

7 The Military Order

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On 7 September 1930, *La Prensa* wrote:

The Provisional Junta addresses the people with a manifesto.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And racism grows with immigration.

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

In 1907, a new type of strike broke out among residents of tenement houses in Buenos Aires, Rosario, La Plata and Bahía Blanca, who refused to accept excessive rent increases. Their protest is also directed against the catastrophic living conditions in the tenements. In the capital, the striking workers’ families are driven out in the early hours of the harsh winter of 1907 by the fire brigade on the orders of police chief Colonel Falcón.

Between 1928 and 1933, Roberto Arlt published the column “Aguafuertes porteñas” (Etchings from the Capital, 1928–33) in “El Mundo”. No whitewashing, he explains, just ink and charcoal. “The Girl with the Tie” describes the ongoing social misery:

Every day, at five o'clock in the afternoon, I stumble across girls looking for sewing work.

Emaciated, tormented, suffering. The rice dust is not enough to cover their throats, where their tendons are visible; and they all walk with their bodies bent to one side: the custom of always carrying their bundles on the other arm [...]

They work until three days before they marry, and marriage changes nothing in the lives of the women in our poor neighbourhood. No, on the contrary, it increases the work, and a week after the wedding, you can see these little women bent over the machine. They have started sewing again, and a year later there is a child in the cradle, and this girl is already wrinkled and sceptical, now she has to work for the child, for her husband, for the house. [...] Every year a new child and more worries and the same poverty; the same deprivation, the same wages, the

same problems that existed in their parents' homes are repeated in their own, only bigger and more burdensome.

And now you see these women: tired, thin, ugly, nervous, shrill.

And all this has been caused by misery, by work; and suddenly you count the years of your life until old age, and with astonishment, almost mixed with horror, you ask yourself: "How many years of your life have you really lived?"

How many minutes of happiness have these women had in so many years of life? And you feel with horror that a voice inside you answers that these women were never happy. Never!

The peaceful gatherings on 1 May are brutally suppressed.

On 1 May 1904, the demonstration march is violently broken up by the police shortly after it begins, leaving 40 people dead. Interior Minister González laconically declares that these deaths are "shrouded in the impunity of silence." On 1 May 1905, four people are killed, more than 50 injured and hundreds are arrested. On 1 May 1909, two gatherings in public places were brutally dispersed. The toll: two dead and 80 injured. A general strike was called, in which 200,000 workers took part and 60,000 accompanied the funeral procession. The "semana roja" (red week) began.

A few months later, police chief Falcón is shot dead by Simón Radowitzky, an anarchist who has emigrated from Russia. A general strike is called, and 70,000 participants march to the prison where numerous demonstrators are being held. Nationalist youths attack workers' meeting places.

Osvaldo Bayer describes Radowitzky's assassination. The day before

a vehicle stopped unexpectedly on Avenida de Mayo. It was Colonel Ramon Falcón, the police chief, who had arrived in person to lead the repressive forces. The people recognised him and began to shout: "Down with Colonel Falcón! Death to the Cossacks! War on the bourgeoisie!" And defiantly, flags and banners were waved. Falcón, who was only a few metres away from the crowd of anarchists, looked on impassively, as if sizing up the crowd. It looked as if he was taking stock of the crowd's strength, like a general before battle. Falcón was considered an officer of the old school, a "priest of discipline."

There he stood, spindly and gaunt, like a falcon, facing the workers who, in his eyes, as in the eyes of most of the ruling class, were "foreigners, without origins, without traditions, without roots, anti-Argentines."

Nothing happened during the speech, but afterwards, when the crowd began to move westward down Rivadavia, the carnage began. After a brief conversation with Jolly Medrano, the commander of the security forces, Falcón gave the green light for the attack. First came the cavalry, riding over the people, then the shooting started.

Many decided to flee, but not all. Those who did not retreat did not even bother to take cover behind a tree, but bravely faced the repression. However, after half an hour of fierce and unequal fighting, the square was cleared. The pavements were

littered with caps, hats, sticks, scarves and thirty-six pools of blood. Three bodies and forty seriously injured people were immediately taken away. The dead were Miguel Bech, a 72-year-old Spanish street vendor who lived at 92 Pasco, Jose Silva, a 23-year-old Spanish shop worker who lived at 955 Santiago del Estero, and Juan Semino, a 19-year-old Argentine coachman. A few hours later, Luis Pantaleone and Manuel Fernandez (a thirty-six-year-old Spanish tram conductor) died. Virtually all of the wounded were Spanish, Italian and Russian.

The riots in the city were violent. But Falcón had no intention of resting on his laurels and immediately had six young anarchist leaders arrested and all anarchist premises closed. The police later reported that “the behaviour of the Russians, who made up part of the cosmopolitan mass of workers, is remarkable.” The police files also included manifestos “written in Hebrew and containing extremely violent propaganda.” According to the police, “they recommend murder and public looting.” And as if to underscore the credibility of these claims, there were official reports to match, such as this one: “It proved impossible to take a statement from the twenty-two-year-old wounded Russian Jacobo Besnicoff, as he does not speak Spanish.”

The following day

his open car drove slowly down Avenida Quintana. At the wheel was the Italian Ferrari, a driver who had worked in the same department since 1888. Next to Falcón sat 20-year-old Alberto Lartigau, the only son of a family with nine children, whose father had got him a job as Falcón's private secretary on the grounds that working with Falcón would “make a man of him”.

The car turned onto Avenida Callao and headed south. At that moment, two men – the driver Jose Fornes, who was at the wheel of the car behind Falcón's vehicle, and the War Ministry official Zoilo Aguero – spotted a foreign-looking young man running behind the police chief's car. He had something in his hand. When he reached the car, he ran diagonally towards it and threw a package inside. Half a second later, there was an explosion, and the boy looked around before running off towards Avenida Alvear.

In 1912, there were 200 strikes, and in 1913, there were 150. During the First World War, world trade declined, and between 1916 and 1919, the cost of living doubled. Yrigoyen's election in 1916 raised high hopes for labour-friendly policies.

But in 1919, during the *Semana Trágica* (Tragic Week), around 700 strikers were shot and 4,000 injured. Fearing a repetition of the Russian Revolution or the unrest in Germany, socialist and anarchist suspects were hunted down and murdered. They were called “maximalists” who wanted everything and would not compromise.

Those killed included: Juan Fiorini, Argentine, 18 years old, single, day labourer on Avenida Alcorta in front of house number 3189, killed by several blows to the skull; Torbio Barrios, Spanish, 42 years old, married, garbage collector, died in Avenida

Alcorta opposite number 3189 from multiple skull fractures; Santiago Gómez Metrolles, Argentine, 32 years old, single, garbage collector, killed in Avenida Alcorta 3521 by Lázaro Alberti with a shot to the right temple; Miguel Britos, married, day labourer, also died from gunshot wounds. According to the police report published in *La Nación*, none of them were killed in combat and none of them attacked the police.

The events took the worst possible turn, caused by companies, politicians and the police. The company hired strike breakers to weaken the workers' front. Instead of reducing the confrontation, this led to its escalation. The company then hired armed civilians as "parapolice shock troops" to end the strike through direct violence. The strikers, for their part, were counting on economic collapse by cutting off supplies. Now the strikers were being supported by neighbours and shopkeepers. The company responded by distributing firearms to transporters and strike breakers. The climate of violence and deaths escalated. Police, firefighters and strike breakers were armed with machine guns. This was only the beginning of the "tragic week."

There were several rounds of negotiations on the workers' demands for shorter working hours and wage increases.

Negotiations were broken off, but police chief Elpidio Gonzalez received a 20 per cent wage increase for his police officers from President Yrigoyen on the same day, in view of their difficult tasks.

On Thursday, a funeral procession of thousands set off for the cemetery, led by the "Workers' Self-Defence", about a hundred workers armed with revolvers and carbines.

During the ceremony, members of the police and army appeared behind the cemetery wall and began firing on the crowd. According to newspaper reports, 12 people were killed and almost 200 wounded. The workers' press speaks of 100 dead and more than 400 wounded. Both versions agree that there are no casualties among the military and police forces. The crimes remain unpunished.

The reason for the failed negotiations and the attacks and murders is the fear widespread in conservative circles, the police and the military of a development similar to that in Russia or Germany, with a revolution and the establishment of Soviet rule. Since the strikers do not merely represent immediate workers' interests but also pursue more far-reaching socialist or anarchist goals, they are labelled as Russians, especially if they have Russian names and have apparently immigrated from Russia. However, this does not restrict the development of the strike; on the contrary, it receives support from workers in other cities such as Mar del Plata and Rosario. Meanwhile, in Buenos Aires, city traffic is paralysed by barricades. The so-called *White Terror* emerges, perpetrated by patriotic and paramilitary groups of "good children" who, together with the police and military, take to the streets to kill Jews, Bolsheviks and anarchists. During the night of 10 to 11 January, police and

groups of civilians break into houses and murder the inhabitants. Hundreds are killed.

Finally, on 11 January, Yrigoyen's radical government agreed with the FORA of the 9th Congress to release more than 2,000 prisoners, grant wage increases of between 20 and 40 per cent depending on category, introduce a 9-hour working day and reinstate all dismissed strikers. The government congratulates the officers and troops responsible for the repression and once again speaks of subversion.

In an interview with *The Times*, Yrigoyen's ambassador to Great Britain reassures foreign investors: "The recent labour disputes in the Argentine Republic were merely a reflection of a situation common to all countries. The vigorous application of the residence law and the deportation of more than two hundred ringleaders have been sufficient to halt the advance of the movement, which is now suppressed."

The report from the American ambassador to his country's State Department mentions 1,356 dead and 4,000 wounded. A high-ranking army commander informed the ambassador that 193 identified bodies were lying in the naval arsenal, including 14 Catalans and 179 "Russian Jews."

The writer Arturo Cencela is awarded the Buenos Aires City Literature Prize for his satirical stories *Tres relatos porteños* (Three Tales from Buenos Aires, 1922). He writes:

Julio Narciso Dilón, the protagonist of the following story, is not made of the stuff of heroes. He lacks the imagination and capacity for enthusiasm to be a hero. This deficiency prevents him from exaggerating danger to the extent necessary, and the absence of the latter condition prevents him from getting worked up about overcoming it.

He is astonished that he cannot take a carriage because of a strike, that he gets lost in the city despite its rectangular street layout, and that he is arrested by the police even though he only wanted to greet them. The following scene also shows that appearance and reality do not correspond, and the flaneur's critical gaze describes the actions of the police and the reactionary "Liga Patriótica" as violent and inappropriate.

In front of me stands a small, old, grey-haired man in a mourning coat, espadrilles and a shiny bag. He walks hurriedly, without attracting the attention of the crowd. Suddenly, a group parked in the middle of the street stops us imperiously. I stop, but the old man does not. A burly fellow wearing the familiar blue and white armband approaches him with a revolver in his hand.

"Get up! Hands up!"

The old man straightens up and raises his left hand in the air. This partial obedience irritates the young man, who repeats the command:

"Put your hands up!"

The old man continues to hold his left hand up, while his right hand disappears completely into the pocket of his embroidered jacket, which contains an unusual

lump. A shot rings out, and after swaying slightly, the old man collapses face down on the ground, his left hand still raised. [...] Quickly, the milk-bearded man who fired the shot rushes towards the fallen man to snatch the gun he undoubtedly holds in his right hand, pulling an empty sleeve out of his pocket, which lies stretched out on the tiled floor. The end sticks out over the kerb and bends towards the street like an empty water hose. But only for a moment, because seconds later a thin trickle of blood sprays onto the pavement. The old man was one-armed.

Cancela is one of those literary critics who have no need for myths, Argentineanism with gauchos and indigenous peoples, or national identity, and who reject centenary celebrations as a means of creating a hegemonic historiography. Cancela also rejects the emotional mood of such undertakings, if one understands the significance of the seriousness with which authority is sought. It is not enough to reject the arguments; seriousness must also be countered with the emotion of satire, parody and even nonsense. Criticism must always target not only the arguments, but also the styles and feelings that accompany them, i.e. understand all three in their interrelationship. Cancela, popular in his day, is forgotten today.

In his story "En la Semana Trágica" (In the Tragic Week, 1966), the writer David Viñas describes the scene of the clashes, the suburbs. "They are dusty, flat neighbourhoods, blackened by the shacks that stretch out to the south of the city, impregnated with the smell of the river." Places of inhumane working conditions, extreme poverty and violence, both within and outside the city, part of modernity and the struggle between state and worker violence, one side willing to go to extremes to maintain state order, the other only to fulfil specific demands within the state order. Violence is the central form of communication, taken for granted because it marks the boundary of existence. Crossing it comes at a price. The price is determined by the number of dead, injured and financial losses, and once it reaches the limit of what is tolerable for all parties, the violence ceases.

Rebellious Patagonia Violence also reigns once again in Patagonia, where large farms with numerous workers have sprung up to produce for the world market. In 1921, extensive strikes break out there. One of the largest farms calls on the government for help. They send soldiers by rail. Once again, it is the same president as during the "Semana Trágica", from whom social reforms had been hoped for.

During the subsequent repression, around 1,500 workers were murdered. Around 100, as we have already heard, were forced to dig their own graves and were then shot. However, 300 workers were spared in order to maintain production. Workers who had taken some of their superiors hostage surrendered; they too were shot. Some time later, an anarchist shot and killed the commander of the operation. Osvaldo Bayer broke the silence surrounding these events and wrote the

comprehensive book *Patagonia rebelde* (Rebellious Patagonia, 1972–74), which was also made into a film.

Not only the assassin has ties to Russia, but also Piñe Wald, who came from Poland when it was still under Russian rule. He is a member of the “Bund,” a party that advocates Jewish proletarian socialism in Poland. Wald fled the Polish-Russian pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century and emigrated to Argentina.

There he discovers that the police measures during the “Semana Trágica” are not only directed against the workers, but also clearly against Jews. Shops are attacked, meeting places are devastated and a valuable library, mainly containing Russian books, is looted, destroyed and burned. This is the Buenos Aires pogrom. Unknown, unmentioned – incredulous amazement.

Wald is arrested during the demonstrations in Buenos Aires and tortured, like many other Jews. He is accused of wanting to install a Soviet government. Ten years after the events, he publishes his experiences in the volume *Koshmar* (Nightmare), in Yiddish, because that is the language of his innermost feelings.

At night, two policemen look into Wald’s cell.

“Today we can laugh,” says one of them. “But a few days ago, none of us felt like laughing. Our lives were hanging by a thread.”

“Are you that afraid of the maximalists?”

The man addressed looked around and said in a low voice:

“Between us, to tell you the truth, I’ve never seen a maximalist. It was terrible chaos between the military, firefighters, police and civilian gangs. That’s how it was.” And he added: “No one knew where to start. That led to us attacking each other”

And as if the second man wanted to prove that he understood the matter better than the first, he added:

“Listen, I’ll tell you, I don’t think the maximalist idea is so bad. They want everyone to live in equal conditions. I think that’s a very good thing, but you can’t rush it, you have to be patient.”

“They scared us by saying that the maximalists would cut our throats, so what else could we do? Instead of waiting for them to shoot us, we were the first to shoot. You ask who? Maybe we knew something? They ordered us to kill, and we killed. And how many of our people were killed!”

“By the maximalists?”

“How should I know? The police were ordered to occupy the rooftops and open fire immediately if they heard any noise. They shot from the rooftops onto the streets and from the streets onto the rooftops. And who was shooting at whom? The police were shooting at the military, and the military was shooting at the police. Maybe someone knew what was going on? They just shot.”

As the labour movement grows stronger, reactionary circles are promoting civilian terrorist groups such as 'Orden Social' (Social Order) and "Guardia Blanca" (White Guard), which later became the "Liga Patriótica Argentina" and the "Comité Pro Argentinidad" and formed armed brigades that were approved by the police and the army and financially supported by the "Asociación Nacional del Trabajo", the employers' organisation. The Liga Patriótica carried out most of the attacks on workers' centres and meetings, Wald was brought into the organisation Orden Social.

"May I ask you a question? Am I sitting opposite the head of the Orden Social?"

"That's my job. But at this moment, you are not sitting opposite the head of the Orden Social, but a person who admires his kind and would like to know something about the fantasy of hell that Dante imagined in the Divine Comedy."

This is not hell, but the Divine Comedy. And if I had found the strength to overcome it, that strength would also have had a very human character: the fear of surviving fear itself. I felt like I was in hell, crossing its paths, its connections, its hidden corners. I had to convince myself of the extent to which people are capable of torturing other people: to observe human bestiality, this refined form of bestiality. To see how fear turns into madness and takes the form of people who exercise power: and I also wanted to use these examples to convince myself of how much physical and mental pain a human being can endure. I wanted to experience it first-hand, to see and feel the actual hell around me, above me and inside me, to get to the bottom of the hidden, the unknown and the terrifying, to get to what one fears so much.

For Wald, the horror in Buenos Aires is reminiscent of what he felt in Lodz during the 1905 revolution. The two blend together. "How they shot at the demonstrators, how some fell and others ran away in panic. The galloping of the cavalry, the wild cries of the attackers and the cries of pain of those who were attacked, wounded and bleeding, all mixed together in a single nightmare of terror."

Racism After the assassination of Ramón L. Falcón by the young anarchist activist Radovitzky, xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiments intensified. "But even wilder were the demonstrations of the 'good children'," notes Piñe Wald in *Koshmar*, "that the storm brought with it. With cries of 'Death to the Jews!', 'Death to foreign maximalists!', they celebrated orgies and proceeded in a sophisticated, sadistic manner, torturing passers-by. For example, a Jew who was already bleeding profusely from the mouth after the first blows. In this situation, they ordered him to sing the national anthem. He couldn't, and they murdered him on the spot."

Anti-Semitism has been widespread since the turn of the century. Against the backdrop of Catholicism and new nationalism, ethnic classification is considered essential in conservative circles in two ways. In 1890, Julián Martel's successful anti-Semitic novel *La bolsa* (The Stock Exchange) was published in *La Nación*. Govern-

ment agencies and social organisations launched campaigns to promote national sentiment in order to oppose “this race of people without God, country or law,” as stated in the brochure *Guía del buen sentido nacional* (Guide to Good National Sentiment). These projects were finally put into action with the founding of the Argentine Patriotic League. The aim was “above all to promote the feeling of being Argentine.”

Ayarragaray drafted it together with Carlos Meyer Pellegrini and Nicolás Calvo. Meyer Pellegrini came from Hamburg, was married to President Pellegrini’s sister and entered the service of the coup leader Uriburu. The conservatives supported him with a large demonstration.

The law essentially empowered the executive branch and even the police to expel any foreigner accused of anarchism from the country, but also made it a criminal offence for them to return, or to transport returnees, and prohibited events, the possession of explosives, etc. In the years that followed, hundreds of anarchists and trade unionists were deported.

A section of intellectual circles, particularly those surrounding the writer Jorge Luis Borges, remained vigilant in the years following the pogrom. Anti-Semitic rhetoric from the Catholic Church permeated Argentine society. For priests Gustavo Franceschi, director of the Catholic magazine *Criterio*, and Leonardo Castellani, pogroms were no longer an unimaginable solution. In his 1936 book *El Judío* (The Jew), Father Julio Meinville explains why pogroms might be necessary: Jews, whom he equates with the Antichrist, promote sin in God’s society, i.e. in Catholic society, which he equates with Argentina; he therefore calls for measures to protect the country and the faithful.

On a literary level, Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, alias Hugo Wast, propagated radical anti-Semitism. His two-part novel “Kahal” (The Jewish Community) and “Oro” (Gold, 1935) presents stereotypes from the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and depicts the Jews of Buenos Aires as a danger to Argentine society. His novels were read by millions. Zuviría became director of the National Library, where the magazine section is still named after him. His successor was José Luis Borges, who is known to have gone blind. Two other writers also went blind, Miguel Marmol and Paul Grousac.

When a bomb exploded in the Colón Theatre in 1910, injuring several visitors, the frightened political class dusted off a long-planned “law for the defence of society”. It represented a significant tightening of the 1902 residence law.

During the parliamentary debate on the law, Ayarragaray did not stop at anarchists and political opponents, but linked them to racist positions:

It is necessary to prohibit the insane and epileptics from entering the country, which means that this country has the fundamental right, recognised by all the constitutions of the world, honourable Members of Parliament, to protect itself by laws for the defence of society, whether against an epidemic, a notorious thief,

a person convicted by a court, an anarchist, a prostitute or a jailer. (it) authorises us to refuse entry to epileptics, lunatics, degenerates and all those suspected of being anarchists, because, if they fall under the influence of the sermons of godless people, they are individuals who, by their very mentality, are prepared for crime, assassination, arson and bombings.

He states: "We do not need yellow immigration, but European fathers and mothers of the white race to overcome the hybrid and mestizo elements that form the basis of the population of this country."

In 1925, Ayarragaray published "*La anarquía argentina y el caudillismo; estudio psicológico de los orígenes argentinos*" (Argentine Anarchy and Caudillismo: A Psychological Study of the Origins of Argentina), a comprehensive work in which he settles accounts with the defects of the Argentine mentality. To this end, he goes back to the colonial era and criticises arbitrary rule and corruption, as well as the inaction and laziness of the hidalgos, "bourgeois illiteracy," "gaucho democracy," the "simplistic nature of Argentine concepts of renewal," the "groups marauding on the battlefields and slitting throats," the "war damage," the power of the caudillos, etc.

The book culminates in attributing Argentina's inefficiency to *mestizos* and non-whites. "The mestizo, especially the mulatto, is a distorted creature," he writes, "without character, without consistent will, without inclinations toward higher ethics and intellectual activity."

This means that "the country that emerged from the conquest was an organism with two antagonistic types of blood circulating in its veins; no longer wanting to be indigenous did not mean becoming European. It was a coarse country, without intellectual and moral unity." Ultimately, the result of this was political failure: "Confusing ideas, political perversions, unrest and dictatorships were fostered by the overpopulation of unequal races."

When Uriburu staged a coup, general concern grew, and in 1932, following the announcement of a campaign against the communists, it became more concrete that this was also, or even primarily, an anti-Semitic campaign. The Hebrew weekly newspaper *Mundo Israelita* felt alarmed by the rhetorical violence emanating from the military and asked Argentine intellectuals to comment on this danger. Borges agreed and wrote on 27 August 1932:

Certain ungrateful Catholics – see the people who belong to the Church of Rome, which is a dissident Israelite sect [...] want to introduce a sinister doctrine into this place, which is known to be of German origin [...] The mere enumeration of this sinister litany is enough for the alarmed Argentine to recognise the seriousness of the situation. [...] We are talking about – let's leave out the obscene word – anti-Semitism. Those who recommend its use often blame the Jews, all Jews, for the crucifixion of Jesus. They forget that their own faith has declared that the cross

brought about our salvation. They forget that blaming the Jews is tantamount to blaming vertebrates or even mammals. They forget that when Jesus Christ wanted to be human, he chose to be Jewish, and that he did not choose to be French or even Porteño (a resident of Buenos Aires, WH), or to live in 1932 after Jesus Christ in order to subscribe to *L'Oiseau d'Or* for a year. They forget that Jesus was certainly not a Jewish convert. The Basilica of Luján would have been as incomprehensible a spectacle to him as a gas oven or an anti-Semite.

Fascist-influenced thinking had also reached the military, including Uriburu. He came from an aristocratic family, was the nephew of President José Evaristo Uriburu, and was educated at an Argentine military school, where he earned a reputation as an enthusiastic soldier and staunch defender of the rights and privileges of his class. In 1890, at the age of only 32 and a young officer, he co-founded a secret military society in Argentina dedicated to preserving the political importance of the military oligarchy in his country. In the same year, he was involved in the “Revolución del Parque” (Park Revolution), which led to the resignation of President Miguel Juárez Celman. In 1896, he was a member of the commission set up to settle the endless border dispute between Argentina and Chile. In 1907, he was appointed director of the War College on account of his leadership qualities. In the 1920s, he developed his ideas on the leadership of a state, influenced by the concept of a corporative state à la Mussolini.

In 1930, at the age of 62 and already a lieutenant general in the reserve, Uriburu led the uprising against President Hipólito Yrigoyen and provisionally took power.

He removed the leaders of the Radicals from national and local administrations, dissolved the courts, reformed the constitution and the electoral system, and denied former Radical leaders' participation in government and even in politics in general. But the revolution collapsed when Uriburu died unexpectedly.

Looking back on the history of the Argentine military, author Marta Merkin concludes that “Argentine society repeatedly knocks on the door of the barracks to urge the military to restore order. That is also the tragedy of our fate: we value neither democracy nor dissent.”

They Believe in Violence But it was no longer a question of restoring order, but of constructing a new order. Uriburu moved in circles friendly to fascism and met Leopoldo Lugones, the poet praised by everyone, including Borges. But Lugones did not just write poetry, he also wanted to play a role in politics. He was not given much room there, but he was allowed to write and deliver political speeches.

Lugones was first an anarchist, then a socialist, and now he sympathised with Mussolini's fascism. Many intellectuals, sons of wealthy families and members of the military had followed this path, attracted by the prospect of special privileges as members of the elite. Many people were unsure of where they belonged. They wa-

vered in their political and moral orientation. They sought alternatives to the status quo and considered the path to revolution, without knowing where it would lead them. They believed that harshness is helpful in any case. They believed in violence, but not so much in themselves. Those who fell off the path, who despaired, might resort to extreme measures and kill themselves.

Lugones seems to be someone who could provide guidance. In 1924, he gave his sensational "Speech of Ayacucho", 100 years after the victorious battle against Spain in Peru. And he called for the military to intervene in politics:

Gentlemen, let me ensure that this hour of emotion is not in vain. I would also like to venture something that is difficult to say in these times of libertarian paradox and failed, albeit bold, ideology. The hour of the sword has struck again, for the good of the world. Just as the sword has achieved the only thing we have achieved so far, namely independence, it will create the necessary order and establish the indispensable hierarchy, which democracy has so far been unable to do and which is therefore fatally drifting towards demagoguery or socialism as a natural consequence. But we know only too well what collectivism and peace have wrought, from the Peru of the Incas to the China of the Mandarins. Pacifism, collectivism and democracy are synonyms for the same void that fate offers the predestined chieftain, i.e. the man who, with or without law, rules according to the law of the strongest, because this, as an expression of power, merges with his will [...]

The army is the last aristocracy, i.e. the last possibility of a hierarchical organisation that remains in the midst of demagogic disintegration. Only military virtue realises the higher life that is beauty, hope and strength at this moment in history.

"The hour of the sword" is thus a call to violence, but one that must not be left to anarchic development; rather, it must be used in a controlled manner under military leadership. The fragile relationship between weak politics and unregulated violence is to be strengthened dictatorially. The change in Lugones' political orientation is exemplary, not only for his generation and intellectual circles, but also for the intellectual development of his country.

The shift from anarchism to socialism is not difficult to understand. What anarchism does not offer, representation in parliament and the Marxist strategy of class struggle and seizure of power, is offered by a militant but non-violent socialism. Moreover, it corresponds to the significant changes in Argentina brought about by sustained economic growth and an influx of workers who want to share in progress and are committed to social improvement.

However, the strategies seem too abstract and the appeals too rational to satisfy emotional needs. In the 1920s, a wide range of conservative-religious and revolutionary-elitist groups emerged, replacing rationalist class-conscious materialism with a new heroic, moralising and warlike spirit. Typical of the rapidly spreading nationalist groups were quasi-military leagues such as the *Legión de Mayo*, the *Legión*

Cívica, the Liga Republicana and the Acción Nacionalista Argentina. The new spirit was overshadowed by the myth of nationalism as a guiding principle, which offered the loss of self in the collective and devotion to a higher purpose in place of the individual and his critical enlightenment. Combined with the rejection of economic and cultural imperialism and utilitarian thinking, an anti-materialist version of Marxism and radical nationalist become the two foundations of fascism. It presents itself as an alternative to liberalism and Marxism.

All of this is attractive to Lugones. For it enables the practice of what he had previously sought and found in anarchism and socialism: the primacy of individual freedom and action as a heroic deed. "Life is intuition and potency, and it triumphs not through reason and truth, but through violence [...] War is natural to man because he is a combative animal." No mediocre democracy, especially not socialism, which is mediocre in its radicalism, can meet these conditions, but only "a society guided by knowledge and intelligence." Its forms of communication should correspond to Latin American customs in accordance with the concept of command, the order, not the concept of dialogue and consent.

Lugones also raves about the national myth and reinterprets the epic "Martin Fierro." The gaucho is the opposite of the decadent bourgeoisie and not a representative of anarchic conditions, but the hero of an orderly and disciplined society.

In a plan for Argentina, he envisages a "revolutionary Argentine democracy" in a syndicalist state with workers' self-management instead of bourgeois representative government, the dissolution of the police and military, and the replacement of formalised court proceedings by people's courts. Without a doubt, this programme leads directly to a police state. At the same time, he advocates economic progress to strengthen Argentina; the bourgeoisie should not be eliminated, but guided towards productivity.

His collection of essays, *La patria fuerte* (The Strong Fatherland), served as study material for an entire generation of Argentine civil servants, while *The Hour of the Sword* was widely criticised in Latin America for legitimising violence.

Leaving aside Lugones' dreams of a heroic elite ruling the country, his ideas about the state and the economy, as well as those of the various groups, point to a strong state with an ideology of nationalist integration, strong industrialisation, a protectionist domestic market and authoritarian welfare policies.

One of Uriburu's first measures is to set up an illegal repressive "special department" of the police, which systematically tortures opponents. The son of Lugones, Polo, becomes the leading police officer of the special department. He is one of the first to use the *picana*, an electric cattle prod, to increase the efficiency of torture. As with Rosas, the relationship with animals in the countryside shapes the relationship with people in the city. After his appointment, Polo Lugones set up an interrogation and torture room in the basement of the old prison on Calle Las Heras. Torture instruments, which had been publicly burned in 1913, were repurchased. One of those

tortured there, the radical Carlos Gimenez, describes Lugones' son in his book *El martirologio argentino* (The Argentine Martyrology), published in 1932: "He is an anthropoid of medium height, rather fat, with a white complexion, a somewhat high voice, a round face, a slanted and cloudy gaze; his greenish and misshapen eyes are the clearest reflection of his dark soul; his hair is not very black and combed with hair gel, his general appearance is that of a large foetus that sees, walks and talks at birth."

The coup was short-lived, not only because of Uriburu's early death. Various social interests also collided, allowing the liberal oligarchy to exploit the military's indecision to return to a democratic society.

The search for a contemporary form of government is intended to preserve the old oligarchic structures in property and politics. At the same time, it is intended to take account of modernisation with its industrialisation. In view of the lack of political liberal or republican institutions of freedom, this path leads to a distorted, fascist version of the common good and the welfare state. Immigrants experience only individualistic politics as concern for themselves, the rich for their rule and the poor for their survival.

Self-Doubt It is not surprising that, in addition to different perspectives on history, there are also different perspectives on the present in Argentina. However, these are not gradual differences, but fundamental ones, juxtapositions of progress and failure, illusion and disillusionment, hope and disappointment.

Independence, the adoption of a constitution, the "conquest of the desert," economic expansion, the centenary celebrations in 1910 and democratisation all raised hopes. However, economic crises, stagnation and decline led to deep disappointment. Why did the country not become what Sarmiento dreamed of? The assumed coincidence of linear progress and the expectation of a great, imminent positive destiny was illusory – unrealistic wishful thinking. Sarmiento described his impressions of failure as early as 1880.

Intellectuals such as Lucas Ayarragaray, Leopoldo Lugones, Benjamín Villafaña, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada and Julio Irazusta unite the contrasting moods within themselves, or even among themselves, whereby they establish relationships with the architects of illusion as intellectuals who addressed the issue of failure" (Kozel). This does not happen smoothly, but rather with great effort, laborious reckonings and long polemics. This also leads to radicalism and fierce, self-destructive negativism. These tensions never disappear completely. For Lugones, whose hopes are not simply temporary illusions but shape his worldview and actions, everything is destroyed by the limited impact of Uriburu's coup. Others waver between elation and despair.

Here, too, literature is a seismograph of social sentiments. But while Discépolos' grotesque theatre deals with the reality of life in the lower classes, survival and

the will to exist, middle-class literature indulges in failure, feelings and concepts of hope, illusion and defeat.

The philosopher Graciela Scheines discovers a wealth of “metaphors of failure” used in the novels and stories. She observes how the pendulum swings between excessive dreams and dark frustrations from the time of discovery to the present day. She offers insights into the work of Adolfo Bioy Casares, who, like other Argentine writers, deals with the fantastic and the uncertain. This is not about the supernatural suddenly intruding into everyday reality, but rather the opposite: the characters find themselves in an unexpected world that deviates from the familiar world. Two parallel worlds exist that are alien to each other, but secretly communicate. “I am obsessed with travelling,” Bioy Casares often says. “I always think that I will solve everything if I go away.”

The characters in Bioy Casares’ stories always embark on a journey that unwittingly leads them into the supernatural. Often it is a routine journey along a familiar route that suddenly becomes strange and plunges them into mystery. Sometimes it is a return to the place of a happy childhood. According to Scheines, these are transgressions of a boundary between two different orders: fiction-reality, dream-reality, past-present, future-present. “As soon as you cross the street, you are on the side of the shadows,” says one of Bioy’s stories. Almost always, during a journey in Bioy Casares’ stories, “a crack appears in the unshakeable reality.” It is necessary to leave, but it is also imperative to return. The ideal balance between a life of coming and going, between these two antagonistic and parallel worlds, is repeatedly disrupted. They are indicated by isolating elements: water, forests, deserts, inhospitable landscapes, walls, keys and padlocks. And salvation can be found in houses of refuge and order or fortresses, isolated and far away from the surrounding landscape. This can also be found in the works of Eduardo Mallea, Manuel Mujica Láinez, Ernesto Sábato, Marco Denevi, Beatriz Guido, Sara Gallardo, María Angélica Bosco, Julio Cortázar and Ezequiel Martínez Estrada. “This Argentine preference for houses or villas that protect or isolate, and the dream of owning one’s own home, which is so deeply rooted in the bourgeoisie of my country, is linked to the old themes of national identity and uprooting that tormented Argentine intellectuals in the 1940s.” (Scheines). However, these houses are not idealised worlds; they can also be prisons, granting or erasing identities. The inhabitants never take possession of such a house, which always remains autonomous and frightening.

Scheines discovers something similar in the generation of writers born around 1940 who wrote their great novels in the 1980s, such as Ricardo Piglia, Juan Carlos Martini, Rodolfo Rabanal, Manuel Puig and others.

The protagonists are often cultural figures, always passionate readers, writers of letters, intimate diaries, unpublished novels and secret notebooks. What sets them apart is failure. They drown in a sea of words, in a cruel inertia, stuck in a state of departure, in the preparation of something that will never be accomplished. They

avoid the centre, moving on the margins, in border zones, in no-man's-land, in the transition to another reality. And again and again, the image of the cripple appears.

"Our tragedy lies in living in the passage: we settle in the border zone, we pitch our tents in no place, halfway, in the middle of the road of melancholy, in the uncertainty of the shadows, in the indecision of horror." Or in the café between the office and home, a moment of conversation or heated polemic, idle, a "passionate immobility." (Scheines) The traitor is also a person of the passage: he lives between two loyalties, in the loneliness of perfidy. The traitor makes the passage his home station. Unlike immigrants, who settle in a new place, these are exiles who have had to leave their old home. What is an Argentinean? asks Umberto Eco, and answers: someone who spends his whole life wondering what an Argentinean is.

The hopes of enlightened thinkers such as Sarmiento that immigration would bring a civilising boost with prestige and prosperity have not been fulfilled. The immigrants' hopes of "making it in America" also evaporated in the face of poverty, a lack of belonging and uprootedness. They spoke different languages and formed new common languages such as the Spanish-Italian *Cocoleche* and *Lunfard*, the *argot* of the La Plata region. Roberto Arlt describes them in "The Seven Madmen":

One evening, Ergueta was in the Plaza de Flores, opposite the pastry shop. There was also the drunk Delavene, who had passed his bar exam a month earlier, and many other hooligans from the Club de Flores. They were harassing passers-by. Suddenly, Ergueta saw a Galician coming towards him, opened his fly, and when the other man reached him, he sprayed him with a stream of urine. The man remained calm and disappeared, grumbling. Then the pharmacist said to Delavene, who was boasting exaggeratedly:

- "Well, I bet you don't dare to piss on the first person who comes by."

- "You bet I will!"

Everyone laughed, because the Basque Delavene was a wild man. A man turned the corner, and Delavene began to urinate. The stranger jumped aside, but the Basque almost knocked him over and sprayed him.

Then something terrible happened.

Without saying a word, the offended man stood still, and the gang watched, whistling and grinning. Suddenly, the stranger pulled out a revolver, there was a bang, and Delavene clutched his stomach and sank to his knees. The Basque's death throes were long and painful.

Armando Discépolo brings this social and cultural mix to the stage of a popular theatre in a grotesque, comical and at the same time tragic way. It emerges in the transition from the optimism of the liberal heyday to the pessimism of the crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. Similar to Roberto Arlt, the characters are simple people, poor, loners, enthusiastic and deceived Argentinians. But Discépolo does not contrast hope with failure. Viñas portrays him as a social critic who makes his own state of mind

the subject of his profession and removes the mask of conformity and civilisation from the true face of the man of the street behind it. However, this does not happen in an educated middle-class or Brechtian didactic theatre, but in a drastically realistic, existentialist manner, heightened by the use of the grotesque. The “Creole grotesque” takes place in the homes of the poor, dubious bars and brothels.

Armando Discépolo and his much younger brother Enrique Santos (also known as Discepolin – little Discépolo) are the children of Italian immigrants from Naples. Armando became the author of many successful plays, his brother one of the most famous writers of tangos. Their father studied music and hoped for a career in Argentina, but he remained a penniless bandleader throughout his life. Enrique was five years old when his father died, and three years later his mother died and he was raised by a loveless aunt. He did not have a normal childhood or adolescence, was physically frail and shy. He experienced the world as hostile and remained a vulnerable person who was unable to offer much resistance to challenges.

In the song “Tormenta” (Storm), he expresses the despair of his generation.

When life is hell
and the honourable live in tears,
what is good...
when he fights in your name?
clean, pure... for what...
When today infamy shows the way
and love kills in your name,
God, what have you kissed...
To follow you means to give the advantage
And to love you means to succumb to evil.
I will not abandon you,
to prove myself once and for all.

Armando wrote about two plays a year between 1910 and 1934. Thematically, he turned away from the working class, which he had presented in 1921 in “Mustafá” as strikers, but who now work in lonely workshops. His first grotesque play, “Mateo”, was performed in 1923. The wholeness of the shared world has dissolved, and now only individual elements such as egoism, monomania and quirks prevail. It is always the same record that is played. In *Hombres de honor* (Men of Honour) in 1924, a participant in a funeral provokes, thunders and grotesquely, leading to the abolition of classes and individual destinies. Their lives are based on uncertainty, abandonment, contempt, exploitation and corruption. In “Babilonia” (1925), the workers find themselves in an underground corner, the grotesque dominates the action and turns it into hell, the myth of building America has turned into dependence.

In *El organito* (The Accordion, 1925), there is no memory of the workers. The past can be felt at most as dampness on the walls of simple dwellings. The grotesque mixes with the picaresque among beggars and thieves. In the crumbling city, the gloomy madhouse, the optimism of the period before 1919 has vanished. Pessimism and scepticism have merged, bordering on cynicism, all of which is now internalised, degenerating into awkwardness.

In *Patria nueva* (New Fatherland, 1926), the characters, the immigrants, are ugly and physically deformed, completely contrary to Sarmiento's hope for a development that would spur progress. It is the gringos who are ugly, not the gauchos.

In the most frequently performed play, *Stefano* (1928), all the characters are victims of an explicit idealisation of America that is itself grotesque: the core of the grotesque lies in the generational conflict between fathers and sons. This also makes the story grotesque, as it repeats itself like an old woman and progresses in a vacillating, meaningless manner. History is an autistic figure. For Discépolo, it is "the great figure of regressive grotesqueness, because the protagonists of the grotesque, increasingly naturalised, can only talk to animals or imitate them until they feel inferior to them or envy them. [...] From the fragmentation of the linguistic norm, we have moved on to Lunfardo as a secret language." (Viñas)

In *El relojero* (The Clockmaker, 1934), time is separated from history, internalised to the point of coagulation into clocks, also grotesque, a mere timetable as a consequence of deforming work. There is no dawn and no more plans; the promising future is already past, and no one talks about the future anymore. The internalisation seems to end in immobility.

Discépolo takes from Italian grotesque above all the tension between face and mask, the clash between the inner self and external reality, which emerges as a revelation of a social condition in the midst of a crisis of ethical and aesthetic values. The vicissitudes of fate and the social and political environment of the country undermine his dreams as an artist and as a human being.

According to Pirandello, the typical humorous feeling is a sensation of contrasts, with the comic and the tragic alternating or appearing in each other. To perceive these contrasts, needs constant reflection. The relationship to ugliness is already mentioned by Aristotle in the fifth book of his Poetics, which describes comedy as the realm of the inwardly and outwardly ugly. Humour therefore does not have to be positive. According to Pirandello, the humorist's attitude to life is based not on sympathy, but on a chronic conflict of emotions. It may be based on the negative experiences of Enrique Discépolo.

Thus, in the field of humour, the grotesque is a form of recognising contradictory feelings by taking them to extremes, or rather, into an oscillation between the moderate and the extreme that enables moments of insight. Together with theatre, which depicts the relationships between the actors and their environment on stage

and is the most political of the arts, the “Creole theatre of the grotesque” can reflect reality more accurately and more popularly than the works of contemporary writers.

Suicide Leopoldo Lugones, who advocates the violence of the sword, dies by it. He breaks the strict rules of marital fidelity he himself defends when he enters into a love affair with a much younger woman that lasts 12 years. His own son Polo intercepted the love letters and took them to the woman’s parents. He wanted to restore the moral purity of the family at any cost. If the lover’s family did not withdraw, he would have Leopoldo declared insane.

Horror reigns over four generations: fame and shame, abuse and silence, torture and suicide, resistance and murder.

During Alvear’s presidency, his son Polo works as the director of a reformatory for minors. He is accused of corruption and rape of minors. When he is about to be sentenced to ten years in prison, President Yrigoyen saves him. He grants the imploring request of his father, Leopoldo Lugones, and secures his acquittal for the sake of “family honour”. After the Uriburu coup, his withheld salary payments are also released.

When Polo’s marriage ends after he becomes violent towards his wife, their daughter Piri is abused by her mother’s second husband, a neurologist, from the age of 12. Piri not only suffers from this, but also from bone tuberculosis, which causes her to limp. However, she is able to skilfully conceal her disability. She is advised not to become pregnant, but gives birth to three children.

Pirí hates her father Polo and likes to imagine that she is the granddaughter of a poet and the daughter of a torturer. She becomes known as a leading figure in the culture of the 1960s and a member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), which joins forces with the Montoneros. There she belongs to the prominent circle of friends of the Montoneros, Paco Urondo, Juan Gelman, Lili Massaferro, Jorge Cedrón and Rodolfo Walsh. She is arrested, tortured and murdered in 1977. According to information from the human rights organisation “Nunca más” (Never Again), she sarcastically accused her torturers of not even being good at torturing, whereas her father had been the best at it.

All the speeches, threats and abuse were underpinned by violence, which culminated in a series of suicides: Leopoldo took cyanide in 1938. Polo died in 1971 on his second attempt. Piri’s son Alejandro hanged himself on the same island in Tigre near Buenos Aires as his grandfather. He was missing a hand because his mother had rubella during pregnancy. Almost exactly four decades after her grandfather’s suicide, Piri was thrown out of a plane by the military during a “death flight” over La Plata in 1978. Before her arrest, Piri sold her father’s anarchist archive to Osvaldo Bayer for little money and also gave him a library that belonged to her grandfather Leopoldo.

Tabita Peralta had a great-grandfather, a grandfather and a brother who took their own lives. A mother who joined the armed struggle and disappeared, was tortured and murdered. And behind her lie a whole host of morally reprehensible acts. She appeared in the film *Familia Lugones* by Paula Hernández. She lives in Paris and Barcelona and has published a book entitled *Withdrawal from the Family*.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the death of writer Horacio Quiroga's family shocked the public. A few months after his birth in 1878, his father died in a hunting accident. Horacio lived alone with his mother for twelve years until she remarried. Everything looked good, and his stepfather developed a loving relationship with Horacio.

But then his stepfather fell seriously ill and was almost completely paralysed after a stroke. He grew weary of life and decided to kill himself. He put a hunting rifle in front of him so that he could pull the trigger with his toe. At the moment the shot hit his stepfather, Horacio entered the room. He was sixteen years old.

He was 23 when his first book, *Los arrecifes de coral* (Coral Reefs), is published. At the same time, two of his siblings die of typhoid fever.

In the same year, a friend wants to fight a duel. Horacio offers to check the pistol for safety. When he accidentally points it at his friend and pulls the trigger, he shoots him through the mouth.

Two years later, he published his second volume, *El crimen del otro* (The Crime of the Other), whose texts revolve around death and madness.

He lived in the jungle of Misiones with his wife, who is 15 years younger than him, and their two children. His harsh parenting included leaving his children in the jungle overnight. The marriage fell into crisis and became increasingly broken. In 1915, after a violent argument, his wife poisoned herself with mercury chloride and dies in agony over the course of eight days.

Quiroga left the children with his wife's family. Years after his death, they commit suicide.

The stories in *Cuentos de amor, de locura, y de muerte* (Tales of Love, Madness and Death) deal with the indomitable nature. In *A la deriva* (Adrift), the snake Yararacusú bites the protagonist and causes his death. *El almohadón de plumas* (The Feather Pillow) describes mites and fleas as the main causes of allergies and diseases in today's world.

In "The Son", humanity is represented by a boy who goes up a mountain, gets lost and is found dead by his father.

In "The Mad Dog," Quiroga tells the story of a man who is bitten by a rabid dog but survives thanks to the care of his wife and mother, only to end up mad and violent towards both of them. It is a reference to the regression of humans to their wildest and most primitive state.

Although animals have reason, they are destroyed by the raw violence of humans. And the dehumanisation of humans occurs through the subjugation of their will to their most primitive instincts.

At the age of 49, Quiroga decided to breed and domesticate wild animals and published his most successful book of short stories, *Los desterrados* (The Exiles).

In "The Dead Man," a man is doing everyday field work and carelessly falls into his machete.

Man tries to wrest goods or resources from nature, but nature stubbornly refuses to let them go; an unequal struggle that always ends in defeat for man, accompanied by madness and death.

At the age of 50, he married another much younger woman and moved with her and a young daughter to the wilderness to live as a moonshiner, farmer and charcoal burner. After eight years, his wife and daughter left him. In 1935, the poet learnt that he had advanced cancer and took cyanide in a run-down hospital in Buenos Aires. He died at the age of 59. His daughter Eglé also committed suicide in 1938, as did his son Dario in 1952. His daughter from his second marriage, Maria Elena, took her own life at the age of 61. A family was wiped out by eight unnatural deaths.

A year later, in 1938, his great friend Leopoldo Lugones, with whom he had made his first excursion to Misiones as a photographer, also took his own life. Lugones took cyanide, but with whiskey.

His friend Alfonsina Storni wrote a poem about Quiroga:

To die like you, Horacio, in your right mind, / and just like in your stories, isn't so bad; / a bolt of lightning at the right moment and it's all over... / They'll talk about it there. / You can't live in the jungle with impunity, / not even facing the Paraná. / Well done for your steady hand, great Horacio... / They'll talk about it there. / "It doesn't hurt every hour – it's written – / the end kills us." / A few minutes less... who accuses you? / They'll say over there.

Alfonsina Storni passed away in the same year as Lugones. She walked into the sea at La Perla beach in the Argentine seaside resort of Mar del Plata. Her last words were:

Voy a dormir / Voy a dormir, nodriza mía, acuéstame. / Ponme una lámpara a la cabecera; / una constelación, la que te guste; / todas son buenas, bájala un poquito, /

I'm going to sleep / I'm going to sleep, my nurse, put me to bed; / put a lamp at the head of the bed / a constellation, whichever one you like; / they're all good, dim it a little

For years she had suffered from cancer and rejection as an unmarried mother.

In 1972, the poet Alejandra Pizarnik died of an overdose of sleeping pills at the age of 36. In her diary, she left the following in memory of Storni: "Every year, the sea performs an act of joy. The reason: the possession of its beloved Alfonsina Storni." (1956)

Pizarnik was rebellious, bisexual and came from a family that had escaped the Holocaust but lost everything else. The last entries in her diaries read:

9 October: I have been admitted to Pinovano (hospital) for four months.

Four months ago, I tried to take my own life with pills. A month ago, I tried with gas.

The words are more terrible than I thought. My need for tenderness is a long caravan.

As for writing, I know I write well, but that's all. It doesn't help me to be loved.

21 November, Sunday

Last Sunday, I tried to hang myself. Today, I can't stop thinking about drowning myself.

"There are many suicides in our literature. Alfonsina Storni, López Merino, Horacio Quiroga. The essential thing is the feeling of uselessness that people who devote themselves to literature have in this country," says Jorge Luis Borges. In 2024, Wikipedia lists 118 websites featuring Argentine artists and politicians who have committed suicide. Most are hardly known. Lugones, Quiroga, Storni and Pizarnik are the exceptions. Most of them suffered from a lack of recognition and self-doubt. Comparable to the self-doubt of young people.

Pere Rojo has investigated the suicides of writers.

Salvador Benesdra, a kind of John Kennedy Toole, who threw himself from the tenth floor of his house in Buenos Aires at the age of 43, probably influenced by the fact that he could only be published posthumously; Arturo Borja Pérez, who took an overdose of tricyclic antidepressants in his hometown of Quito at the age of just 20; Andrés Caicedo, who died in Cali at the age of 25 with his first book in his hands; Adolfo Couvé in Cartagena, Chile; Jorge Cuesta in Tlalpan, Mexico; Joaquín Edwards in Santiago de Chile; Javier Egea in Granada, Spain; Rodrigo Lira in Santiago de Chile; José Mallorquí from Barcelona, who committed suicide in Madrid, Spain; Carlos Obregón, a Colombian poet who also committed suicide in Madrid; Carlos de Rokha, in Santiago de Chile; Guillermo Rosales, another Cuban who died in Miami (next to Rainaldo Arenas WH); Armando Rubio, also in Santiago; José Asunción Silva in Bogotá, Colombia; and to finish the list of those I have found, Teresa Wilms, who might have gone down in history as the most revolutionary poet of the Generation of '27 if she had not been born in Viña del Mar and if she had not taken her own life in Paris in 1921.

In 2019, UNICEF Argentina reported that suicide among young people aged 10 to 19 had tripled as the second leading cause of death over 30 years. Cases in the rural provinces of Salta, Catamarca and Jujuy are ten times higher than in the rest of the country. The reasons cited include the absence of important figures or institutions to provide guidance, difficulties in meeting accepted social norms, untreated mental illness and sexual abuse. These are constellations of violence.

The Mission of the Military The political environment of the 1930s was later referred to as the “*década infame*” (the infamous decade), in which the military, the Church and the oligarchy formed a united front to control and dominate the poor and their anarchist tendencies.

Every military regime brings with it new instruments of power. Uriburu’s son’s *picana* and the use of torture, the Supreme Court recognises the coup leader as provisional president of the republic and thus fatally legitimises the so-called “de facto government”.

When Uriburu fails to gain the support he hoped for his socially corporatist project, he restores democracy, albeit under military control, corrupt and fraudulent, and excluding the liberal UCR.

In the same year, 1932, a group of prominent military officers and members of the UCR attempted to install a “revolutionary transitional junta” with the help of a mass uprising. It was supposed to call elections within a year. However, the acting government imposed a state of siege and arrested numerous people; the most important leaders were imprisoned or sent into exile.

In 1943, the military staged a coup. The reason was not so much the “*Década Infame*” or the tense relationship between the liberals and large landowners as the pressure from the United States to abandon its neutral stance during the Second World War and at the same time reduce Britain’s dominant position. This coup is therefore the only exclusively military coup that merely installed a transitional dictatorship. Although it put an end to the conservative and corrupt system of government, the political class received no recognition. Numerous groups became involved in a chaotic power struggle.

While the vast majority of the military was anti-communist and Catholic, socialists and revolutionary syndicalists now joined forces with a group of young army officers led by Colonel Juan Perón to form a successful trade unionist-nationalist movement that eventually gained the support of the working class and became known as Peronism. This movement led to a new polarisation, this time between workers and the middle and upper classes.

A proper transfer of power took place through democratic elections in 1946, from which Juan Domingo Perón emerged victorious.

However, as early as 1951, parts of the armed forces attempted to overthrow Perón, arguing that he had lost moral, spiritual and material trust. In the early

hours of the morning, the coup leaders stormed the Campo de Mayo military base, where units were already in turmoil. There were exchanges of fire in the tank regiment stationed there, leaving one person dead. Of the thirty tanks available, only two were operational due to sabotage. The coup leaders set off with these two Sherman tanks, three tank units and 200 mounted soldiers.

The expected support from the National Military Academy failed to materialise, as did that of the naval air squadron and the Punta Indio military base when they realised that they lacked ground troops. The coup failed and the coup leaders were sentenced to prison terms of between 6 and 15 years.

In 1955, the military staged another coup, this time led by Generals Eduardo Lonardi and Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, the two successive dictators of the “Revolución Libertadora” (Liberation Revolution). They formed a National Advisory Council in which most political parties were represented and divided into two sectors, a nationalist-Catholic sector and a liberal-conservative sector. The latter staged a palace coup and elected Aramburu as “president.” The Peronist Party was banned, its sympathisers persecuted and the trade unions controlled. Here, too, new methods were developed for the persecution and execution of opponents, in some cases publicly, in others secretly. Aramburu was publicly kidnapped and murdered in 1970 by the newly founded Montoneros as an act of initiation.

The Ministry of Economy was led by Adalberto Krieger Vasena, among others, in favour of the ruling circles.

In 1958, the liberation revolution ushered in a return to limited democracy. Peronism was excluded, so that the Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (UCRI) won the elections as planned and Arturo Frondizi, in agreement with Perón, became president. Frondizi secured a comprehensive amnesty for convicted politicians and trade unionists, as well as a reform supported by the Peronists to restore unified trade unions by industry and sector. Four years later, Frondizi was overthrown by the military.

The coup was carried out by the commanders-in-chief under pressure from some sections of the armed forces due to a deterioration in their relations with Frondizi. The air force protested against plans for an aircraft carrier because it believed this would result in a loss of power to the navy. The Peronists also soon broke with the government and wanted to demonstrate their strength by creating a climate of uncertainty. In 1959, they detonated numerous bombs in Buenos Aires and the surrounding area and also won elections in ten of fourteen provinces. Frondizi immediately intervened in the provinces, asked General Aramburu to mediate and accepted the plan for a coalition cabinet, which, however, was not supported by the other political parties.

Frondizi was taken to Martín García Island. As the military failed to decide on further steps, except for agreeing that Frondizi should be succeeded by a civilian, the deputies elected José María Guido as provisional president of the Senate, who

was immediately sworn in by the Supreme Court. Guido accepted the military's demands to annul the elections in the provinces, outlaw communism and Peronism, and reversed the introduction of proportional representation

Four years later, in 1966, there was another coup, and once again a liberal was ousted from the presidency, Arturo Illia, a member of the Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo, and once again the breach of the constitution and the dictatorship were glossed over in all their brutality and unimaginativeness, this time as the "Argentine Revolution." But now, instead of a provisional government, a permanent military dictatorship was established, as in Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and Paraguay. It was justified by the challenge posed by the Cuban Revolution and the emergence of guerrilla movements. Unlike previous coups, the "Argentine Revolution" of 1966 enacted a statute that had a higher legal status than the constitution, thereby suspending the separation of powers. In 1972, in anticipation of political liberalisation, a constitutional reform strengthened executive centralism (absolute majority in presidential elections, rapid approval of new laws, impeachment proceedings for judges, etc.). The military's worldview is traditionally Catholic, with additional fascist elements since the 1920s and, following the Russian Revolution and then again after the Cuban Revolution, increasingly anti-communist.

The social and political situation remained unstable. The high level of political and social conflict during the "Argentine Revolution" and the struggles between the various military sectors led to two internal coups, resulting in three military dictators coming to power in succession: Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–1970), Marcelo Levingston (1970–1971) and Alejandro Agustín Lanusse (1971–1973). They pursued different economic policies. Onganía, with Krieger Vasena, remained committed to the ruling economic circles, while Levingston, with the radical Aldo Ferrer, promoted a nationalist, development-oriented course that could be observed worldwide.

The military saw no other way to pacify society than through elections in 1973 with the participation of the Peronists without Perón, in which, of course, the Peronist candidate Héctor J. Cámpora received just under 50 per cent of the votes and resigned after his election to allow free elections. Perón emerged as the overwhelming winner with 62 per cent of the votes. He had fought for this for 18 years, and now he died less than a year after his election: once again, a democratically elected government was brought down. This time, civilian and military right-wing extremists surrounding the new president, María Estela Martínez de Perón, were able to undermine democracy and assassinate members of the opposition until, in 1976, the military was able to blow away the rotten tree of democracy like a gust of wind.