personal care of his deputy, Major Eduardo Arandía, who hid it in his attic. One night, suspecting burglars in his apartment, drew his pistol. A fatal mistake, in which he shoots his pregnant wife.

Koenig takes Evita to his office, where he places her in an upright position, hidden in a box that originally contained material for radio broadcasts. The Vatican arranges for her transfer and burial under a false name in Milan’s Cimitero Maggior. For 14 years, Evita’s grave is tended by someone who believes that a Milanese woman is buried there.

It is not until 1971 that President Lanusse allows the remains to be returned, initially to Perón’s residence in Madrid. It is reported that Perón’s wife Isabel has to endure having the body in her house and that Evita’s hair is regularly done. Only after Perón’s death are the remains brought to Buenos Aires in November 1974, restored and buried next to Perón.

Isabel took up the idea of a grand mausoleum, but nothing came of it. The military ordered the burial in the grave of the Eva Duarte family. Conflicts within the Peronist movement led the Montoneros to use unusual pressure to force Isabel Perón’s government to return the body. To this end, they stole the body of Aramburú, who had died in 1970 and was buried in the La Recoleta cemetery.

On 15 October 1974, the moment arrives. The group is led by Francisco “Paco” Urondo. Their goal is to pressure Isabel Perón’s government to return Eva Perón’s body to Argentina. The elaborate cemetery operation involves overpowering a police officer with amorous means, using a stolen garbage truck and creative improvisation to lift the heavy coffin out of the crypt and transport it away. The incident had a strong symbolic meaning and demonstrated the strategic and ideological determination of the Montoneros.

The Fifth Deadly Sin – Cyanide / Keeping the Sect Alive Through Self-Sacrifice So that murdering comrades become unnecessary. On 28 December 1975, Roberto Quieto is arrested on a playground in Martínez, Buenos Aires province. Some time later, activists close to the leader are kidnapped and some houses are searched, resulting in the loss of weapons and logistical resources important to the organisation. Convinced that these events were due to Quieto’s confession under torture, the national leadership decided to use cyanide capsules. Suicide was to prevent further confessions. Initially, their use was mandatory for senior officers, but at the request of the other members, they were made available to all fighters.

Paco Urondo He is just 46 years old and becomes regional leader of the Montoneros. The dictatorship has only just been established, and many people, including those abroad, are now discovering the gifted poet – who is driving to Mendoza that day and falls into a deadly trap set by the police. He is stopped, the police officers approach him, and now it is a matter of survival. His partner, Angela, with their eleven-month-old child, knows what to do in Paco’s place. He urges her to get out of the car and take refuge in a shop while he provides cover. He knows that his ammunition will be exhausted within minutes and that he will succumb to the superior forces. They will not shoot him immediately, but take him away to squeeze as many names as possible out of him, names of Montoneros and other opposition figures.

However, Rodolfo Walsh gives a different version of Urondo’s death in a text dated 29 December of the same year, according to former activist and editor Sergio Bufano of the magazine “Lucha armada en la Argentina”:

Paco’s transfer to Mendoza was a mistake. Cuyo (region, WH) had been suffering a constant drain since 1975 that could no longer be tolerated. Paco only lasted a few weeks. [...] What happened was terrifying. There was a collision with an enemy vehicle, a chase and, at the same time, a shootout between the two cars. Paco, Lucía with her baby and a colleague were there. They had an MP, but it was in the boot, and they couldn’t get to it. Finally, Paco stopped, searched for something in his clothes and said, ‘You shoot first.’ Then he added, ‘I’ve taken the (cyanide) pill and I feel sick.’ His companion recalls Lucía saying, ‘But Dad, why did you do that?’ Paco was shot twice in the head, although he was probably already dead.

Walsh, who was a friend of Paco Urondo and describes the events in meticulous detail, adds that the incident took place “in a context of defeat,” meaning that many activists – and probably Urondo as well – were unable to bear the climate of repression and death that prevailed in 1976. The denunciations, the betrayals, the advance of the military dictatorship had caused a demoralisation that had to be covered up by any means necessary, even lies. How could anyone recognise that Paco Urondo, a revolutionary poet who had been in prison and whose militant achievements were remarkable, had died from the hasty ingestion of cyanide without resisting death, as required by some procedural rules? The use of poison was permitted if there was no possibility of escape or if the victim was unarmed when confronted by the police. But Paco, discouraged like many of the militants who saw the disastrous situation in the ranks of the National Liberation Guerrilla at the end of 1976, chose to die, even though he might have been able to live. Or at least inflict losses on the enemy. This attitude, this gesture of suicide, which is so human in the face of defeat, as Walsh defines it, could not be tolerated by the “Montonero” leadership, which altered the facts in its official newspaper to avoid any possible contagion of the despair that had overcome the poet. Anyone who witnessed the guerrilla militancy after Videla’s coup will remember the deep scepticism that began to spread after 24 March.

The leadership takes cyanide, fleeing to death to save life, the lives of others, of the organisation, of the future, of Angela. Paco Urondo is dead, is the terrible news, like that of the many leading cadres who perish.

In the last of his posthumously published poems, Urondo addresses the contradictions within the population that clearly hinder the revolutionary path. The poem reads:

Por Soledades.

Un hombre es perseguido, una / familia entera, una organización, un pueblo. La / responsable de esta situación no es la codicia, sino un / comerciante con sus precios, con la imposición de las reglas del juego. Los empresarios, la policía / con la imposición / de las reglas del juego. Por eso / ese hombre, ese pueblo, esa familia, esa organización, se / siente perseguida. Es más, comienzan / a perseguirse entre ellos, a delatarse, / a difamarse, y juntos, a su vez, se lanzan a perseguir / quimeras, a olvidarse de las legítimas, / de las costosas pero realizables aspiraciones; / marginan la penosa esperanza. / Entonces toda la familia, todo el pueblo, entra / en el nivel más alto de la persecución: la paranoia, esa refinada búsqueda de los perseguidos históricos y culturales. Y ésta / es la triste historia de los pueblos / derrotados, de las familias envilecidas / de las organizaciones inútiles, de los hombres solitarios, la / llama que se consume sin el viento, los aires / que soplan sin amor, los amores que se marchitan / sobre la memoria del amor o sus fatuas presunciones.

Through loneliness.

A man is persecuted, an entire family, an organisation, a people. It is not greed that is responsible for this situation, but a trader with his prices, with the imposition of the rules of the game. The entrepreneurs, the police with the imposition of the rules of the game. That is why this man, this people, this family, this organisation feels persecuted. What is more, they begin to persecute each other, to betray each other, to slander each other, and together they chase illusions, forgetting their legitimate, costly but achievable aspirations; they suppress their laborious hope. Then the whole family, the whole people, reaches the highest level of persecution – paranoia, the final stage of the search of the historically and culturally persecuted. And that is the sad story of defeated peoples, of degraded families, of useless organisations, of lonely people, of the flame that dies without wind, of the winds that blow without love, of the loved ones who wither at the memory of love or its vain pretensions.

A great poet whom the public deserves to know. A sensitive and initially surreal poet. Who came to politics from literature. “I took up arms because I am searching for the just word,” he said. In 1973, he published the interview “The Shot Fatherland” (*La Patria fusilada*). An idealist who stood up for humanity without training. The police officers involved in his murder and others were sentenced in 2010 to long prison terms for their involvement in 24 crimes against humanity. His daughter subsequently declared: “This act of justice gives us the comforting knowledge that we no longer walk the same streets as mass murderers.” A building for cultural activities has been named after him on the site of the former torture centre at the ESMA in Buenos Aires. How we would love to hear him speak.

Benefacción

Piedad para los equivocados, para / los que apuraron el paso y los torpes / de lentitud. Para los que hablaron bajo tortura / o presión de cualquier tipo, para los que supieron / callar a tiempo o no pudieron mover / un dedo; perdón por los desaires con que me trata / la suerte; por titubeos y blabuceos. Perdón / por el campo que crece en estos espacios de la época / trabajosa, soberbia. Perdón / por dejarse acunar entre huesos / y tierras, sabihondos y suicidas, ardores / y ocasos, imaginaciones perdidas y penumbras.

Benefaction

Mercy for those who erred, for those who hurried and those who were clumsy and slow. For those who spoke under torture or pressure of any kind, for those who knew when to remain silent or could not lift a finger; forgiveness for the slights with which fate treats me; for hesitations and idle chatter. Forgiveness / for the field that grows in these spaces of the difficult, arrogant era. Forgiveness / for letting oneself be cradled between bones / and earth, know-it-alls and suicides, passions / and sunsets, lost imaginations and shadows.

In January 1977, a document entitled “Report on the Basics and Use of Cyanide” circulated among the Montoneros. The prerequisite was the slogan of every “Montonero” – Resistance until escape or death. Organisational measures were taken to enable escape in extreme cases, including planning dates, deciding to take up arms, and making plans to defend homes.

Forty days before the impending coup, the Revolutionary Tribunal sentenced the leading Montonero, Roberto Quieto, to death. He should have taken the pill.

Years later, Firmenich justified Quieto's suicide as an act of extreme devotion to the cause of national liberation:

How was it possible that the one who was supposed to be the “new man” could sing under torture? [...] From then on, we decided on two things: a trial in Quieto's absence, which had real symbolic value. We knew we wouldn't find any trace of him [...] In this trial, Quieto was convicted because he had sung under torture, convicted because he had denounced others. This had the effect of saying: “We will not allow denunciation; it does not seem reasonable to us that someone should denounce, even if the torture can be very terrible [...] And there, the compulsory nature of the cyanide capsule was established for the members of the leadership, so that they would not surrender alive” (Pigna).

Everyday life with cyanide seems bizarre in its normality. Rulo from the North Column complained to the leadership that they were not being given tablets or weapons. “We from the north asked for them, but they refused. So we started making them ourselves. We got cyanide, about half a kilo. It was enough to kill the whole gang, and we laughed our heads off about it” (Celosio, Waissberg).

Amidst all the heroism, there is of course also grief and preoccupation with death. The partner of a kidnapped woman writes to her. It is the first letter after her death

a death that says a lot, or rather, says everything. What was your death if not life itself? What was your resistance if not the conviction of a struggle? [...] What I would like to ask you – although I can imagine – is what you felt. It is one thing to be ready to be killed, it is another to say: Kill me now! – Here and now! I don't want to say that they are different [...], but between readiness and decision there is a distance, and we know that many have fallen by the wayside.”

In this vein, the back page of issue 13 of *Evita Montonera*, under the headline “I don't want to surrender alive,” reported how a fighter killed his “comrade” after she asked him to do so in order not to be handed over “alive” to the “enemy.” Given that both had placed the “revolution” and the “organisation” above their own lives in fulfilment of a “just order from the organisation,” it was decided to promote them and award them honours.

Moni was a soldier in the “Montonero” army. Her partner belonged to a base unit of aspirants.

On 7 May, my partner and I decide to go to my old parents’ house, where I want to get changed and we can have some time to ourselves. We arrive at 11:30 a.m. When we go inside, we don’t notice anything unusual.

At around 2:30 p.m., Moni is reading and I am getting changed. Suddenly, the glass panes of the front door are smashed. I go to the dining room and Moni fetches the guns from their hiding place. I go to the stairs and ask, “What’s going on?” to find out who it is; they tell me to open the door, police.

We take the weapons, throw a grenade in their direction and begin to retreat. I go out into the courtyard and cheer for the Montoneros. At that moment, one or more shooters concentrate their fire on us. Crouching down, we try to take cover from their fire, but this proves impossible as we cannot locate the enemy’s positions. We move towards the bathroom, passing through a passageway with no parapet, as there is only a metal railing on the side where the enemy is standing.

When we enter the bathroom, Moni says she is wounded and leans against the wall (behind the bathroom). I can see her weakening from the wound in her chest and losing a lot of blood. She says she does not want to surrender alive and that I should help her kill herself (from the report of Moni’s companion).

The article continues:

Both comrades put the revolution and the organisation above their own lives. With their resistance metre by metre, with the comrade’s wish not to surrender alive, and the comrade’s attitude to help her fulfil this just order of the organisation.

Her steadfastness and love for the people and the organisation, proven in daily practice, leave me in no doubt that I will fulfil her request.

I take her weapon and decide to take a chance to free myself. To do this, I leave the bathroom with both weapons and fire forward and downward to locate the enemy. I see one running away down the hallway. I fire a shot at him and jump onto a rear roof that leads to a workshop. I come out and realise that I am slightly injured. This prevents me from simply walking away. I decide to commandeer a car. The guy takes me to a place near where some of our comrades are. I arrange a meeting with my superior and inform him of the situation.

The article gives an assessment of the events:

By making these decisions, the comrades demonstrate not only their love for the revolutionary project and the organisation it embodies, but also a deep and rational understanding of the class of enemies we face. Their cruelty and determination to destroy anyone who challenges the power of exploitation means that there

is no return ticket on this journey. The alternatives are victory or death.

Comrade N. was promoted to the rank of officer and honoured for his outstanding achievements in fulfilling his revolutionary duty. Comrade Moni demonstrated sufficient political understanding and ideological solidity through her attitude towards the enemy to become a full member of our organisation (our party). This status was awarded to her by the Montonero National Council in recognition of her memory.

The crucial questions are avoided. How did he shoot her? Why is this being kept secret, even though armed struggle is the top priority? And how does the comrade feel today when he thinks about the moment his girlfriend was shot – assuming he is still alive?

Towards the end of World War II in 1945, cyanide was a common poison in Germany to escape the feared revenge of enemies, rape, punishment, degradation or shame. 700 suicides took place in the small town of Demmin alone, not far from today's Polish border.

There is a photograph showing the deputy mayor of Leipzig slumped at his desk two weeks before the arrival of American troops. A woman is lying on a sofa. More than 200 politicians, officials and military personnel committed suicide. The poison was, so to speak, on everyone's lips.

The Sixth Deadly Sin – Indifference / Towards Strangers and One's Own Victims The distance between the organisation and the “people” reported in the chapter on the Montoneros and noted by many members is not due to a practice that unintentionally promotes such a distance, but to a deliberate avant-garde concept that is close to Leninist Bolshevism. This includes a vanguard, selected and ideologically trained members, and the combination of political and military struggle.

In the case of the Montoneros, however, two further elements are added: the absolute primacy of military struggle and the emotional coldness with which the organisation is placed above everything else with bombastic pathos. People are indifferent, whether they are actors or victims of their own or enemy ranks. In Germany, before the rise to power of totalitarian National Socialism, the behavioural doctrine of coldness became a cultural trend that emotionally promoted totalitarianism. (Heuer)

Among the Montoneros, as we have already seen, there was a clear difference between the warm-hearted Roberto Quieto, who was respected, if not loved, by the population, and the withdrawn Mario Firmenich, who was coldness personified. The fact that Quieto disappeared and was sentenced to death *in absentia* could only be to the advantage of the representative of coldness.

Firmenich advocated the rational coldness of politicians, as exemplified by Perón, the “prototype of the rational politician, the strategist, the cold man, the man who made decisions without emotion. And on that day (1 May 1974 in the Plaza de Mayo, WH), Perón was not the cold strategist, he was the emotional man, and he reacted emotionally, he reacted with insults that have no place in political discourse. That triggered a tragedy. (Pigna)

Firmenich, who grew up in a wealthy middle-class family, was educated at the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, the country’s most traditional school, which has produced numerous personalities such as two Nobel Prize winners, many doctors and scientists, and numerous cultural figures, including the writers Juan Gelman and Alberto Manguel. The list of graduates reads like a who’s who of Argentine society. It also includes the names of Firmenich’s two friends, Fernando Abal Medina and Carlos Ramus, both co-founders of the Montoneros. They were strongly influenced by the charismatic liberation theologian Carlos Mugica and came into contact with the influential magazine “Cristianismo y Revolución”.

Christianity and revolution aim at material and spiritual emancipation, a just society and a new human being, and Firmenich pursued both goals. However, he focused on structural changes and the lure of seizing power.

The goal of a humanitarian organisation is to save people. The goal of a political organisation is not to save people, but to seize power at the lowest possible cost. Under these circumstances, the approach of revolutionary war or guerrilla warfare (as in Cuba) or urban guerrilla warfare (culminating in an uprising as in the case of Algeria) or so-called regular or irregular warfare in the Vietnam War was legitimised at the international level. General Perón developed these concepts very clearly in his writings and films. The concept of developing resistance against oppression, which was legitimised by the Church itself, is legitimised by international law, which was very clearly expressed in the foundations of the Amnesty Law of ‘73. (Pigna)

His instrumental thinking was already evident earlier. The statement that the goal was not to save people but to seize power was not only clearly suited to a dictatorial solution, but also differed from a similar-sounding republican orientation. Arendt also explains that she was not concerned with the salvation of individuals, but with the world, that is, the space of pluralistic freedom and its institutions. Both are concerned with the world, but they differ fundamentally in whether they advocate power in the sense of vertical domination or horizontal political equality.

Leading cadre José Amorim confirmed this in an interview:

Personally, one can attribute a number of characteristics to Firmenich: authoritarianism, rigidity, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, irreverence, and so on. But these

characteristics are common to many leaders, revolutionary or not, and will continue to be so in the future. [...] The problem with Firmenich was his lack of political skills and also his lack of understanding of Perón and the unconditional support of the people for him, of the political model proposed by Peronism and of the Peronist movement as a revolutionary movement as a whole. He shared this problem with other members of the national leadership of the 'Montonero'. This led to the controversy with Perón and a feeling of humiliation over certain attitudes Perón took after the Ezeiza massacre.

This reveals an undialogical, Nazi-like character. Firmenich always kept his inner feelings hidden, rarely spoke about his past and refused to contribute to biographies.

All statements clearly reveal a pronounced connection between authoritarianism and violence, a tendency towards dictatorial behaviour that is not communicative and free of violence, but violent, not interested in dialogue-based power building, but in silent execution. In this way, the leadership promotes the bureaucratisation of the movement and unleashes violence as an end in itself. Mao saw the long-lasting people's war as a school for raising awareness and revolutionising the local population in China. This sounded like an emancipatory process of self-knowledge, enabled and guided by the avant-garde. Think of Paulo Freire's literacy campaign with socially critical content in Brazil.

But in the case of the Montoneros we encounter the opposite process. It is by no means emancipatory, but rather subject to the physical and psychological control of a clique calling itself the avant-garde. Their path leads to dictatorship. In *Silencio*, Cuba, Claudia Hilb clearly describes Cuba's path from the seizure of power to dictatorship as the violent establishment of equality under the leadership of those in power. The democratic alternative described by Fred Dewey as a "school of public life" is quite different. It is based on the practice of civil society participation and the experience of collective action and judgement. The school of war in the case of Argentina is the exact opposite. It is based on nothing less than discourse as obedience, dissent as treason, politics as violence, emancipation as self-criticism and judgement as logical reasoning.

The Montoneros murdered not only for political reasons, but also to mobilise their members. The assassination of Perón's confidant, Rucci, in 1973, the conservative Peronist trade union leader, "was something we needed," a Montonero told journalist Pablo Giussani some time later. "Our people barricaded themselves in the offices. At times, it was necessary to protect them from this danger by resorting to military action." It was a kind of revolutionary self-therapy with human sacrifices.

Throughout all this, Firmenich remained the undisputed leader.

The coldness is evident in an interview Gabriel García Márquez conducted with Firmenich in 1977, the year the Montoneros began their free fall with numerous ca-

sualties. To García Márquez, Firmenich appeared like a wild cat: “Intense eyes, a slight smile, with hard, gaping teeth, sideburns with red, bushy hair and moustache hairs that could just as well be fake.” The prognosis of the downfall of the Montoneros leaves Firmenich cold. He is capable of clear political analysis,

[...] but despite this political clarity, I cannot shake the impression that I am talking to a man of war – indeed, Mario Firmenich, who was born in Buenos Aires in 1948, has had little time in his life for anything other than war, and his education and experience are primarily of a military nature; moreover, that the “Montoneros” lack the ability to deal with political options, that they only have the military aspect of the problem in mind, and that, in my opinion, a military solution is the last and most risky alternative left to them.

This indifference towards the person also characterises Firmenich’s TV interview with the journalist Neustadt. He gives the impression that he bases his actions on indifference. “We respected him (the kidnapped Aramburu) and even prayed for him publicly. And that’s where I learned that you shouldn’t hate your enemy.” But the enemy is not a human being at all, but a function. There is also no question of guilt, because the crime was not committed by the Montoneros, but by the people of their own free will, represented by the avant-garde, as Firmenich explains in the same TV interview.

He remains silent about all this, because otherwise the media would pounce on him, he explains. When Maria O’Donnell interviewed him in 2020 while writing her book about Aramburu, he says: “Journalists who are functional in my exclusion treat ‘Firmenich’ as a ‘historical figure’, that is, as someone who is no longer alive”. Someone who is buried. Someone who should not exist in the future of history. There have been several attempts to write a biography of Firmenich. But in vain. Not only the contemporary witnesses remain silent, but also Firmenich himself. The authors of the only comprehensive biography, Waisberg and Celesia, suspect that old scores still need to be settled or that former Montoneros are remaining silent for the time being because they hold high political office following the restoration of democracy.

The Seventh Deadly Sin – Succumbing to Triumphalism / One’s Own Propaganda Triumph overshadows mistakes that have been made, which can be dismissed as insignificant. Firmenich admits that it was a mistake to go underground under democratic conditions. It was also a mistake to assassinate Rucci. The temporary surge in support for the Montoneros fuelled the illusion that this was the result of a correct strategy. Looking back with a sober eye, Rucci’s murder appears to have been a mistake: “We thought we could negotiate better terms if we put a dead body on the table for the old man (Perón, WH), but history has shown us that this was not the case. It was the wrong political decision.” In 2004, he confirmed his statements in the magazine

Noticias: "Yes, from our point of view, Rucci's killing was a political mistake, like the whole civil war that Argentina went through." (Caparrós) Parallel to this self-criticism, Miguel Bonasso said at a press conference in 1997: "Instead of killing Rucci, we should have killed López Rega."

Further problems include centralism within the Montoneros and the leadership under Firmenich's control. "Under normal republican conditions," explains Firmenich's biographer Celesia, "he could have been an officer, because his vocation and his virtues for war are undeniable." Added to this is his leadership ability. Celesia explains this with the insight that "to be a leader, you first have to be determined to be a leader, and Firmenich wanted to be a leader."

Added to this is his intelligence. When he wrote his highly acclaimed essay "Peace is Possible" as a schoolboy, he was recommended as a "role model" for children of his age. His father later praised his great sense of fairness. His encounters with Christian and political movements had a strong moral influence on him.

However, none of this prevented him from making mistakes. Firmenich rejected criticism, believing that the avant-garde did not make mistakes. Decentralisation was rejected. Gelman and Galimberti's demands for more political action instead of military action were rejected. The demand for an open party conference was also rejected. On the contrary, it was expressly prohibited. And those who did not sacrifice themselves were sentenced to death. Decentralisation and participation are superfluous because everything is going so well. Triumphalism.

The fact that around 50 Montonero fighters were killed within two days in the last quarter of 1976 did not shake the leadership. Walsh, who was not only a brilliant journalist and analyst but also a politically minded comrade, criticised the blindness with which 500 military actions were carried out in 1975. In a letter to the leadership, he expressed his deep disappointment and called for two changes:

The council document criticises militarism, but in militaristic terms. The entire document is like a strategy drawn up in the sandbox, and our reality has nothing to do with this approach. To make policy, you first have to think in political terms and formulate them simply and clearly.

Triumphalism: Despite the blows we have suffered and the corrections made to the document, we remain triumphant. We are convinced that the enemy's plans have completely failed, and we continue to underestimate him. This is very worrying, and we believe that it is essentially due to a lack of understanding of our own history. We will try to illustrate this: if we do not reflect on the reasons for our spectacular growth and our representativeness among the population in the years 1970 to 1974, we come to the conclusion that this is not because we acted correctly, with proposals that were accepted and adopted by the people, but because we are geniuses, and if we are geniuses, then it is irrelevant whether we do things right or wrong. Whatever we do will be right,

writes Walsh sarcastically, criticising

[...] excessive pursuit of power. We do everything and we think big. Our struggle is a war. Our propaganda must reach four million people. Although we criticise militarism, the entire document seems to be a manual on how one army can break through the encirclement of another and then defeat it. We must be more modest. We must defend ourselves against dictatorship together with the people. We need a lot of propaganda. We must organise ourselves in the struggle, without megalomania and with a long-term perspective. This is the summary of our general views. In summary, they have evolved militarily and politically. We are regressing in both areas. And that is because it was not possible to move forward without politics. We must admit this, even if it hurts.

Two years later, in February 1979, Galimberti finally broke with the Montoneros, together with Juan Gelman, Patricia Bullrich, Pablo and Miguel Fernández Long and other leaders. At that time, the leadership of the Montoneros, Mario Firmenich, Roberto Perdía and Fernando Vaca Narvaja, had gone into hiding in Cuba. From there, they accused the dissidents of “treason,” demanded the establishment of a “revolutionary tribunal” and called for “the harshest punishment,” i.e. shooting Galimberti wherever he was found. However, the sentence was never carried out.

Walsh continues his critique and develops a “hypothesis of resistance” based on two fundamental principles: “The renunciation of individual terrorism, which ‘disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution’ (Lenin),” and the decision “not to carry out indiscriminate military actions that prevent us from working politically within the ranks of the enemy or deprive us of the basis of human rights.”

This refers to actions such as the attack on the dining hall of the Federal Police Headquarters, which was blown up on 2 July 1976 during an operation in which Rodolfo Walsh was involved in the preparations: 23 people were killed.

“After the coup, we made a mistake,” Walsh said, “because instead of engaging in politics and talking to all sides, we decided that the main weapons of confrontation were military ones.” The battle on the purely military level had been lost, making political steps all the more urgent. But Firmenich and his colleagues do not see it that way at all. In their triumphalism, they believed that the military had in fact run out of steam for its offensive and that they should therefore prepare for a counterattack that would enable them to seize power once and for all

Realistically, the attacks on individuals and acts of terrorism should be stopped. “A hundred officers spread across the territory are enough to support the resistance if it has sufficient resources in the form of money, documentation, propaganda and explosives.”

At the same time, Walsh argued in favour of offering peace to the military by admitting military defeat, but paving the way for peace with the “recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the validity of its principles under international control by both sides” and the mutual commitment that “the future of the country must be resolved by democratic means.”

It was in the last months before his violent death that Walsh worked on alternative paths. When the Montonero leadership, misjudging the balance of power, organised a counter-offensive whose catastrophic failure was foreseeable, Juan Gelman wrote to the Supreme Council of the Peronist Montonero movement, represented by Rudolfo Puiggrós, on 12 March 1979:

“This leadership of the PM [...] has developed a strategy and tactics for the counteroffensive that will lead to the total suicide of the ‘Montoneros’ [...] It insists on a militaristic *foquismo* outside the masses. [...] What the leadership of the so-called PM is trying to do is to fall back into the battle of the apparatuses that led to the death of thousands of our comrades and to the reduction of our political space within the masses.” Gelman criticised the fact that military ranks were determined from above and that there was no internal democratic life. Finally, he complained of being labelled a “deserter” and thus condemned to death by firing squad according to the rules of the Montoneros.

Those criticised, the survivors, remained silent. Only a few isolated, undaunted, triumphalist voices were raised: “Without a doubt, the ‘Montonero’ Argentine National Liberation Movement, with all its successes and mistakes, is one of the great heroic deeds accomplished by our people, or at least by parts of Peronism.”¹

To the Short End Taken together, the mistakes paint a psychological portrait of Guerilleros as a “man of war” surrounded by Montoneros, who, in García Márquez’s opinion, “lack the ability to deal with political options because they only have the military aspect of the problem in their heads.” Within this world, discourse is understood as obedience, dissent as treason, politics as violence, emancipation as self-criticism, and judgement as logical reasoning.

The breath of violence blows across the country as a cultural legacy of the caudillos and gauchos, from where the path of the guerrilla war led to the dead end of dictatorship. But nothing is inevitable in politics. The guerrilla movement had been destroyed and the military had been discredited on two counts. Democracy offered opportunities for political participation and a welfare state, equality before the law and justice, republicanism. However, a democratic future was burdened by old structures and behaviours. The burden of the past weighs heavily. In his 2018 report, the UN Special Rapporteur condemned the flagrant violation of human rights, partic-

1 Mari ano Pacheco, Montoneros: 5 hipótesis, 50 años después, in Lobo Suelto, 2020

ularly in prison conditions, with widespread violence, abuse of all kinds and an apparent culture of impunity among the security forces.²

However, there is the commitment of civil society organisations that are aware of the burden of the past and already opposed the power of violence during the dictatorship. It is not so much theoretical insights as courageous, joint actions that point the way to a new practice.

What remains? Juan Gelman contradicted his comrades and forgave the military who murdered his son and daughter-in-law but allowed his granddaughter to be born and gave her up for adoption. Gelman spoke poetically to gain the strength to go on living. He responded to the famous Carlos Gardel, who 50 years earlier had called for peace in his well-known tango *Mi Buenos Aires querido* (My beloved Buenos Aires):

Mi Buenos Aires querido /
 Cuando yo te vuelva a ver /
 No habrás más pena ni olvido
 My beloved Buenos Aires /
 When I see you again soon /
 You will no longer suffer sorrow and oblivion.

Gelman, on the other hand, lives in a troubled time, unable to leave or stay, unable to rest, but in need of the strength to resist and engage in civil disobedience:

Mi querido Buenos Aires
 My beloved Buenos Aires:
 Sitting on the edge of a worn-out chair,
 dizzy, sick, barely alive,
 I write verses, previously wept over,
 about the city where I was born.
 They must be captured, for it was here
 my sweet children were born,
 who, despite all the punishment, sweeten you beautifully.
 We must learn to resist.
 Neither to leave nor to stay,
 to resist,
 even though it is certain
 that there will be more sorrow and forgetting.

2 United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Nils Melzer, 2018 <https://www.ohchr.org/es/statements/2018/04/preliminary-observations-and-recommendations?LangID=S&NewsID=22974>.

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