6 Patagonia, Genocide

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> After hostilities broke out, Rauch overran the Federals and, according to his opponent's account, went all out without realising that his two wings had been defeated. He was distracted and began to savour his triumph, but soon found himself surrounded by troops he believed to be his own. It should be remembered that at that time, the Federalists differed from the Unitarians only by a ribbon on their hats that read: "Long live the Federation."
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> His rival remarked: "When he was among us, he realised that we were his enemies and only then did he become aware of the danger that surrounded him. He tried to flee and defended himself in a bizarre manner, but his pursuers outnumbered him every time and slipped through the grassland until the corporal fell from his horse and the Indian Nicasio killed him. […] Thus ended the life of Colonel Rauch, a victim of his own military incompetence."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> One day, Racedo advances as far as Leuvucó, surprises Epumer, captures this barbarian and returns with 400 prisoners and 3,000 rescued animals. In this action, he loses 15 men, both dead and wounded; and believing that these lives require a new effort, he returns and crushes the armies of Mariano Rozas.
> Rudecindo Roca went to Poitahué and Leuvucó twice in less than two weeks and captured 500 soldiers after killing more than 150 warriors.
> By the end of 1878, there is not a single tribe left in the pampas capable of undertaking even the most insignificant malón. Catriel, Pincen, Epumer, Cañumil, Nahuel Payun and Painé are in the hands of our troops; Namuncurá has fled with the remnants of his former power to the south of Neuquén, and Baigorrita is

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

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

> On the 18th, the desertion of two men was confirmed during roll call. I sent Lieutenant Maldonado to search for them. At three o'clock in the afternoon, this officer returned with the deserters. They had been tracked down at noon.
> The soldier Blas Gonzalez, who was a better horseman than his comrades, caught up with the deserters and was killed after a fight in which one of them was wounded. The rest of the troop arrived and seized the guilty men, who, as soon as they reached the camp, were handed over to a court martial, which sentenced them to death [...] And when this painful act was over, the division marched on as if it had stopped to harness the horses.
> In a large camp, smallpox breaks out furiously and relentlessly. Within two weeks, a quarter of the troops are lost, and the scourge is only temporarily defeated with the frost in June.

"I have no intention," Prado declares, to

> draw parallels between Caesar's campaign in Gaul and the expedition to the Rio Negro; but I do maintain that the colonial manoeuvre that led the army from Trenque Lauquen to the Rio Negro is the most important, the most profound, the noblest military operation ever undertaken on the continent, since the immortal epic of our independence. [...]
> The first operation we witnessed under the direct command of the Minister of War was the crossing of the Colo-Rado.
> Wide, impetuous, murky, because in the fury of its torrential flow it tears open and destroys the earth of the gorges that surround it, we saw the mighty river, whose waters border the Pampas in the south, rushing down, drawn by the abyss of the distant sea.
> A scout led the way, and behind him came the minister, his staff, the regiments, the women, the wagons, the cattle, the horses, creating a monstrous concert that amplified the mighty roar of the river, the screeching of the horsemen and carts, the commanding voices of the officers, and the cries of the frightened women and children.
> Finally, "we saw below, in the deep valley, the greenish line of the willows and, within this frame, the silvery surface of the river.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> The hatred of the natives and their contempt went so far with the new owners, who wanted to get rid of the rightful owners for good because they were an obstacle to the expansion of their herds, that they offered a pound sterling reward for every pair of human ears brought to them.
> And since the Indí would eat anything to satisfy their hunger, including dead animals they found in open fields, they poisoned large pieces of meat with strychnine to achieve their insidious goal more easily. Others simply killed the Ona as game so that the museums of London could adorn themselves with their skulls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The most famous case is that of the chieftain Inacayal.

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

The newspaper La Capital reported on 27 September 1887 under the headline "Grave Accusations":

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

But this scandal has no legal or political consequences.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> the film I made is based on the memories of the elders. And there are no records of any of this. I couldn't find any documentation about it either. They told me that they were attending a religious gathering, that they were warned and told to leave the area. And on 10 October, at six o'clock in the evening, the machine guns were set up and they were shot. After this first shooting on 10 October, the massacre continued for ten days throughout the bushland of the province of Formosa to kill the witnesses. In addition, an aircraft was sent from Buenos Aires, which took off from the El Palomar military base, equipped with a machine gun instead of a door, and flew over the area. This is based on the memories of the old men and the documents that were found. […]
>
> **Did the gendarmerie confuse a religious celebration with an uprising?** […] No, there is no possibility of confusion. In this case, they tried to criminalise in order to suppress. There could be no confusion between the one and the other. On the part of a state that has built a colonial regime to control the indigenous people of Argentina since 1880, there is no confusion. That is to say, since the time of Roca, when General Victorica was sent to conquer the "desert" of Chaco, there has been a plan to control the indigenous population in the north.[…]
>
> **Why do you think the Peronist government covered up the massacre?**[…] I can imagine that any government would have to cover up something like that because it was really on a huge scale. The Napalpí massacre was also covered up under a radical government. The same thing happened during the desert campaign, which we have only just learned about. I believe that the Argentine state is responsible for a genocide that has been going on for a very long time. It doesn't matter which government is in power: it has always happened, and it has always been hushed up because it is a disgrace. […]
>
> **Why did the gendarmerie classify the Pilagás as dangerous? Was it to frighten the rest of the population?** […] I wouldn't talk about the gendarmerie, but about the nation state. The nation state must have had a plan to control the indigenous

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> **A landowner in Argentina crushed hundreds of penguins and their nests with a bulldozer – apparently to make way for an access road.**
> The bulldozer rolled over everything in its path. Nests, chicks and even adult penguins fell victim to it in a brutal manner. In the end, the swath of death was 700 metres long and three metres wide.
> An initial report by two Magellanic penguin experts now provides an overview of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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