5 Caudillos and Gauchos

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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, Martin 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 Bolivar, 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. Poussett, 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 Viamonte:

> 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.
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> 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.
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> 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.
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> 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 multidisciplinary 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 Ramirez 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 Martin, 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 Léon 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 "Martin Fierro" twenty years after the constitution was adopted in 1872/79. 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 Martin 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 peliar 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 "Martin 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 Martin 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 "Martin 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 Martin 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 "*Gaucho 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 Martin, 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 Roja, 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) Bolivar, Sucre, Belgrano and San Martin."

"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 Martin. 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 in the 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.