

PERÓN OF ARGENTINA: CASE STUDY
IN POLITICAL CHARISMATIC
LEADERSHIP

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POLITICAL CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the term charisma (spiritual gift of grace) was first transferred by German sociologist Max Weber from its original religious meaning to the broad spectrum of social science.¹ He described charisma as:

. . . a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. . . regarded as divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them, the individual leader concerned is treated as a leader.²

Weber thus made a systematic analysis of the relationship between objective social forms and the subjective psychological meaning of behavior. Charismatic leadership was one of three types of authority distinguished by him on the basis of differences in the legitimating belief systems that validate them. Weber described, as his first type, authority legitimated by tradition.³ Here the social order

¹Weber borrowed this concept directly from Rudolf Sohm, a Strasbourg church historian and jurist.

²Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York, 1947), pp. 358-359.

³Ibid., p. 328.

is viewed as sacred, eternal, and inviolable. The dominant person or group, usually determined by heredity, is thought to have been pre-ordained to rule by personal dependence and a loyalty to tradition. Obedience is reinforced by cultural beliefs such as divine right of kings. General traditional authority tends to perpetuate the status quo and is not well suited for adaptation to social change, which undermines its very foundation.

Values that legitimate charismatic authority, Weber's second type, define a leader and his mission as inspired by divine or supernatural powers.⁴ The leader heads a new social movement, and followers are converts to a new cause. There is a sense of rejecting the past and welcoming the future. Devotion to the leader and to his pronouncements, which embody the spirit and ideals of the movement, are the source of the group's willing obedience to his commands. His movement is enthusiastic and revolutionary, with class and status barriers sometimes giving way to fraternalization and exuberant community sentiment.

The third type, rational-legal authority, is validated by a formalistic belief in the supremacy of the law.⁵ Obedience is owed to a set of impersonal principles, including the requirement to follow directives originating

⁴Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, p. 359.

⁵Ibid.

from a superior office. This type is epitomized in the phrase, "a government of laws and not of men."

The threefold categories have been viewed as developmental stages in the political process as well as simply being analytical groupings.⁶ Hence, they may be seen as transitions from traditional to charismatic and, finally, to legal systems in which a rational (goal-oriented) type of motivation predominates. The implication here is that the three types correspond to historical development from simple to more complex societies, and thus a predisposing environment for the rise of political charismatic authority would be the transitional state.⁷

At a glance the sprawling Argentine of the 1940's did not give the impression of the transitional state likely to spawn the rise of such charismatic leadership. It appeared prosperous and progressive and was institutionalized in its governmental forms to the point of giving the effect of a smooth running legal-rational system.

Several studies of the contemporary Latin American area have noted several traits which are necessary for

⁶David Easton, "The Perception of Authority and Political Change," in Carl J. Friedrich, ed., Authority (Nomos I) (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), p. 89.

⁷Transformation occurs in a political system when support has shifted from one set of authorities to another in which the organization, the limits of power, and the central characteristics governing the way power is used have all undergone change. Once support begins to shift away from the structure of authority, the system will undergo a rapid change process--a transition.

any country to make progress toward the more complex systems. These include literacy; urbanization; the presence of a sizeable middle class; and party organization.⁸

Argentina in the first half of the twentieth century possessed most of these characteristics. It was the dominant nation of South America, the most heavily industrialized, urbanized, literate, and well-fed. The population, estimated at some seventeen million, inhabited one million square miles of fertile land, located largely within the temperate zone. The country was also the continental leader in livestock and manufacturing.⁹

Buenos Aires, the capital city, was the economic core of the country and one of the world's largest metropolitan areas. A city of progress and culture, it was referred to as the "Paris of South America." One third of all Argentines lived here.

Cultural and socio-economic adjustment for twentieth century Argentina had been easier than adjustment experienced by other nations of the continent. To begin with, Argentina's problems were less severe. The population was estimated to be 89 per cent European in cultural orientation. Thus, the Indian problem, so common to other

⁸W. Rex Crawford and others, "The Pathology of Democracy in Latin America," The American Political Science Review, XLIV, (March, 1950), pp. 100-119.

⁹United Nations Statistical Yearbook, 1949-1959 (New York, 1950), pp. 118-189.

countries in the area, posed no serious obstacle.¹⁰ Poverty was no serious problem either, as the population enjoyed the highest per capita income in Latin America. Argentina's working classes were among the healthiest and best fed in the area and per capita meat consumption was the highest on earth. Also, in the country, the largest middle class in Latin America had developed.

Argentina's school system, created by the "school-master President," Domingo F. Sarmiento in the 1860's, was based on that of the United States and extended throughout the Republic. Some 85 per cent of the population was considered literate (which by Argentine standards meant the ability to both read and write).¹¹ Two great national daily newspapers, La Prensa and La Nación, had been established in the 1870's and enjoyed worldwide reputations for their accurate coverage and journalistic excellence. Communications were in good working order throughout the Republic and British-built railroads linked the provinces with Buenos Aires.

The country promulgated a National Constitution in 1853 which was still in effect throughout the 1940's. The

¹⁰Argentine Indian tribes were systematically exterminated by a significant military campaign, "The Conquest of the Desert," which ended in 1880. No more than a few thousand persons exist culturally as Indians in the country today.

¹¹Latin American Center of the University of California at Los Angeles, Statistical Abstract of Latin America, 1964, (Los Angeles, 1965), p. 32.

Constitution provided for a federal system of government. Juan Bautista Alberdí, father of the document and one of the most influential republican liberals in the country in the late nineteenth century, expressed the ideas on which the country was developed.

Foreign capital will be needed: attract it. The age of heroes has passed. We enter today in the age of common sense. The American type for grandeur is not Napoleon, but Washington, who represents not military virtues, but prosperity, organization, and peace. South American liberators are the worst enemies of liberty. . . . We shall sow the seed for our grandchildren. Real freedom is a slow growth.¹²

Since the 1880's, the country had experienced three relatively articulate and stable political parties with world renowned statesmen as members.¹³ It was taken for granted in Argentina, as well as beyond its borders, that arbitrary dictatorships, bloody military rebellions, and caudillismo, (rural, feudalistic, strongman rule) were a thing of the past. Cecil Jane in his 1929 book observed that "The Argentine is today one of the most stable and well-ordered states not only in America but in the world; it is one in which revolution is as improbable as it is in England."¹⁴

¹²Juan Bautista Alberdí, Obras selectas, organizada por Joaquin V. Gonzales, Vol. X, (Buenos Aires, 1920), p. 103.

¹³These parties and their statesmen included Socialist Party, Alfredo Palacios and Nicolas Repetto; Radical Party, Leandro N. Alem; and Conservative Party, Carlos Saveddra-Lamas.

¹⁴Cecil Jane, Liberty and Despotism in Spanish America, (Oxford, 1929), p. 173.

However, out of this seemingly modern legal-rational environment arose an authoritarian regime legitimated by charismatic authority and led by Juan and Evita Perón. That this phenomenon could occur in such an environment was the question which prompted this study.

The thesis here is that the Argentina of the 1940's provided a perfect matrix for the rise of a charismatic leader. Perón did not emerge as an European-style fascist or the traditional Latin American dictator. Rather, he was called forth by his environment to exercise authority over his followers in a leader-mass, savior-disciple relationship. Perón's base environment was Argentine. Thus, Argentine patterns, values, and culture outlined the scope and methods of his rule. For this reason the total social and political behavior of the Argentine people will be studied and equated with the Perón phenomenon. For as Max Weber himself wrote,

Understanding goes further by asking not only why an action has taken place, but also why a certain behavior pattern continues to be followed. . . . Merely functional understanding may suffice for the natural sciences but not for the social sciences which must probe the why and wherefore of any given course of social behavior.¹⁵

The analysis begins with an overview of the given theory of political charismatic authority, relying heavily

¹⁵Max Weber, Basic Concepts of Sociology, translated by H. P. Schor, (New York, 1962), p. 16.

upon Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority as found in the various English translations of his Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. The A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons' translation, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization is used primarily.

Weber spoke in general theoretical terms and made no differentiation or value judgement in considering the variety of different authority types endowed with charisma.¹⁶ Since charismatic political authority is the subject of this study, elaborations on Weber's schema are presented from other sources. Related observations of various political scientists writing on the subject are utilized to form an eclectic theory of political authoritarian charisma.

Chapter III presents a brief resume of the major points in the history of the Argentine Republic. In this chapter an attempt is made to provide a causal explanation of the kind of social behavior which brought about Peron's acquisition of power and prestige and which caused the Argentine regression from progress toward the legal-rational political authority pattern to the charismatic form.

Chapters IV and V study Peron's rise to power, his political genius, and the innate personal qualifications which enabled his rule to be termed charismatic by this thesis. The routinization of his authority, the role of

¹⁶Weber included berserkers, shamans, religious prophets, demagogues, and religious heroes as those endowed with charismatic attributes.

Evita Perón as his charismatic heir, is also discussed. Chapter VI considers factors which caused his fall from power. In conclusion, Peron's continued influence upon the Argentine scene, twelve years after his ouster, the continuing fragmentation in the present governmental processes, and the propensity of the Argentine people to accept yet another charismatic leadership form should one arise, are analyzed.

Nothing approaching a definitive study of Peron and his political system has yet been published in English or in Spanish. Thus relevant material for this study was gleaned from the work of Argentine literary figures, sociologists, and economists, as well as United States and British historians and journalists' accounts of the Perón years.

Primary sources for the case study were the collected sayings, speeches, and quotations of Juan Perón published by the Peronist propaganda organizations in 1947-1950. Other useful material came from Evita Peron's ghostwritten book, La razon de mi vida.

The fall of Perón brought about a rash of books and articles by his enemies, silenced from dissent by the regime. Although many were little more than vitriolic attacks upon Peron, valuable material came from Alejandro Magnet, Nuestros vecinos justicialistas, Pablo Pujades, El justicialismo de Perón, Diez Periodistas Argentinas, Así cayó

Peron, and the pamphlet published by Deputy Mauricio Yadarola in English, Yadarola Judges Peron.

Events and happenings during the Perón years were documented from the reports to the New York Times by Argentine correspondents Arnaldo Cortesi, Virginia Lee Warren, and Frank Kluckhohn. Also the English language magazine The Review of the River Plate, published in Buenos Aires, was an important source of unbiased information concerning the last days of the leader. Finally, valuable recent sources were the work of the American Field Staff on contemporary developments in the country and the Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems Election Analysis Series.

CHAPTER II

THE CHARISMATIC POLITICAL LEADER

What He Is

Charismatic authority characterizes a self-appointed leader who is followed by those in distress because they believe him to be somehow extraordinarily qualified to lead them. Thus an outstanding characteristic of the charismatic leader is his reliance upon a mass base.¹ When there are no believers in the omnipotence and perfection of the leader, he cannot be said to exercise charismatic authority, no matter how strong, wise, or moral he perceives himself to be. He cannot be content merely to gain control over governmental machinery. On the contrary, he must consciously and continually seek to exert his dominance over the individual citizen, not by threat of force alone, but by appealing for affirmative and enthusiastic devotion. He wants active identification rather than passive acceptance from his followers. J. C. Davies elaborated on Weber at this point.

The political demands of individuals are merged with the economic, social, and ethnic demands of the nation, as these are expressed

¹Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, pp. 359 and 382.

by the leader. The charismatic follower becomes an undifferentiated cancerous cell in the body politic.²

Charisma, therefore, is not only characteristic of leaders as such, but of a relationship between leaders and followers. It depends on the construction of an image of the leader as infallible, omniscient, and incorruptible, as well as on a positive active response to this image by those already predisposed toward such leadership.

The complete charismatic follower is oriented in politics toward candidates in a particular way, rather than toward parties or issues. He tends to divide political figures on the basis of strength or weakness, omniscience or utter incompetence, righteousness or iniquity. He is unable to see any but good qualities in the leader he accepts, or to see any good qualities in the one he rejects. Although strong liking for a candidate is not in itself predominant it is coupled with the feeling that the leader is the incarnation of all virtues.³

Nevertheless, Davies said, the leader takes for granted the adaptability of the mass to his plans. He knows how to chastise the multitude if they do not readily adapt to his desires and demands.

The tendency of strongly charismatic leaders to seek power by the use of violence, intimidation, and fraud indicates their deep-seated reluctance to rely even primarily on persuasion and their recognition, perhaps,

²J. C. Davies, "Charisma in the 1952 Campaign," American Political Science Review, XLVIII (December, 1954), 1083.

³Ibid.

that in no society at any time, can enough people be trusted to believe in the infallibility of any one man.⁴

The leader does not regard himself either as chosen by or solely dependent on his followers, but rather as "elected" from above to fulfill a mission. He perceives followers as having an obligation and duty toward him and believes that he derives his morality and legitimacy from his special relationship with some more abstract force such as God or history. Those who resist or ignore him are regarded as "delinquent in duty."⁵ He arouses the charismatic sensibilities of his followers by his special, almost supernatural, gifts and by connecting himself with the nation which in turn becomes the charismatic object. Thus political leadership is likely to become the most charismatic form because it is the closest to the source from which the charisma radiates. Edward Shils wrote that it was with this charisma, this legitimizing force potent in nationality, that the leader and the mass were held in similar subjection by the charisma which is concentrated in authority.⁶

The only legitimate basis for personal charisma is that it receives recognition and is able to satisfy its followers. It lasts only as long as belief in the charismatic inspiration

⁴Ibid.

⁵Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, p. 360.

⁶Edward Shils, "The Concentration and Dispersion of Charisma," World Politics, XXX, (April, 1965), 3.

remains. If proof of his charismatic qualifications fails, the leader, thus failing to benefit his followers, will tend to think that his powers have deserted him. If these qualifications disappear for long, it is likely that his charismatic authority will vanish.⁷

Is the charismatic leader basically good? Gaetano Mosca in The Ruling Class noted that the leader was never the "best" of society, (those inclined to sacrifice themselves for others rather than sacrificing others to themselves) but that he was one who possessed the qualities best suited to directing and dominating men. Mosca saw goodness as only hindering the self-made leader in his aims and ambitions.

For goodness cannot remain indifferent to the hurts of those who must be thrust behind if one is to step ahead of them. . . all that we can justly require of leaders is that they not become inferior to the average moral level of society they rule, to identify to a certain extent their welfare with that of the public, and not to commit any too vile, mean, and repugnant actions of a kind to disqualify, in the ambit in⁸ which he lives, the man who has committed them.

Roberto Michels in First Lectures in Political Sociology agreed with Mosca that personal ambition may be exercised freely and openly as long as a regard for the public's welfare is maintained on the surface.

⁷Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, pp. 360 and 362.

⁸Gaetano Mosca, The Ruling Class (Elementi di Scienza Politica), Part III translated by Hannah D. Kahn, (New York, 1939), p. 450.

Goodness for those that are at the helm of a nation, does not signify sentimentality, but sentimental concentration on public welfare, abnegation, complete and unconditional. The great monarchs have not been the people's ruler. They have been of an energetic goodness, of a goodness not separated from fierceness.⁹

Thus, the charismatic-political leader is the sole head of a mass movement which is based largely on emotional and psychological need-dependencies of the political culture of his country. He becomes the symbol of the needs and desires of the masses who follow him and must create a "savior-disciple" relationship with his followers. As long as this rapport is maintained, he retains his charismatic mandate and stays in power. The leader need not be good, perfect, or all-wise, but he must possess that elusive, ethereal quality or gift of the spirit known as charisma--the ability to sway thousands of followers to his will.

Conditions Under Which He Rises

There are no universal charismatics. The leader is called forth by the environment. An individual personality capable of generating a charismatic authority relationship in one context may fail completely to generate that relationship in some other context. The leader must thus appeal to the predispositions and mores of the total context of his societal environment.

⁹Roberto Michels, First Lectures in Political Sociology, translated by Alfred de Grazia, (Minneapolis, 1949), p. 129.

In transitional societies, which will be recalled as providing a predisposing environment for the rise of charismatic authority, the hold of tradition has been weakened by the forces of modernization. Industrialization and the need for diversification of the traditional agrarian, rural, primary organizational, and class-bound societies have demonstrated in case after case in the developing nations that the traditional organizational forms are incapable of meeting the needs and desires of the nation.¹⁰ The traditional social structure is fragmented by the rise of new middle classes, the withdrawal unto themselves of the upper strata, and the futility felt by the lower groups. The selective nature of action, i.e., the specialization of institutions which accompanies the modernization process, leads first to a visible change in the individual personality structure, second, to a social stratification system based on ascription instead of merit, third, to a lessened family relationship, and fourth, to a new political organization.¹¹

During the transition period, societies acquire many characteristics of modern society, while retaining some

¹⁰In these nations, economic, political, and social modernization is the only process by which they can survive in a progressive and changing world.

¹¹M. I. T. Study Group, "The Transition Process" in Roy Macridis and Bernard Brown, ed. Comparative Politics, (Homewood, Illinois, 1964), p. 622.

traditional features.¹² People search for their identities and popular moods may at times turn backward in an effort to recapture some of the lost security and order associated with the transitional system. The M. I. T. Study Group depicted transitional man as imagining and hoping for change, yet in his mind, the exciting possibilities are balanced against old doubts and fears.

And so the literate elite in transitional societies may be quite skilled, and they may talk the language of modernization with fluency and apparent conviction; but latent within them is a conflict between the modes of action and the values which modernization requires and the ingrained habits and attachments of the traditional society.¹³

The transitional environment is not essentially appealing to the rational forces of self-interest, but it does arouse and mobilize forces in man which were believed to be non-existent or to have died out long ago. It further paves the way for the emergence of the charismatic leader, a symbol of a return to some form of order and security. As Edward Shils stated,

Those who break from the traditional society and enter the transitional period, cease affirmation of the concrete forms of traditional life, but retain the essential charismatic sensitivity which often becomes

¹²Traditional features remaining might include dependence upon agricultural economy, no breakthrough into sustained economic growth, strong family and clan ties, the assumption that children and grandchildren will assume status similar to that of parents and grandparents.

¹³M. I. T. Study Group, "The Transition Process," p. 627.

more sensitive from the strain of living without the comfort of traditional surroundings and tasks.¹⁴

The components of the theory of charismatic authority require a background of crisis and anxiety. This phenomenon seems most likely to occur during periods when neither the force of tradition nor that of reason appears adequate to cope with mounting political crisis. During such times, when more individuals are uncertain of what should be done in politics, the number of those searching for charismatic leaders will increase.

Crises of political relevance may arise from several different sources. They may come from feelings of insecurity or anxiety because of society's failure to supply basic human needs or from frustration due to dissatisfaction with the control structure of society. Moreover, the persistence of unresolved conflicts between forces seeking dominance intra- or internationally may be the motivating factor. Further, the crisis may stem from the struggle between two small factions for control of the government (factions operating outside the accustomed or legal techniques of seeking such control). In addition, conflict may arise where individuals, regardless of class or party differences, are united in growing intolerance of perceived incompetence or inadequacy of established political rulers

¹⁴Shils, "The Concentration of Charisma," p. 3.

and rules.¹⁵ In any one or a combination of these circumstances, a new leader may arise who has special appeal, and who says

. . . follow me and turn over to me irrevocably the responsibility for making the decisions on those problems which I say are problems and on which I shall establish and administer policy through control of government, for I am strong and through me you will get strength.¹⁶

What He Must Do

One of the first requisites of the charismatic leader is an unembarrassed, easy deportment which rises from the faith he has in himself, his vocation, and his mission. As Eric Hoffer observed,

. . . it was not the intellectual crudity of an Aimee McPherson or a Hitler which won and held their following but the boundless self-confidence which prompted these leaders to give full rein to their preposterous ideas. . . . The quality of ideas seems to play a minor role in mass movement leadership. What counts is the arrogant gesture, the complete disregard of the opinion of others, the single-handed defiance of the world.¹⁷

Charlatanism of some degree, then, is indispensable to effective leadership. The leader must be basically realistic and practical, yet must speak the language of a prophet and an idealist in order to hold his followers and to make them zealous and loyal.

¹⁵Davies, "Charisma in the 1952 Campaign," p. 1086.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Eric Hoffer, The True Believer, (New York, 1951), pp. 113-114.

The leader personifies the certitude of the creed and the defiance and grandeur of power. He articulates and justifies the resentment dammed up in the souls of the frustrated. He kindles the vision of a breathtaking future so as to justify the sacrifice of a transitory present. He stages the world of make believe so indispensable for the realization of self-sacrifice and united action. He evokes the enthusiasm of communion--the sense of liberation from a petty and meaningless individual existence.¹⁸

He must have audacity, faith in his cause, and thereby invoke fervent devotion and loyalty from the masses.

The leader must continually prove that his charismatic qualities remain intact. Michels stated that the leader must remain in continuous contact with the masses, and yet, to preserve intact his ascendancy, must also remain distinct from the mass and not share his faults with it. In "Keeping the distance which separates him from the common people he also will finally make himself precious and indispensable."¹⁹ Confronted with the charismatic leader,

. . . public opinion stands easily bewildered, at the mercy of uncontrollable ups and downs. . . . The weaknesses of great men, which often border upon the ridiculous are easily observable even by the multitude, even though it does not know the causes, are nothing but the correlative limits of extraordinary qualities which distinguish leaders by lifting them above their contemporaries.²⁰

¹⁸Hoffer, True Believer, p. 112

¹⁹Michels, First Lecture in Political Sociology, p. 127.

²⁰Ibid., p. 125.

Charismatic authority makes only sparing use of bureaucracy. Followers and collaborators are chosen (called) according to their charismatic qualifications and the leader's will. These persons are from outside the bureaucracy and thus their rank, not implying permanence, may be taken from them as soon as their supposed charismatic qualification fades out.²¹ Hoffer called them

. . .fearless, proud, intelligent, and capable of organizing and running large-scale undertakings, and yet they must submit wholly to the will of the leader, draw their inspiration and driving force from him, and glory in this submission.²²

The problem of political communication also reinforces the leader's position. Since the majority of the population does not share his modes of reason or judgment standards, subtle points of view are difficult to communicate. Therefore, he relates to the mass in emotional terms, since emotion, related to considerations of human character and personality, is easier to transmit. Hence, all groups in the population can gain confidence in judging the worth of a man for what he is even though they cannot understand his mode of reasoning.²³

The leader generally has a past of struggle--victorious struggle. Therefore, he is conscious of his qualities

²¹Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, p. 360.

²²Hoffer, True Believer, p. 112.

²³Lucian Pye, Politics, Personality, and Nation Building, (New Haven, 1962), p. 29.

which have previously proved useful. He likes to live a dangerous life and cherishes a super-personal and often righteous world-encompassing idea. When charismatic authority meets a competing authority, the only recourse is to some kind of contest. As Michels stated, "Therefore and from his necessity for struggle, and his intensity of hope, he will be an evangelist, whose passion aims at the attainment of remote and lofty goals."²⁴

He must live in the national image. That is, he must personify the ideal of the political culture. To do this, he must be a master at manipulating the governmental mechanics which are a prerequisite to power. To maintain this power position, he must play the organized elements of the political system against one another. His cause must be the cause of the nation; his name and image must be primary in every phase of national life. Domination by the leader means a rejection of all ties to any external order in favor of the exclusive glorification of the genuine mentality of himself as prophet and hero.²⁵

The ideology of the chief must create and manipulate hatreds as well as loyalties. He must make use of the most deeply ingrained habits and prejudices of the populace and direct them into a political channel of unified feeling

²⁴Michels, First Lecture in Political Sociology, p. 132.

²⁵Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, p. 362.

and action for himself. He must search and find a scape-goat on which to blame his failings. Persons possessing high charismatic qualifications need some institution or person on whom to place responsibility for governmental actions, especially for failures and unpopular ones. For if the leader, in the role of administration executive is personally responsible for all its abuses and sufferings of the people, he is continuously jeopardized. This may act to shake belief in his charismatic legitimacy.²⁶

Eric Hoffer summed up the requirements a charismatic leader must possess to carry out his functions and to continually prove his legitimacy.

The main requirements seem to be: audacity and a joy in defiance; an iron will; a fanatical conviction that he is in possession of the one and only truth; faith in his destiny and luck; a capacity of passionate hatred; contempt for the present; a cunning estimate of human nature; a delight in symbols (spectacles and ceremonials); unbounded brazenness which finds expression in a disregard of consistency and fairness; a recognition that the innermost craving of a following is for communion and that there can never be too much of it. . .²⁷

Political Culture and What Happens

In the rise of any type of leadership change in the political system, consideration must also be given to the

²⁶Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (New York, 1946), p. 263.

²⁷Hoffer, True Believer, p. 112.

particular pattern of norms surrounding the individuals in the political culture. Weber's theory encompasses only the processes that lead from charismatic movements to increasing rationalization. It does not include an analysis of the social and psychological processes that give rise to the charismatic power structure in the social milieu.

Going beyond Weber, other studies have advanced the theory that the inner dynamics of the transition process from stage one to two would not have led to the rise of charismatic authority if the societal consensus were not inclined toward such leadership.²⁸ Personality needs evolve under the impact of the social environment and can never be isolated from the social totality within which they occur. Personality patterns that have been dismissed as "pathological" because they were not compatible with the most common manifest trends within a society have, on closer investigation, turned out to be but exaggerations of what was almost universal below the surface in that society.²⁹

A society's basic personality, (national character) is defined by considering those value orientations shared by

²⁸Talcott Parsons, "Authority, Legitimation, and Political Action" in Carl J. Friedrich, ed. Authority (Nomos I), p. 198; Theo Adorno and others, The Authoritarian Personality, (New York, 1954); Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York, 1927); and Franz Neumann, "Notes on the Theory of Dictatorship," in Macridis and Brown, ed. Comparative Politics, pp. 530-543.

²⁹Adorno, Authoritarian Personality, p. 482.

the bulk of society's members as a result of the early experiences which they have had in common. Thus, social development for the transitional nations hinges largely upon inherent national values and national institutions. The Adorno study noted that,

No value system is ever perfectly internalized and institutionalized, but its status is uneven in different personalities and subcollectivities of the society. The value does not 'actualize' itself automatically, but maintenance of relative control in its terms is dependent upon a whole series of mechanisms of institutionalization, socialization, and social control.³⁰

It may follow, when these mechanisms are disturbed by the transition process in a society, that latent values may rise and "actualize"--become dominant in the society. Both the Adorno and Fromm studies state that personalities predisposed to accept the authoritarian-charismatic type of leadership come from a quasi-dictatorial family environment. Adorno calls it "a type of home that represents a prototype of the authoritarian world."

When we consider the childhood situation of the most prejudiced subjects, we find reports of a tendency toward rigid discipline on the part of the parents, with affection which is conditional. . . .upon approved behavior on the part of the child. Related to this is a tendency apparent in families. . . .to inter-relationships or rather clearly defined roles of dominance and submission, in contradiction to equalitarian policies. Faithful execution of

³⁰Ibid.

prescribed roles and the exchange of duties and obligations is. . .often given preference over the exchange of free flowing affection.³¹

There is plausible evidence that the loyalty and submission of the authoritarian-predispositioned personality to a charismatic leader is a reaction formation against his hostility towards his parents. This is directed particularly towards his father's authority which he experienced, whether correctly or not, as harshly repressive.

The breakdown of the traditional system, accompanied by modernization features of industrialization and social mobilization, causes a deterioration in the traditional role of the family, especially the authority figure of the father. This may add to the increase of fear, frustration, and anxiety already felt by members of transitional societies.

The objectification of social processes, their obedience to intrinsic supra-individual alienation of the individual from society. . . experienced. . .as disorientation, with concomitant fear and uncertainty. . .political stereotypy and personalization can be understood as devices for overcoming this uncomfortable state of affairs. Images of the politician and of the bureaucrat can be understood as signposts of orientation and as projections of fears created by disorientation.³²

Thus with a charismatic form of authority, a "delusion-like security" casts its spell over those who feel insecure. The leader takes over the decision-making process from the

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 618.

insecure member and reduces complicated issues to elementary ones. The technique is to take advantage of societal predispositions by using manifest political indoctrination. Adorno stated that

Every authoritarian character is both sadistic and masochistic. Which tendency will appear depends largely, but not entirely, on the situation. If he is in dominance status, he will tend to be cruel or authoritarian ; if he is in subordinate status, he will tend to be masochistic or submissive . Because of these tendencies in himself, he will tend to understand and deep down within himself will agree with the authority of the superior person, even if he himself is the object. . .33

Socialization experiences of childhood and early adulthood--family, church, school, work group, voluntary association--are pre-political citizenship experiences. In this way, unintentionally the individual is inducted into a sequence of decision-making systems with particular authority and participation patterns and with particular kinds of claim or demand inputs and policy outputs. It need not follow that all of these pre-political citizenship patterns are consistent with the adult citizenship pattern that emerges in the transitional society, but they do influence one another.

The process of change to the transitional society carries with it mounting pressures for the transformation of political practices and institutions. General needs of

the socially mobile population cannot be met by traditional types of government. Social mobilization may generate pressures for more general transformation of the political elite. Old elites and political leadership may tend to shift to the new party or quasi-party organizational elite. These parties are always led by the new "marginal men" who have been exposed more or less thoroughly to the impact of modern education and urban life. These new leaders represent the progress and modernization of the transitional state, speaking of the hope and glories of the future. It is for them, however, always a future based on the glories and greatness of the past.³⁴

Routinization of Charisma and its Consequences

The personal significance of the leader makes charismatic structures inherently unstable. For charisma to assume a permanent aspect, it is necessary for the charismatic authority to become radically changed. There is interest among follower and leader alike to put their status on a stable day-to-day basis.

Weber traced in detail the possibility of charismatic authority eventually becoming routine (developing into traditional or rational-legal bureaucratic institutions).³⁵

³⁴Karl Deutch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," American Political Science Review, LV (September, 1961), p. 498.

³⁵Weber, From Max Weber, p. 263.

Whether this routinization develops into traditional or bureaucratic types depends upon the institutional framework of the movement and the economic order of the system.

Charisma is a phenomenon typical of expansive political movements in their early stages. As soon as the position of authority is well established, however, and control over large masses of people exists, it gives way to the forces of everyday routine. Usually validation for this routinization of authority comes in the form of a plebiscite.³⁶

From its inception, charisma strives for security. This implies legitimation of positions of authority and social prestige and control of the economic situation by which the leader gains the material means necessary to hold power. It is imperative, then, that there should be some definite order introduced into the organization of the polity and of the administrative staff itself. The leader also must make increasing use of inherently impersonal discipline if he wishes to remain in power and expand his sphere of domination.

Routinization of charisma is further defined by the disappearance of the personal charismatic leader and the search for his successor. The primary leader will often personally designate his heir. In this successor, all qualifications for positions of authority and power are regarded as strictly bound to the inheritance of charisma.

³⁶Ibid.

The process of routinization of charisma is quite important in dealing with economic conditions in the system. In many respects, it is identical with adaptation to the conditions of economic life. Transition to hereditary charisma or the charisma of office serves as a means of legitimizing existing or recently acquired powers of control over economic goods. Weber, however, noted that "The economics of charismatic revolutions will have to be discussed separately. . . for they are by no means the same in all cases."³⁷ Nevertheless, as has been observed, the immediate effect of charisma in economic connections as well as in others, is usually strongly revolutionary and often destructive. This is due to the fact that charisma means new modes of orientation. The process of routinization retards this revolutionary aspect, or in some cases, reverses it completely.

His Position in the Latin American Milieu

Throughout Latin America in the last generation, there has been a profound trend toward accomplishment of a rational-legal form of authority. This trend has obscured but not significantly changed the character of the political scene. No Latin American republic has emerged completely into the modern period in its political and social institutions. Some polities occupy a position not far from the traditional

³⁷Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, p. 373.

pole, and some are quite close to the legal-rational. All, however, combine features of both, and thus may be characterized as transitional systems.

Generalizing on the political ideology of area countries, an ambivalence exists between the extremes of authoritarian thought and the bases of democracy and constitutional government. The reasons for the existence of the unique political dynamics of the area may derive from what Martin C. Needler called a "legitimacy vacuum."

The Latin American states are passing through a period of transition between one set of principles of legitimacy and another; during the period of transition, some features have survived from the old way, some have developed as precursors of the new, but for the most part legitimacy does not attach to existent institutions. In the absence of stable patterns of legitimate political behavior, no alternatives exist to the dominance of personality, the absence of public spirit, and the rule of force.³⁸

In the "legitimacy vacuum," terms of office holders often last until the incumbents are toppled from power. Public office is used for private advantage, and the chief criterion for public personnel selection is personal loyalty to the administrative or bureaucratic chief. Thus, there is little faith in or reliance upon state institutions. Party loyalty is often based solely on self-interest. Militarism often prevails, for where institutional authority is not

³⁸Martin C. Needler, Latin American Politics in Perspective, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1963), p. 35.

respected, force must be used. Thus, the single available focus of loyalty and hope for individual advancement is often the personalist leader.³⁹

The most important class phenomenon from the political point of view is the rise of the middle class, the decisive voice in transitional Latin America. Its presence spells doom for traditional caudillismo (feudal, rural, local strong-man rule), but it does not necessarily bring an immediate and automatic surge of stability and democracy. What may, and often does, arise is a new breed of caudillo, the "demagogic variety," characterized by its modern, charismatic, and industrialized mass-urban legitimacy base. Fernando Cuevillas, fervent peronista (follower of Peron) in purely propaganda-oriented praise of Peron, described this new type of leadership.

. . . that regime which consists of the personification or incarnation of authority, where he who governs acts with an extraordinary charismatic moral ascendancy over his people: advising them, guiding them, leading them paternally. The power of the caudillo is inspired authority before it is juridical authority. . . a social institution full of ethical content (political and military control, the authentic totality of power, the psychic leadership of the governed, the moral magnetism of the leader's personality), which makes it most suitable for those states whose political life is determined by the integration of individual and collective traditional values.⁴⁰

³⁹Rosendo A. Gomez, "Latin American Executives: Essence and Variations" in John D. Martz, ed., The Dynamics of Change in Latin American Politics, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), p. 51.

⁴⁰Fernando N. A. Cuevillas, "A Case for Caudillaje," in Hugh M. Hamill, Jr., Dictatorship in Spanish America, (New York, 1965), p. 205.

Latin Americans place high value on the "person" of an individual. More emphasis is placed on "being" than "doing." Character traits defining what an individual is are constantly scrutinized. Some traits are highly valued in society. One of these is machismo (the cult of masculinity). One who possesses machismo is expected to demonstrate sexual prowess, zest for action, great oratorical ability, daring, and absolute self-confidence. In politics a man is not usually elected to office because he stands for some particular political program, but because he personifies the macho traits that the Latin male holds dear and would manifest in his own actions, if he could. One who wishes to become the popular hero, the symbol of a Latin nation, loved and revered by the common people, must display these traits and identify himself completely with the attitudes, opinions, and characteristics of his particular country.

The Latin leader must be on a hyper-personal plane with his followers. He must play the role of patron or protector of his people. Thus, he is a substitute for a more general sense of social responsibility. He must take a personal interest in the myriad problems and frustrations of the masses, seeing them personally each day, listening to their questions and offering advice and material aid. As Frank Tannenbaum described him,

The tradition of centralization and the absence of effective party organization define

the role of political leadership. The leader must do everything. He must have the answer to all problems and the remedy for every ill. He must accept every responsibility and relieve or promise to relieve every difficulty. . . . Government is personal, intimate, a matter between friends, a family affair. It has to be this way. The people will permit no subordinate to usurp the powers of the president, which can belong to only the real leader.⁴¹

⁴¹Frank Tannenbaum, Ten Keys to Latin America, (New York, 1966), p. 154.

CHAPTER III

THE ARGENTINE MATRIX

Argentina in the 1940's provided a predisposing environment for the rise of the political charismatic leader, Juan Domingo Peron. At the time, Argentina was a maverick, not fitting into any of the common categories of nations such as developed, underdeveloped, democratic, or authoritarian. It bore little resemblance to any other Latin American type of government. Every aspect of Argentine life was more advanced than that of most Latin nations, yet it still could not be classified as a developed legal-rational system in the Weberian sense. Half a century of political consolidation had gradually built a central authority and a national spirit, but little integration of the parts had resulted.

Though outwardly stable and progressive, Argentina had a history of social ferment and political instability. Force had long been the dominant element in political life. The rise of populist nationalism and the expanded role of the armed forces placed the country far behind the political maturity of the legal-rational systems. Diverse economic and social forces tended to burst the frail political forms devised to give them expression.

The military coup of 1943, which overthrew the Conservative Party-supported regime of President Ramon Castillo and led to the rise of Juan Peron, ripped away the facade of institutional government. This revealed the transitional and weakened Argentine national state as a system ripe for the rise of a charismatic form of authority and leadership.

The Two Argentinas

In the study of Argentina's unique situation as a transitional system, it is necessary to summarize the history of the diversity between rural Argentina and the capital, Buenos Aires. In this relationship, Buenos Aires came to dominate and economically strangle the rest of the nation like a tremendous "Goliath's head" overwhelming its provincial body.

The fundamental division between Europeanized Buenos Aires and the provincial areas has brought a basic and tragic schism in Argentine national life. Argentina is geographically divided into twenty-two provinces, one federal district, Buenos Aires, and one national territory.

In addition to being the capital and major port of the country, Buenos Aires is also the cultural and economic center. Inhabitants of the city, or porteños, are extremely proud of their metropolis and think of themselves as being on a higher plane than the rest of the country. The porteño

mentality has been summed up as "the inner conviction that Argentina exists for Buenos Aires and that all outside the limits of Buenos Aires is outside the limits of civilization."¹

The roots of this division run as far back as the first decades of the Spanish exploration and conquest of the area. Buenos Aires was settled from Europe and thus was imbued with European culture and many of the ideas of the French Revolution--republicanism, individual liberty, and laissez faire economics.

Spaniards from Peru conquered the provincial areas, which became culturally more Peruvian than European. Spaniards and their mestizo offspring (mixed Spanish and Indian blood) settled these regions and developed a spirit of independence and individualism which reinforced similar traditional Spanish traits. They combined liberty and despotism, personalism and hierarchy, in a pattern that reached back hundreds of years into Spain's own past and which has endured for three centuries down to the present.²

Land ownership was the key to power in this traditional authoritarian society, and ranching was a noble occupation in the Iberian manner of thinking. The provincial areas

¹Isabel Rennie, The Argentine Republic, (New York, 1947), p. 20.

²Jose Luis Romero, History of Argentine Political Thought, translated by Thomas F. McGann, (New York, 1947), p. x.

were divided into huge estancias, or estates, which were composed of thousands of acres and owned by a few Argentine families.³ This land was the basis for the formidable Argentine cattle industry, which was begun from wild cattle, descendants of conquistador stock that roamed the plains or pampas. Herds were tended by the gauchos, (Argentine cowboys) who in turn were descended from the Spaniards and Indian women of the nomadic pampa tribes. The hard, primitive gaucho life on the estancias of feudalistic, chieftans or caudillos, is best immortalized in Jose Hernandez' poem, El Gaucho, Martín Fierro.

A son am I of the rolling plain
 A gaucho born and bred
 For me the whole great world is small
 Believe me, my heart can hold it all,
 The snake strikes not at my passing foot,
 The sun burns not my head.

I was born on the mighty Pampas' breast,
 As the fish is born in the sea;
 Here I was born and here I live,
 And what seemed good to God to give,
 When I came to the world; it will please him too,
 That I take away with me.

And this is my pride: to live as free
 As the bird that cleaves the sky;
 I build no nest on this careworn earth,
 Where sorrow is long and short is mirth,
 And when I am gone none will grieve for me,
 And none will care where I lie.⁴

³This was the latifundia system of Argentina which was furthered by grants of thousands of hectares to political favorites by Juan Manuel de Rosas, great caudillo and dictator.

⁴Jose Hernandez, El Gaucho, Martín Fierro, translated by Walter Owen (New York, 1937), p. 4.

The caudillo emerged as the principal element of order and stability on the pampas. He ruled with an iron hand, and his gaucho armies were faithful to his will.⁵ Alexander Scobie described him in the following manner:

. . .he became the government, ruling either directly or through puppets. Those with land and capital sought security in his shadow. The rapidly growing lower classes looked to him for protection. His word was law; his power absolute.⁶

After the wars of independence from Spain and until the 1940's, colonial land owners dominated the interior regions. Pious Catholicism, authoritarian rule, and a strong localistic regionalism which opposed porteño efforts at national centralization characterized their spirit. This spirit lasted into the twentieth century and played an important role in the political culture of transitional Argentina. As Martin C. Needler put it,

. . .the Wars of Independence from Spain succeeded in sweeping away the colonial system. . .without replacing it by a system of practice based on the belief that legitimate authority comes from below, from the popular will.⁷

The masses of the interior found spokesmen and leadership in their local caudillos, the greatest of whom was Juan

⁵The term caudillo is a dynamic institution subject to change, redefinition, and reappraisal. For this study, the term will be used to connote local, feudal, rural strongman rule.

⁶Alexander Scobie, Argentina, (New York, 1964), p. 39.

⁷Needler, Politics in Perspective, p. 78.

Manuel de Rosas, who emerged in 1830 to rule the entire country for some twenty years. Rosas was the "interior," the second Argentina personified. His government was a return to the old order which had existed in colonial society. He deliberately cultivated the loyalty of rural lower classes. He once reportedly confided to a friend,

I know and respect the talents of many of the men who have governed the country; . . .but it seems to me that all committed a great error; they governed very well for cultured people but scorned the lower classes, the people of the fields, who were men of action.⁸

Such words were not heard again from an Argentine leader until the coming of Juan Perón.

Rosas was popular with the common people throughout his regime, although his rule represented oligarchical protectionism and the defeat of liberal principles of government. He worked to enhance his popularity by deliberately helping to provoke French and British interventions in the country. Thus, in defending Argentina against foreign encroachment, he was able to appeal to xenophobic nationalism.⁹

Rosas was also the chief proponent of the interior cattle industry, and the estanciero elements relied on him to maintain their way of life. He fell from power because he could not guarantee the continued expansion of a flourishing

⁸Juan Manuel de Rosas as cited in George Blanksten, Peron's Argentina, (Chicago, 1953), p. 27.

⁹Arthur Whitaker, Nationalism in Latin America, (New York, 1965), p. 34.

cattle economy and at the same time allow the interior to prosper. The estancia and saladero, (meat salting plant), while bringing prosperity to the coast and to the landed aristocracy of the interior, were nevertheless destroying the provinces economically, due to the monoculture they produced. Rosas' regime taught, in addition to its reactionary doctrines, that the interior was important economically to the nation.

Rosas' regime embodied the historical and geographical conditions of the isolated, undeveloped, traditional society which produced it. It did, however, secure a measure of stability and national unity for the provinces that saved the country from disintegration into political chaos during a time of national development.

When Argentina won its independence from Spain in 1816, Buenos Aires expanded and flourished on the new world trade. Lack of transportation and communication with the interior, however, made the exchange of trade and culture with Europe easier than with provincial areas. The entire province of Buenos Aires profited from this exchange and began to receive and appropriate for itself all profits and custom's duties from port revenues. This left the interior provinces further isolated and without public income. Ysabel Rennie, avid student of the Argentine, described the situation in The Argentine Republic.

Buenos Aires learned what to wear, and how to heat her houses from the English. She took her

poetry and literature from the French. Where the provincial ate his beef without bread, with vegetables, and drank Correntine caña and wine from Mendoza, the porteño ate bread and fruit and vegetables as well as the finest beef and drank the best Spain and France had to offer. In the city the poor might dress like the gauchos, but the estanciero and the merchant class wore satins and silks. The campesino drank from a gourd mate, and the porteño from a mate of wrought silver. The gaucho wore botas de potro, the porteño, silver-buckled shoes.¹⁰

Conflict between porteño and gaucho had extended into a conflict between the Unitarios and Federales. Unitarios wished to have a strong central government with Buenos Aires dominating the entire country, while the Federales, those living outside Buenos Aires, wished for greater dispersion of power.

No one has better described the conflict and schism between the two Argentinas in the early days of nationhood than the "schoolmaster president," Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. In his Facundo, he described the conflict as a contrast between civilization and barbarism. He saw in society all the elements of civilization: wealth, learning; honor; and self-discipline. He also saw poverty, ignorance, and brutality, in a word, la barbarie. Sarmiento was unique in realizing that "barbarism," as long as it remained a vital element in the social complex, could as readily control and direct Argentine society as could "civilization."¹¹

¹⁰Rennie, Argentine Republic, pp. 19-20.

¹¹Domingo F. Sarmiento, Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants, translated by Mrs. Horace Mann, (New York, 1960)

Jose Manuel Estrada, Argentine sociologist, wrote that the struggle between "civilization" and "barbarism," or the upper classes and the masses, lasted through the fall of Rosas and the adoption of the Argentine Constitution of 1853. At this time a measure of unity and stability was achieved throughout the country.¹²

The Constitution of 1853

The Constitution of 1853 contained one hundred and ten articles and was a consolidation of the liberal governmental ideas of many Western progressive nations, particularly those of the United States of America. It provided for a federal system of government, the inevitable result of the strong Argentine tradition of particularistic and sectional sentiment and the loyalty of the people toward local leaders.¹³

The national government possessed only the powers expressly delegated or reasonably implied by the Constitution. Provinces possessed the residue of governmental authority. Territories on the fringe of the developed zones played virtually no role in the contrast between the two Argentines.¹⁴

¹²Jose Manuel Estrada, La política liberal bajo la tiranía de Rosas, (Buenos Aires, 1945), pp. 330-332.

¹³This was not actually public opinion; it was traditional and inherited views rebelling against any attempt to destroy the identity of local subdivisions.

¹⁴No attempt will be made to summarize the scope of the entire Argentine Constitution. Only factors relating to the rise of a personalist executive will be presented. A thorough reading of the Constitution itself and comments by L. S. Rowe, in Argentine Federalism, (Washington, 1921) and Austin F. MacDonald, Government of the Argentine Republic (New York, 1942), give adequate accounts of the system of government. The Constitution of the Argentine Nation is printed in full in Appendix A, MacDonald, Government of the Argentine Republic.

Structurally, the document provided for a bicameral House of Representatives and a Supreme Court. Perhaps the most notable feature of the Constitution for this study was the considerable authority invested in the Executive Branch. "The President," according to the document, "is the supreme head of the nation and has the general administration of the country in his charge."¹⁵ In the scheme of Argentine life, based upon deeply rooted political ideas and tendencies inherited from Spain, the President was given more authority than either Congress or the Judiciary.

His administrative and legislative powers were extensive. He could appoint and remove almost the entire personnel of the national administration without Senate approval. He could call special sessions of Congress and extend regular sessions beyond the stated five months period. The President could declare a "state of siege," a form of martial law suspending the personal liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. This permitted the Executive to rule the country by presidential decree and make himself virtual dictator. (This power, constitutionally exercised by Congress, fell to the President when Congress was not in session.)¹⁶

The national executive was authorized to replace elected governors and legislatures in the provinces with

¹⁵Constitution of the Argentine Nation, Article 36, Clause I.

¹⁶Ibid.

federal interventors.¹⁷ Virtually all Argentine presidents used this constitutional provision to insure their personal control over the provinces. Hence, Perón's later use of it to secure more power for himself was nothing new or different.

Other presidential powers developed largely by custom. Public policy was often determined and implemented by presidential decree rather than by Congressional action. Thus, the President was lawmaker in his own right. Expenditures were frequently ordered by him without reference to statutory law. Before taking such a position, however, he had to secure unanimous cabinet approval in an acuerdo de ministros, (ministerial agreement), but this was not difficult to obtain from subordinates completely dependent on Presidential patronage. Similarly, the President had to gain the signature of a consulting cabinet member on any piece of legislation he approved. This also proved to be no limitation on the powerful Executive.

In national finances, the President submitted his budget estimates to Congress, but he often spent more money than it appropriated. Expenditures were often made by him at will. He could also expel from the country any aliens convicted of a crime by a foreign court or any person whose presence compromised the public security or perturbed public

¹⁷Ibid, Article 6.

order.¹⁸ This provision provided the Executive with an unlimited prerogative to exile his opposition.

The Constitution in essence, then, gave the Executive branch tremendous authority. Noting these powers, plus the informal ones strengthened by each succeeding president, the power plays of Juan Peron often seemed, by Argentine standards, to be ordinary presidential actions. Both Conservative and Radical Party presidents had used these powers. It was the accepted practice in the Argentine.

Once the Constitution was firmly established and the nation stabilized, the danger of anarchy disappeared. The two Argentinas endeavored to consolidate into a true nation-state. From the beginning, however, several conflicting tendencies of national life were apparent.

First, the country had established the preconditions for a peaceful growth process and political stability. It had a modern constitution. Argentine leaders had developed a federal system of government that fit the nation's needs and traditions of provincial autonomy and central direction of the parts. Nevertheless, the national government and the country's President came to dominate the life of the Argentine federation. Secondly, Argentina had wise and liberal leaders who realized the necessity of foreign investment and immigration to develop the great natural resources of

¹⁸Ibid.

the country. Nevertheless, the small landed aristocracy, the governing oligarchy who spawned these leaders, perpetuated its own monopoly of power and successfully excluded the masses from participating in the affairs of state. These tendencies were perpetuated and accentuated as the years passed. Thirdly, Argentina stood on the threshold of a transformation that was soon to make it the richest most progressive, and most Europeanized country in Latin America. However, the democratic ideal, avidly accepted by Argentines in theory, was not accepted in practice. The majority of citizens did not participate in politics, nor were they actively politically conscious.

Accustomed to a strong tradition of authoritarianism, most were merely spectators of governmental affairs, rather than active participants. George Pendle indicated the proclivity of the masses for clinging to old authoritarian forms.

The Argentines might be taught to read and write and to wear trousers, but they retained the traditional preference of the gaucho. . . for personal independence and personal rule. They continued to be more ready to follow a leader than to give their allegiance to the political programme. The Argentine caudillo henceforth was dressed in a frock-coat--or in the uniform of an officer of the national army--but he remained a caudillo at heart.¹⁹

Whether these conflicting forces in the country are called civilization and barbarism or other terms, they were

¹⁹George Pendle, Argentina, (London, 1961), pp. 52-53.

basic factors in the making of the Argentine environment. The differences between them may help to explain the progress and regression of later Argentine development, both political and economic.

Economic Development

Argentina's great source of wealth has always been land. Its tremendous grasslands gave rise to the cattle civilization and the latifundia system of land ownership (large entailed estates owned by one family). The ruling faction of the country, or oligarchy, was made up of some two thousand of these families. All strata of Argentine society strived to emulate the estancieros' way of life.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, and largely through foreign investment, the rude, pastoral economy of Argentina was transformed into an outpost of European order and prosperity. A flood of immigrants swept over the country, importing sheep and English short-horn cattle to improve the rangy longhorn pampa stock. They fenced pasture land and planted feed alfalfa.²⁰ The invention of the refrigerator ship, (frigorífico), made possible the shipment of fresh meat to Europe and revolutionized the cattle and sheep industry. Argentina soon became the world's leading exporter of meat and an important

²⁰This was due largely to increased European demand for wool, beef, tallow, and mutton. The country's economy was already oriented toward European markets (chiefly British).

exporter of wheat and other grains. Some 90 per cent of its exports were agricultural or pastoral products, and the national economy was geared to the farm. National prosperity was thus largely dependent upon foreign acceptance of farm products.²¹

For owners of capital and land this system was highly satisfactory. Even immigrant tenant farmers were satisfied for they lived better than their contemporaries in Italy and Spain. Normally eating steak every day, Argentines of all strata became accustomed to a higher standard of living than the rest of Latin America. The system they were creating, however, contained the seeds of its own destruction--the inequality of income distribution.

The isolation of the interior provinces continued into the twentieth century. Some twenty railroad lines with more than 25,000 miles of track, built by British and French concessions and the Argentine government, had opened up the provinces a bit and brought them into closer contact with Buenos Aires. These transport lines enabled provinciales to bring their animals and produce to the port for sale and export. Nevertheless, the railroads were inadequate to aid in long term development of the country. They linked Buenos Aires with provincial cities and towns but did not link these outlying centers with one another.

²¹Raul Prebisch, "La Inflación Escolástica y la Moneda Argentina," La Administración Nacional (July 10, 1934), 1475.

The agricultural boom period of 1880-1916 stimulated agricultural-related manufacturing and commerce. Early industrialization was nonspecialized and export oriented, a pattern Argentine industry has followed since World War I, and the accompanying stoppage of imported supplies upon which Argentina relied, left the country largely unprepared to meet its own needs. The result was an increased emphasis on diversified industries. While this trend reversed itself after the end of the war, the world depression spurred industrialization once more as Argentine exports declined and the price of foreign manufactured goods rose. Restrictive controls were placed on immigration. Domestic labor was unemployed and cheap, and exchange controls regulated the flow of goods from abroad. These factors made the growth of Argentine industry imperative to the life of the nation. Thus, by 1939 the nation was virtually self-sufficient in non-durable consumer goods.²²

The industrialization process, however, was basically unhealthy. Factories were small and employed few workers. The few labor unions in the country had split internally between anarchist and socialist elements. Commerce was centered around Buenos Aires and was oriented toward consumer items. Durable goods were, as in the past, imported from

²²United Nations Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America, Department of Economic Affairs, Economic Survey of Latin America, (New York, 1951), pp. 89-180.

Europe. Principal exports were still agricultural products. Profits from agriculture did not stretch as far as before in the purchase of capital goods and machinery needed for industrialization. Further, industrialization required foreign investments and credits, and the depression-ridden nations of the world could not supply these funds.

Thus, through the 1930's the country remained fundamentally dependent upon agriculture. Latifundia of one or two hundred thousand acres was not uncommon. There were virtual pyramids of leases and sub-leases on the haciendas (large ranches), and those who worked the land were rarely the owners. Rather, they were peones who worked and lived in a feudalistic hierarchical relationship with the owner or patron (protector).

Many of these characteristics prevailed during the World War II period. By 1944 still more than half of all the farms were worked by sharecroppers.²³ Agricultural production was not diversified and was vulnerable to external fluctuations and emergencies in the world market. The oligarchy wanted the country to retain a colonial status, exporting the raw agricultural products and importing, in turn, manufactured goods from Europe. These estancieros enjoyed the spiraling inflation which accompanied the rising

²³Ysabel Fisk and Robert Rennie, "Argentina in Crisis," Foreign Policy Reports, XX (May 1, 1944) 35.

European production because export prices were soaring on the world market. Therefore, they opposed processes of industrialization and modernization.

James W. Rowe analyzed the situation and indicated that Argentine society did not possess the traits to promote the human relationships necessary for long-range economic growth. In the Argentine there was no cooperative attempt to create integration between classes or to promote harmony among various interest groups--labor, landowners and industrialists. There was no mutual trust, self-discipline, or desire to change the existing institutional forms of Argentine socio-economic life.²⁴

Consequently, the country while 70 per cent urban was still dependent upon agriculture in the mid-twentieth century. The economic, political, and social life of the nation had been dominated by landowners from the beginning of national existence, and there was no deviation from tradition until the coming of Peron. As Carl G. Taylor of the United States Department of Agriculture remarked during a 1938 visit to the country,

Agriculture is the dominant economic enterprise. In the ebb and flow of time one economic factor or another moves toward the front but none will surpass agriculture. I doubt whether one ever will in the Argentine. . . . Few societies are so thoroughly agricultural. Those who own

²⁴James W. Rowe, Notes on Argentina, American University Field Staff Reports Service, East Coast South America Series, (New York, 1964), p. 39.

large blocks of land are the recognized spokesmen. . . few families ever abandon agriculture as their major economic concern. They stay by it. And they are likely to persist, for social status in Argentine culture is built on land ownership. . . . Inheritance, sales, even bankruptcies occur, but usually landowners remain landowners of some sort and so retain their place in the social structure.²⁵

Political Culture

What may be called "political culture," notions of civic goodness and badness, is important in analyzing the total environment which produced Juan Peron. It is very difficult to determine the true spirit and character of the Argentine. There are, however, several traits in his character which are outstanding and upon which many writers agree.

Argentines have a high opinion of their own worth as a people, a feeling variously described as vanity and arrogance. Actually, however, his attitude may be a defense mechanism against his feeling of inferiority. Argentines are not content to be one nation among many; they require an exalted destiny and a proud future. They encourage the spirit of Argentinidad or basic "Argentinism," a tremendous pride derived from being a part of the "glorious Argentine Nation." This seems to be born into every individual along with a blind faith in the magnificent destiny of the country.

²⁵Carl G. Taylor, "Rural Agriculture in Argentina," Foreign Agriculture, II (December, 1938), 339.

James Bruce, United States Ambassador to Argentina from 1947 until 1949, recognized and reported on this inbred attitude.

Argentines refuse to accept any truth which makes them inferior to anyone else. Theirs is the greatest city in the world, their frontier mountains the highest, and their pampas the widest; theirs the most beautiful lakes, the best cattle, the richest vinyards and the loveliest women. They accept no qualifications nor the fact that there might be some other country which surpasses them in anything. . .perhaps it is this overwhelming pride of the Argentines that leads them to believe they can live aloof from any interdependence of nations; that they are self-sufficient without possessing even elementary industries; and that they need to have no fear of whatever changes may come.²⁶

Another trait of importance is the concept of dignidad or dignity. Every person must be treated with utmost courtesy and respect in a personal relationship. No one can be criticized in front of his friends. Students and soldiers must be obedient and respectful to professors and officers. Any other response would be contra la dignidad (against dignity).

Argentine character is a paradox of passions. Excitable and gregarious, the individual seeks to put his whole being into things which interest him. Nevertheless, there is an essential sadness in his nature (la tristeza), which motivates him to live tranquilly, keep out of trouble, and

²⁶James Bruce, Those Perplexing Argentines, (New York, 1952), p. 76.

remain uninvolved in other affairs of life. This is manifested in attitudes toward government and politics. Government is extremely important to the Argentine. His society has always depended upon government paternalism to create the utilities of the nation, to influence the educational system, and to direct the development of the country. Yet the individual does not wish to become directly involved. Ideas and ideals are discussed and debated with an explosion of energy and gusto, yet there is little interest in final political results. Fundamental principles of democracy have long been discussed and accepted in Argentina, yet practical results have been ignored because petty and short-sighted self interest has directed policy.

Hence, the spoils system is at the heart of all forms of public administration. The group in power is expected to take all the jobs, and the President is to have all means at his disposal to influence voters. Ambassador James Bruce, after dealing with Argentines of all classes, noted that the average citizen, depending on his political viewpoint, blames most of the corruption (traditionally prevalent and accepted in Argentine public affairs) on the opposition. Even if the party he supports is "in," somehow he will hold the opposition responsible for any governmental graft.²⁷

²⁷Ibid., p. 274.

World renowned Argentine historian Ricardo Levene wrote that it was these and other defects in the Argentine character which brought about the political environment in the country.

Defects in the character of the Argentine people are responsible for such evils as administrative bureaucracy, which dissipates much energy that could be useful in productive labor; political mendacity which has vitiated our political system; a spoils system which has disposed of public offices; a misdirected fiscal regime which has long corrupted democracy; greed and a sensual desire for material things; a blame-worthy disinclination to solve grave problems such as public sanitation.²⁸

Another political manifestation of such Argentine character defects is the fact that the fuero, the old Spanish privilege which exempted its holder from compliance with regulations, is perhaps the most sought after privilege in the country. Rarely publicized in the country, the fuero is nevertheless an integral part of Argentine thinking. It even tends to create a general disrespect for laws and law enforcement. In effect, it is the privilege of public office, high or low, to legally break the laws.

The above are only a few traits of the politico-cultural makeup of the country and its people. The total cultural outlook, however, can only be understood if these characteristics are related to the social and ethnic composition of the country.

²⁸Ricardo Levene, History of Argentina, translated by William Spence Robertson (Chapel Hill, 1939), p. 517.

Immigration's Influence

The social structure and composition are products of the economic revolution which occurred between 1880 and 1930. Economic expansion during this period, abetted by governmental encouragement, attracted unprecedented immigration from Europe. Between 1857 and 1900 the net increase in population by immigration was 1,200,000, and from 1870 to 1930 Argentina absorbed 3,400,000 immigrants, nearly twice as many as the 1869 population base. Almost three-fourths of the total were of Italian or Spanish stock.²⁹ Consequently, Argentina's ethnic composition changed drastically. It became "whiter" than the United States, being 90 per cent white, 8 per cent mestizo, 2 per cent Indian, and the Negro element virtually disappeared.³⁰

Immigrants settling in the rural areas found that the pattern of land ownership was already fixed. Hence, for the rural immigrant, although he helped to make the pampas one of the world's leading regions for grain and meat, tenancy was practically the only way of life. Preston James described the tenant's plight in his Latin America.

The landowners needed, in particular, agricultural laborers to prepare the land for the planting of alfalfa for their high-grade beef animals and the most effective way to do this

²⁹Preston James, Latin America, (New York, 1951), p. 339.

³⁰There was a large Negro population in the country at the time of Rosas. Many Negroes, however, had been sent to the front lines to fight in the bloody Paraguayan War of 1865-1870 and few returned.

was to rent it for a period of four or five years to tenants and to permit them, for a share in the crop, to raise grain. . . .The contracts obliged the tenants to plant the land with alfalfa and to move away after a specified number of years. The alfalfa fields yielded well for five or ten years after which time new tenants would be secured, and the cycle repeated.³¹

These tenants, and the even more rootless hired hands (peones), lived on the isolated estancias, a life of squalor and poverty. All social institutions, including schools, were inadequate. Hence, later immigrants tended to settle in the urban sections where they found jobs and a measure of prosperity in the new industrial plants. Since Buenos Aires was virtually the only port of entry, the city drained off a large proportion of the labor force in services, construction, and production.

The massive population growth was basically unhealthy, however, and according to Argentine sociologist Gino Germani, for several reasons. First, the growth rate was too rapid, as the population increased 1,000 per cent in the ninety years from 1870 to 1960. In addition, modernization was attempted at too fast a pace. As a result, the dual pattern of the traditional state, visible around 1860-1870, was succeeded by a multi-class-differentiated and complex stratification characteristic of modern societies some thirty years later. Geographical distributions of the population were also unhealthy. The people congregated in "isolated clusters"

³¹James, Latin America, p. 340.

with massive expanses of land between them. There was no population continuity, no sense of community, due to the lack of contact between towns and cities and between peoples. These characteristics in a country rich in resources were not conducive to democratic, communal, and stable political institutions.³²

The newcomers were not rebels against the existing social order in Europe but came to Argentina chiefly to exploit the land. Their south European customs readily blended with the Hispanic traditions of Argentina. They created what Jose Luis Romero termed "alluvial Argentina"-- the social conglomeration resulting from the incomplete nationalization of the immigrants.

No one can deny that this mixture continues to maintain its conglomerated character. . .It would be difficult to state what we Argentines are. . .the Argentine soul is an enigma because the collective personality of the nation is still in the process of elaboration.³³

Church and religion played important roles in the newcomer's daily lives. Emphasis was placed on dignity, outward

³²Gino Germani, "La Asimilación de los Inmigrantes en la Argentina" in Richard N. Adams, Dwight B. Heath, editors, Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America, (New York, 1965), pp. 3-5. The impact of this tremendous population influx can best be appreciated by comparing the relative proportion of immigrants to the total population of the United States and Argentina. In the period 1821-1932, total immigration into the United States was 32,244,000, a figure representing 16 per cent of the total population. 6,405,000 immigrants entered Argentina equaling 30 per cent of the population. Of 4,100,000 immigrants between 1857 and 1958, the bulk were Italian, 46 per cent, and Spanish, 33 per cent.

³³Romero, Political Theory, pp. 227-230.

appearance, and dress. They had a fatalistic attitude toward life along with a fondness for gambling, and they sheltered their women from friends as well as strangers. "In other words," according to Tomas Fillol,

. . .the cultural assimilation of the bulk of the immigrant element has been complete because of the high degree of goodness of fit of the basic value orientations of the two groups (immigrants and native society).³⁴

In essence, then, the conglomerated Argentine society was founded on the same social organizational patterns as those in Spain: the assumption that a society consists of a natural hierarchical order in which a few are born to rule, and many are born to serve. The Argentine social structure was built upon dominance and subordination. There was a tendency toward autocratic paternal rule in the family with the father passing on his authoritarian personality to his children. Argentines seemed to possess Spanish cultural characteristics, including the passive "world view."³⁵

There were varying opinions among Argentine writers of the relative value of the contributions by immigrants. Most of them agreed that the Europeans provided the numbers

³⁴Tomas Roberto Fillol, Social Factors in the Economic Development: The Argentine Case, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961), p. 33.

³⁵"world view" was described by Salvador de Madariaga as the passive-passionate attitude of the Spaniard toward life--"Being" rather than "Doing" in life. See de Madariaga, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, (London, 1931), p. 246.

which increased the pre-industrial middle class and made it one of the largest and most vocal in Latin America. Writer Ricardo Rojas however, representing the consensus of others, believed that the immigrant hordes were responsible for weakening the moral fiber of the nation because they came solely to make money. Their "get rich quick" attitude, according to Rojas, tainted the national life with their materialistic and unhealthy values--values which paved the way for Peron from as far back as the turn of the century.³⁶

Rise of the Middle Sector

The immigrants swelled the ranks of the developing middle sector of the population. This group was not a compact social layer, nor did it fulfill the central condition of a class. They were but a heterogeneous mass of unrelated occupational and social groups, with no common background or experience. Some were members because of wealth, others due to academic achievement. Many had just recently risen from the laboring classes, and others, formerly of elite status, retained their traditional contempt for workers. Alexander Scobie commented,

This class came to possess dignity and ambition but they lacked unity. They were not convinced that they even existed as a class. Their eyes were fixed on elite values and any

³⁶Ricardo Rojas, Blason de Plata, Vol. XX of Obras Completas (Buenos Aires, 1948), p. 102.

sense of belonging to a class was limited to remaining aloof from the laboring groups. . . . The universal striving of these middle classes was upward in social terms: to secure a better education for their children; to imitate the morality, society, and amusements of those just above them on the economic scale; to be clean and well dressed; and to maintain the outward appearances of prosperity, even if this meant real privation in the home. Jobs and residences in Buenos Aires became accepted goals of the middle classes. But, as a consequence, the middle groups suffered from the frustration of urban living and high cost of housing. The inflationary pressures of Argentina's rapid economic expansion struck hard at the size of the middle-class family.³⁷

Hence, people in the middle sector had the ambition, but lacked the unity and the stabilizing influence, which a middle class is usually expected to provide wherever it develops. They had a constant fear of being forced back into the working classes, and desired to maintain their status quo by any means and would gratefully accept a regulated capitalism if necessary. They developed a feeling of insecurity, leading to anxiety and fear--the group neurosis required for the acceptance of the charismatic leader.

Lower Groups and Unmet Needs

An important segment of the population yet untouched by this study was the laboring class, the group at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. In and around Buenos Aires they were largely literate and of European descent, while

³⁷Scobie, Argentina, pp. 174-175.

in the rural areas they were illiterate and largely of mestizo stock. Samuel Shapiro viewed the situation of these people in the rural areas in the following account of life in the province of Tucuman.

In Tucuman, as in Louisiana before the Civil War, cane is planted, cultivated, and entirely hand harvested with machetes. To take it from the fields to the ingenios, the farmers in some places still use the carreto, the high-wheeled, ox-drawn wooden cart for which Tucuman was already well known in the 17th century. To watch this painfully slow and inefficient process was to look once again at living history and to understand how urgent it is for Latin America to modernize her agriculture and to make a more humane use of her human resources. Nobody profits from unskilled hand labor. Production per acre and per man hour is very small, wages are low, profits are low. . .and yet Argentines pay double the world market price for their sugar. After seeing how the sugar workers lived, I understood why they were General Peron's enthusiastic supporters during his dictatorship, and why they remained loyal to him after his fall.³⁸

During the depression, agricultural prices had declined, precipitating a national crisis.³⁹ This decline in agriculture, however, stimulated industrialization. Thousands of new jobs were created for Buenos Aires' working classes, especially in meat packing, textiles, shoes, and pasta products. In fact, full employment was reached in Buenos Aires by the end of 1942 and was maintained through 1947-48,

³⁸Samuel Shapiro, The Invisible Latin America, (New York, 1963), p. 21.

³⁹Prebisch, "La Inflación Escolástica," p. 1475. Agricultural prices declined 28 per cent from the 1928 level, export prices declined 67 per cent, and the peso depreciated 65 per cent.

when immigration was resumed by government decree.⁴⁰ This employment status accompanied by the decline in agricultural prices led to an influx of rural poor into the capital seeking jobs, education, security, social equality, and a better way of life. Between 1943 and 1947 approximately 20 per cent of the rural population moved into the urban areas, chiefly Buenos Aires.⁴¹ This movement created a distressing cycle: acute housing shortages led to rent control, and the latter forced the migrants into outlying shantytowns or villas miserias. Thus, an amorphous human mass concentrated in and around Buenos Aires, building the basis for the greatest socio-political movement the country had seen. Shapiro has concluded that the rapid growth of many cities in a country is a sign of economic distress and not of prosperity.⁴² In and around Buenos Aires in the 1940's this was the case.

The lack of sharp ethnic or cultural contrasts between rural and urban population made all Argentine labor more adaptable to the requirements of industrialization than the laboring forces of other Latin countries with their indigenous populations and their entrenched native customs and traditions. Argentine labor forces were not rooted to the soil. Therefore, they could easily leave the interior and be available to learn industrial skills. Acculturation and migration were easier for them.

⁴⁰Shapiro, Invisible Latin America, p. 11.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

Culturally, however, these new city dwellers were different from the old. All that most of them knew of politics was what they had learned from being required to vote by their patrones (usually for the local Conservative Party oligarchy candidate under their title of National Democratic Party). To them political terms meant little and frequently were regarded as something foreign to Argentina.⁴³

Many of the new urban dwellers were socially and economically unprepared for life in the city. Faced with new problems of cultural conflict, family dislocations and illiteracy, they experienced the frustrations and anxieties of mobile dislocation. They often had neither the skills to earn a living in the new environment nor the education to learn the skills. As John Gillin wrote,

Lacking an understanding Patron to turn to in time of trouble he (the migrant) feels unsure and insecure, rootless and alone. As a result, he is apt to respond readily to the labor leader or political radical who promises to befriend him. He also tends to look increasingly to government as a new patron who will take care of his problem.⁴⁴

Seymour Martin Lipset in Political Man wrote of the reasons for this phenomenon. Probably more important, however, he pinpointed the solution frequently utilized by the insecure city dweller.

⁴³Robert J. Alexander, The Peron Era, (New York, 1955), p. 8.

⁴⁴John Gillin, "Some Signposts for Latin American Policy," in Richard W. Adams, John Gillin editors, Social Change in Latin America Today, (New York, 1965), p. 36.

. . .predisposing the lower classes toward authoritarianism is a relative lack of economic uncertainty one finds. . . .Such insecurity will of course affect the individual's politics and attitudes. High states of tension require immediate alleviation, and this is frequently found in the venting of hostility against a scapegoat, the search for a short-term solution by support of extremist groups.⁴⁵

The loss of the traditional forms of security led the migrant workers to seek a new reference group with which to identify. They were a rootless human mass eager to follow any leader capable of supplying them with a new and attractive set of values and ideas.

Internal migration greatly contributed to a spirit of angered nationalism which swept the country in force in the mid-1940's. This feeling was partly due to the migrant's emotional need to replace his broken sense of local or provincial identification with new symbols of group membership at a higher national level.

In conclusion, several comments appear logical and valid. The middle groups discounted the importance of the laboring masses, explaining that history and tradition were against them and that the workers had no earthly idea of what was going on politically. They were filled with fear and anxiety. They feared slippage back into the lower classes. The oligarchy, or upper classes, professed democratic ideas and ignored labor completely. Thus, the

⁴⁵Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, (New York, 1954), p. 92.

unsophisticated masses came to associate democracy with soaring prices, meaningless slogans, and frustration. Workers wanted and needed some person or institution to express their common desires and thoughts, organize them, and lead them in a campaign for betterment.

Political Articulation

The Parties

To articulate the demands and desires of the social classes, political parties had functioned in the country for years. Traditionally, the government had been run by the elites or oligarchy of landowners, cattle barons, and a few upper-echelon land-owning merchants, industrialists, and professionals. They were known by various party titles during their decades of incumbency, yet their most durable and popular name was that of Conservative Party.

This small upper class exercised amazing influence in proportion to its size. With and without the aid of the Argentine military, it had run and developed the country in accord with its own elitist ideas. Its members had drawn up the national Constitution, chosen nominees and directed the election of national presidents, and made all the basic foreign policies for the country.

As has been noted, the masses were largely politically inarticulate. This characteristic was due primarily to the influence of the Spanish traditions which did not

encourage the participation of the average man in governmental affairs. Argentine political economic analyst Walter Schuck observed that "the governor and his officials were so remote from the people that they were loved or loathed but seldom understood."⁴⁶ The attitude of the masses toward the remoteness of government from them is expressed simply but accurately in Martín Fierro.

I saw that things were looking black
 So I thought it best to go;
 Its unlucky to start an argument
 With men that are in the government
 That's one of the lessons I have learnt
 In the bitter school of woe.⁴⁷

It is important to note, however, that the middle population sectors were not completely apathetic. They had long exercised a pronounced influence on several Conservative governments by encouraging education, cultural development, immigration, technological development, and representative democracy.⁴⁸ With the arrival of the immigrants and their incorporation in the middle group, the latter made its first real attempt to exercise meaningful influence in the politics of the nation by establishing the Unión Cívica Radical or Radical Party in 1892. The Party, organized as a protest

⁴⁶Walter Schuck, "Report on the Economic and Social Conditions in the Argentine Republic," unpublished analysis distributed yearly (Montevideo Uruguay, 1951), p. 18.

⁴⁷Jose Hernandez, Martín Fierro, p. 34.

⁴⁸Particular influence was placed upon the Conservative presidencies of Bartolome Mitre (1862-1868) who brought Buenos Aires into the Argentine Confederation; Domingo Sarmiento (1868-1874), and Ramon Avellanada (1874-1880).

against corruption in government, was termed the "voice of the middle element." Its tactics for wresting governmental control from the Conservatives were political education of the electorate through party organizations and the press and through abstention at the polls.

Another middle class party, the Partido Socialista de Argentina or Socialist Party, had been established in 1890 to appeal to intellectuals and rising industrial workers who were beginning to organize themselves into unions. The Socialists were divided, however, between international anarchist, utopian, and anti-nationalist philosophies. They were also torn between theoretical discussion of their principles and the practical need to organize strikes and labor unions.

John J. Johnson noted a significant result of this creation of opposition parties. Writing in 1958, he stated that

The very fact that the middle sectors were free to make their objections known is highly significant. It suggests, above all that the Republic had passed out of the stage of brute force and into one of greater political refinement and finesse.⁴⁹

In the role of effective political opposition, however, the middle sectors remained amorphous and powerless. They had vainly aspired to political leadership and electoral reform since the late 1880's. Their cause was

⁴⁹John J. Johnson, Political Change in Latin America, The Rise of the Middle Sectors, (Stanford, 1958), p. 99.

suddenly and surprisingly realized, however, when the moderate Conservative President, Roque Saenz-Peña (1910-1916), personally insisted on the promulgation and observation of the Saenz-Peña Law of secret and obligatory vote. The result of the first free election in Argentine history brought the Radicals to power in 1916. Unfortunately for them, they soon revealed their own weaknesses manifested in the division and vacillation which seems endemic to Argentine political life.

President Hipólito Irigoyen, the Radical victor in 1916, was a liberal Radical by political belief. Nevertheless, he was typified the personalist type of president. He was a mystic and of no great intelligence, yet he possessed the flair of the old Argentine caudillos for personal leadership. Alexander Scobie described him in this manner:

Taciturn, introverted, a poor orator, he nevertheless galvanized the middle and lower classes by a certain mystical leadership. A meticulous organizer who created a disciplined and loyal party structure through countless individual interviews and small informal gatherings, he built an electoral machine which paralleled and often excelled that of the oligarchy.⁵⁰

As Irigoyen strengthened his position, he began to intervene in the provinces more than any past Argentine President, Conservative or Radical. He centralized power in the national

⁵⁰Scobie, Argentina, p. 201. It is an illustration of the inherent weakness of the Radical Party that Irigoyen ruled more and more as a personalist leader. Interesting biographies of Irigoyen have been written by Carlos Ibargoyan and Manuel Galvez.

government and used patronage to gain political support. He developed no political program and was a weak administrator as he could not delegate authority. The party became an extension of personalist rule. Irigoyen found a needed scapegoat by linking economic independence, which to him meant an anti-imperialism directed mainly against Britain and the United States, with social transformation. This led to attacks on the Argentine oligarchy. Irigoyen branded them as vendepatrias--those who sold control of their country to foreigners for their own profit.⁵¹

Thus, though the Radicals took office in 1916 as a middle class, progressive party of reform, by 1929--their last year of political rule--they had consolidated their power by the same methods as the Conservatives. Furthermore, they were deficient in many ways. They failed to meet the challenge of world depression which hit Argentina hard in 1929. They did not strengthen or perpetuate democratic institutions, and they did not implement effective economic or social reforms. The Radicals did not even effectively appeal to the lower classes. For Radicals, the political issue of democracy was suffrage, and with that presumably all problems could be solved.⁵² Perhaps their greatest failing, however, was that they could not galvanize

⁵¹Whitaker, Nationalism in Latin America, p. 48.

⁵²John Robert Hudspeth, "Fragmentation of Radicalism," unpublished master's thesis, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1962, p. 34.

major sectors of the middle groups into a political unit. Fragmentation was a trait of Latin American middle classes, and it increased during their tenure. The Radicals themselves split into two factions, personalist (those following the dictates and whims of Irigoyen) and anti-personalists (those who looked toward institutionalized forms of government). As Johnson again noted, the Radicals

. . . produced no progressive and enlightened Constitution. . . and had been content to leave welfare of the less fortunate in the hands of Catholic charities. . . The Party could not point to anything concrete. . . by way of permanent gain for organized labor. . . [they failed] to provide for enforcement of labor legislation, [made] liberal use of court injunctions to prevent strikes, [and the] use of armed police as strike breakers. . . imprisonment of labor leaders who refused to show their gratitude for favors received. The over-all view of labor's status under the Radicals revealed that the leadership's thinking had not been affected by the Mexican Revolution, or the world trade union movement.⁵³

Ysabel Rennie was equally critical of the Radicals' failure. Summing up the entire situation, and its aftermath, he stated that

What happened in Argentina happened in France, in Germany of the Weimar Republic, in Austria, and throughout Europe. The middle class governments instead of accepting spiritual leadership, were as afraid of change as anyone; and so change when it came, simply mowed them down. Radicalism did not offer Argentina anything. . . Radicalism had introduced the principal of universal suffrage.

⁵³Johnson, Political Change, pp. 103-104.

It had admitted the middle classes to university education. Beyond that, it had nothing to offer.⁵⁴

The Military Aims for Stability--1930

The depression brought the social crisis to a head and provoked a resurgence of militarism in the country. In 1930 the military, allied with Conservative factions, overthrew the fragmented Irigoyen regime in a swift and bloodless coup. Francis Herron reported the development:

A handful of soldiers marched into the Plaza (de Mayo) in front of the Casa Rosada or Argentine White House), shot two volleys into the air and proclaimed the revolution to be a fact accomplished. People in the nearby hotels closed the windows so that the noise would not disturb them and discretely waited for the newspapers to explain the commotion.⁵⁵

The revolution was accomplished by popular assent chiefly because government under the then senile Irigoyen was outrageously ineffective. Militarists decided to grab power to keep the nation on an even keel and to enhance the power of their own establishment, which had been neglected by the Radicals.

The military regime was led by General Jose F. Uriburu. It had no new ideas on running the country and meeting its problems nor did it represent any specific group. It was regressive, reactionary, dedicated to the status quo, and became increasingly unpopular.

⁵⁴Rennie, The Argentine Republic, p. 342.

⁵⁵Francis Herron, Letters from the Argentine, (New York, 1943), p. 114.

The Conservatives promptly capitalized on the "revolution." This group had a desperate stake in politics due to the agricultural crisis affecting the country, and the fact that they were the only effective party alternative to Radicalism. In 1939 a Conservative-military coalition--the Concordancia--attained the Presidency. It became increasingly apparent, however, that the revolution of 1930 had merely restored the government monopoly of the landed aristocracy which refused to acknowledge that a change had occurred in the country's source of wealth.

Conservative-supported Presidents Justo and Ortiz succeeded Uriburu from 1932 to 1943 by means of the usual fraudulent election procedures. Their respective regimes were similarly unenlightened and authoritarian. To many Argentines, even the regime of Irigoyen seemed infinitely preferable to these governments.⁵⁶

In 1941, Ramón S. Castillo came to the presidency and institutional decadence reached new depths. Stringent government policies increased the impotency of Radical and Socialist reform measures. Castillo ignored and even encouraged Nazi fifth column activity in the country⁵⁷ (greatly displeasing the United States' desire for hemispheric

⁵⁶On Irigoyen's death in 1937 nearly a quarter of a million people formed his funeral procession and at least that many looked on from windows and balconies. Gone were the thoughts of his incompetence in his last years. Only the fact of his personal magnitude remained.

⁵⁷Consultation Among the American Republics with Respect to the Argentine Situation, (Washington, 1946).

solidarity against the Axis in wartime) and was totally unable to solve or lessen Argentina's own internal problems.

Argentines chafed under the rising cost of living. In 1940, the National Department of Labor calculated that the average porteño family of five needed one hundred and forty-seven pesos per month to live decently. The average white collar worker made one hundred and twenty-eight pesos and the average laborer, seventy-eight. Thus, many inhabitants worked at two jobs merely to maintain an adequate standard of living.⁵⁸

There was also the increasing pressure from the United States to obtain an Argentine declaration of war against the Axis. Argentina was becoming increasingly isolated and ignored in the hemisphere because of her neutrality policies.⁵⁹

Wartime shortages were equally disturbing. Britain, while buying Argentine raw materials, was unable to supply manufactured goods in return, and Argentine credits built up in London. Other European markets were inaccessible, and piles of surplus grains mounted on Argentine docks. Prices rose and discontent mounted among the working masses. At the same time, no opposition in the country had a chance to bring about a peaceful change in administrations.

⁵⁸Ministro del Interior, Departamento Nacional de Trabajo, Investigaciones Sociales (Buenos Aires, 1940), pp. 10, 13, 26.

⁵⁹Under pressure, Argentina finally declared War in March, 1945, the last Latin American republic to do so.

Castillo had, in the traditional Argentine manner, implanted himself and his supporters in power positions throughout the country and had stifled the opposition parties. Again, as in 1930, revolution became the only means to effect a change.

Who was to perpetrate such a revolution? The estancieros had no desire for an upheaval, and the Radicals were still demoralized. The masses were, as usual, political spectators. Nevertheless, someone had to take the country in hand and govern with enlightened leadership. The Conservatives had failed at this task as had the Radicals. Old-guard military factions had tried, but had also failed to display the talent necessary to inspire and lead the country toward its destined glory.

This, then, was the Argentina of June, 1943, disunited and deeply cynical, without purpose or direction. The country was spiritually bankrupt. At the helm of government was a class that no longer had the power to change the country's direction. A nation, a society with all its values, was adrift with no one to set the course or point the direction. Argentina had reached the end of an era.

1943--The Military Tries Again

The only coherent force in the country which was able to precipitate a change in the government was the military. This time the revolution was directed by a clique within its

ranks called the Grupo de los Oficiales Unidos. A prime organizer of this faction was one Colonel Juan Domingo Peron.⁶⁰

Many melodramatic observers in the United States, including members of the Department of State, branded this group fascistic and pro-Nazi due to their training, their respect for the German military machine, and continued Argentine neutrality policy in World War II. The G. O. U. however, moved not on orders from Berlin but on the basis of a shared philosophy, tradition, and belief. It lacked faith in democracy and its trappings--freedom of the press, speech and elections. They conceived of administration with a military mentality. Reflecting the powerful nationalistic feeling in the country, they displayed a blatant pride in its achievements and worked for its complete self-determination. Robert Rennie and Ysabel Fisk described the Argentine government in 1944.

Thus in 1944, power is in the hands neither of the middle class Radicals nor of the landed Conservatives, but of a small group of army men who represent extreme right wing nationalism. They are not Hispanists, precisely for they are not intellectuals; but they draw their inspiration from much the same traditions and are one faction in a political trend that includes the Hispanists, (Labor and Agriculture Ministries are affiliated with Spain). They derive what

⁶⁰Grupo de los Oficiales Unidos is hereafter referred to as G. O. U. During the first two years of the regime there was a bitter struggle for power within the regime. Though Peron emerged at the top, it is unknown whether he was there from the start or whether he was at first a minor member.

support they have--which is not much--from extreme Catholics, from Hispanists and from fascists. They are in power by the force of arms; but that power each day grows less certain as army and navy show unmistakable signs for political division. They are daring but are also intrinsically weak. . .

The Argentine people . . . have not achieved their aims. . . due to. . . a demoralization and lack of leadership which characterizes the democratic parties and particularly the Radical Party, at this crisis in the nation's history.⁶¹

⁶¹Isabel Fisk and Robert Rennie, "Argentina in Crisis," p. 44.

CHAPTER IV

VEHICLES TO POWER

Qualities Prerequisite for Leadership

Personal Qualities

Juan Domingo Peron was far more than an ambitious power-hungry army officer unburdened by liberal convictions, scruples, or even constant ideology. His person came to transcend the reactionary interlude of military dictatorship, replacing the fragmented Radicals, ineffectual Socialists, aristocratic Conservatives, and bumbling military.

Juan Peron was born in 1895 in the town of Lobos in Buenos Aires province, some sixty miles south of the capital. Son of a poor tenant farmer, he lived a spartan existence in bleak Patagonia throughout most of his formative years.¹ He came to love the primitive struggle of the land and grew to surpass most men in athletic prowess. He became a crack shot, champion rider and fencer, a clever boxer, and possessed all the qualities of the Argentine macho.

His father deserted the family when Juan was still a boy, and an interested uncle provided the means for him to enter

¹Maria Flores indicated in her book that Peron's poor childhood gave him a complex which drove him to power and justification of himself. This idea is perhaps more valid when considering the more culturally deprived childhood of Eva Peron. Maria Flores, Woman with the Whip, (New York, 1951).

the Argentine Military Academy in Buenos Aires. He graduated at eighteen with the rank of Second Lieutenant, and enjoyed a successful yet unspectacular military career. He served his country in Chile as military attache and in Mussolini's Italy, where he trained with Alpine ski troops, studied Italian and German, and observed the rising careers of Mussolini and Hitler. Perón learned political and military strategy and tactics, theories of the German military machine, and built a reputation as a master military tactician.

A clever and shrewd man, Perón served as professor of military history at both the Argentine Army and Navy War Colleges and wrote four books on military campaigns of the past. Arthur Whitaker reported that during Perón's Italian assignment,

. . .he took extensive courses on economics, sociology, and politics at the Universities of Bologna and Turin. . . .In the 1920's he had studied history under one of the leading Argentine historians, Ricardo Levene. In 1937 he contributed an article on San Martín's famous crossing of the Andes in 1817 to the International Congress of the History of America, which met in Buenos Aires under the chairmanship of Levene. Shortly thereafter the latter engaged Perón to contribute several chapters to the monumental and scholarly History of the Argentine Nation, (1936-1942) which Levene was then editing. Perón accepted but his trip to Europe diverted his attention to other matters.²

²Whitaker, The United States and Argentina, p. 119.

On his return home, Perón began to form the G. O. U. clique, plotting to dominate the Argentine army and Argentina.³

Coming from a middle class background and participating in the abortive Uriburu revolution of 1930, Perón recognized that permanent military identification with right wing Catholic and elitist ideas would bar the broad popular support needed for the regime's survival in the transitional state. In Italy he had studied European fascist movements directly. He had definite ideas on how to solve Argentine problems in relation to the development of world events. Convinced that this was to be an age of manipulated mass democracies, his keen sense of social dynamics led him to seek a mass labor base and a middle class following for the regime. This middle sector was composed of the newer industrial and commercial groups whose interests differed sharply from the oligarchy and which had failed to find representation in the fragmented Radical Party.

Perón rose first in league with the military. Yet many Argentines saw the military as allied with the old Conservative factions. Perón sought power, not only in the military, but in the country as well. He became increasingly obsessed with the idea that it was his mission in life to build a new Argentina with himself as leader. Speaking continually of his "election" to charismatic office, he remarked in 1944,

³Argentina had not been at war for years. Thus the only way for an officer to gain power and prestige was through business or politics. Politics was faster.

The people ought to know, that the leader is born. He is not made either by direction or by elections. Leadership is an art, and the artist is born, not made. . . . Nobody in history has been able to improvise leaders or governors. God has predestined with extraordinary opportunity the life of men who have represented through the centuries, true meteors destined to burn in order to illumine the path of happiness. As there is no art without the artist, neither is there leadership without the leader, nor government without the governor. . . .

The psychology of the multitudes was a psychology, but it was not a leadership of the masses. To be a leader it is not sufficient to have understanding; neither reflection, nor reason are sufficient qualities for leadership of the masses. The masses are led by intuition which comes solely from God.⁴

Earlier he had said,

He who aims at leadership, or whom circumstances have placed in the position of leader of a country must first know it well and then understand it; and woe unto him who stops at that for it is absolutely necessary to feel with it. At first, it is led with love and enthusiasm, later with skill and finally with knowledge. But it must be remembered that the works of man, when born of love, are like children, more perfect and more beautiful.⁵

Perón looked like a leader. He personified the Argentine symbol of masculinity. He was handsome, about six feet tall, of powerful build and military carriage. Of ruddy complexion and with dark hair brushed straight back from his forehead, he had flashing white teeth which were shown

⁴Juan D. Perón quoted in Ramón García, Radiografía del Perón, (Buenos Aires, August 12, 1944), pp. 11-12.

⁵Juan D. Perón, Speech of August 11, 1944, Perón Expounds His Doctrine, (Buenos Aires, 1947), p. 14.

in a continuous smile. Arnaldo Cortesi of the New York Times reported that the Colonel was filled with energy, vitality, and emotion, and that he had the quality of yielding graciously on minor points in order to minimize opposition to his important plans.

There is no denying that Peron has a very magnetic personality and produces an electric effect on crowds and even some individuals who come into contact with him. Most people are aware of his magnetism, at least so far as they disagree completely with his opinions, and find themselves half convinced by his arguments even when they know there is not a shadow of truth in what he is saying. Some people, however, come under his spell entirely and seem to lose all power of independent judgement and action, becoming little better than puppets in his hands. This applies to more than one member of the present Government.⁶

Juan Perón sought to be the personification and incarnation of authority. He wanted to advise, guide, and lead his people paternally. In this connection, Cortesi reported that

Peron is obviously consumed by an unquenchable fire of ambition. He has set his heart on becoming President of the Argentine Republic and woe unto him who stands in his path. He intends to get there by fair means or foul, and no scruples or conscience or considerations of any sort will cause him to depart from his purpose. To the achievement of his ambition, he brings a truly uncommon recklessness, an iron will, an astuteness of no mean caliber and indefatigable energy, a colorful personality and a willingness to use trickery or force when arguments fail.⁷

⁶Arnaldo Cortesi in the New York Times, February 3, 1946.

⁷Ibid.

Showmanship

Showmanship was an extremely valuable tool to Perón. The only way he could get and keep what he wanted was to sell himself to the people, and the Argentine people had an engrained propensity to accept one with his qualities.

Emphasis was placed on fanaticism and mystical ceremonialism. Perón studied and envied the Hitlerian oratorical hold over the Nazi political party. He loved furious tension, the drama of mass meetings, the torch-light parades, martial songs, mob adulation, and the spectacle of thousands of men shouting in unison for their leader. Fleur Cowles reporting from Argentina for the Des Moines Register wrote that it was the emotionalism of World War II that stirred Perón's ambitions into action and made him feel that it was his moment to become the leader, and that only he could do it.⁸

Perón worshipped anyone who had strong leadership qualities. He had high regard for Alexander and Napoleon and admired Hitler and Mussolini. Perón studied the thoughts of these men, how they stood, and the gestures they made. He thought Mussolini one of the century's greatest men but admitted that he had made "certain disastrous errors." Referring to the Duce in early 1944, Perón

⁸Fleur Cowles, Bloody Precedent, (New York, 1952), p. 150.

remarked that "I, who have the advantage of his precedent before me, shall follow in his footsteps but also avoid his mistakes."⁹

Perón relied on the techniques and precedents of these men whom he classified as great leaders. He used their mannerisms and gestures when speaking to Argentines in the role of national hero, including Mussolini techniques of balcony speeches, and mass meetings, the inciting of crowds to scream his name and to sing martial songs. He often wore his white summer military uniform in winter in order to be easily recognized by crowds and in newspaper photographs.

Perón was a genius at organizing political and labor demonstrations. He developed a giant propaganda machine which worked efficiently and smoothly. Ruth and Leonard Greenup, reporters for The Buenos Aires Herald during 1943-1947, noted that Perón was often accused of hiring young men to stand near microphones at government rallies to chant his name. Thus, it would be heard again and again over the radio, leading listeners to believe that Perón had a giant following.¹⁰ Thousands of workers were paid five pesos per day to go about Buenos Aires and neighboring

⁹Juan D. Peron quoted in New York Times, February 3, 1946.

¹⁰Ruth and Leonard Greenup, Revolution Before Breakfast, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1947), p. 150.

cities agitating for Perón. Called gritones or criers, these people would demonstrate loudly and often for Colonel Perón and his friends or against his enemies.¹¹

Disciples

Perón possessed the inherent quality of inspiring fervent loyalty among his followers. He formed an inner circle of disciples, wooing them by offers to allow them a part in an epoch-making historic change for the Argentine. It sounded both dramatic and exciting and even many liberals were won over completely. None of this inner circle came from the established bureaucracy, but each in his own way was capable of inspiring loyalty in others. All owed complete loyalty to Perón. They felt they might become missionaries in their own land, and welcomed the opportunity to join in the creation of the "new Argentina."¹²

Cipriano Reyes perhaps provides the clearest example of this type of follower. Reyes, leader of the meatpackers

¹¹Their wages were paid out of the large pension funds appropriated from the Ministry of Labor. MacDonald, Government and Politics, p. 77.

¹²Included in the circle of disciples were Perón's own nominal military superior, General Eldemiro J. Farrell, Colonel Domingo Mercante, later interventor of Unión Ferroviaria the Railwaymen's union, Colonel Filomeno Velazco, later head of the Federal Police of Buenos Aires. Others included Juan Bramuglia, lawyer for Unión Ferroviaria, Angel Borlenghi and José Argana of the Commercial Employees Federation, José Figuerola, former collaborator of fascist Spanish dictator Primo de Rivera and Cipriano Reyes, head of the meat packing union, and Miguel Miranda, later head of the Central Bank. Many of these men were nationalized Argentines. All came to power and left it at the pleasure of Perón.

union, was a most controversial man in Argentina in the 1940's. His friends nearly worshipped him, feeling that he was the spokesman for all the country's depressed workers. They also felt that he was a man of intense bravery and true devotion to the cause of labor. Robert Alexander, who knew Reyes personally, shared this belief that Reyes was a sincere and courageous man who had taken upon himself the dangerous work of organizing labor in a traditionally anti-union industry.¹³

Reyes came to worship Perón and seemed completely under his spell. However, he broke with Perón in March of 1946 when the leader proposed liquidating the Partido Laborista (a coalition party organized to elect Perón to the Presidency in 1946 and in which Reyes firmly believed) to form the later monolithic Peronista Party. Angered at Reyes' defiance of his authority, Perón revoked his favor and mandate, on which Reyes' position in society solely depended. Without it, Reyes was eventually prohibited from future effectiveness in the meatpacker's union or as a National Deputy, a seat which he assumed after Perón's electoral victory in 1946. Many of Perón's other disciples fell by the wayside as well when they displeased their charismatic chief or became too powerful in their own right. Their jobs and positions depended strictly upon Perón and his recognition of their qualities. With this recognition removed, these men slipped into oblivion.

¹³Robert J. Alexander, The Peron Era, (New York, 1955), p. 56.

The Appeals

Perón's climb to power provides a study of the combination of inherent charismatic qualities with inordinate skill and ambition. He rose from an unknown army colonel to President of the Republic in just three years, while at the same time, filling the environmental need for the charismatic leader at a time of internal crisis and anxiety. He rose to power through two principal steps. First, he mobilized a manipulative labor force and second, he secured the armed forces' acceptance of labor as an ally. As Pablo Pujades, Radical Deputy during the Peronista years, remarked,

Perón's plan was quite clever and circumstances precipitated it perfectly. Publicly, he was to be the most important man in national politics and privately, the unsubstitutable element of the military regime.¹⁴

Appeal to the Military

It was through the military establishment that Perón found a foothold on the ladder to full charismatic authority. Throughout Latin America it is usually only through the military or the church that a middle or lower class person can rise to national prominence. Perón chose the military route, and through his friend General Eldemiro Farrell, then President of the Republic, he was appointed successively Minister of War, Minister of Labor, and Vice President

¹⁴Pablo Pujades, El justicialismo de Perón, Bogotá, (Colombia, 1958), p. 117.

of the Nation. As Minister of War he became unofficial head of the G. O. U. and proceeded to ensure his undisputed control of the Army. It was reported that the signed and undated resignations of most of the nation's 3,600 army officers were on file in Peron's office and could be enforced by him at any time.¹⁵ Peron thus became comfortably entrenched as de facto army chief, gaining the backing of the military for future activities.

Under his leadership, the army grew in manpower from some 40,000 in 1943 to 100,000 in 1945.¹⁶ Officers filled a large number of cabinet posts in the government and were used as provincial interventors. Other important civilian jobs such as head of the Railroad Administration, the National Energy Administration, the Federal Police, and the Peronista Party were filled by military men.

Salaries of all military personnel were raised, and commissioned officers were said to be paid more than their contemporaries in the United States Army.¹⁷ Each of the three armed services was expanded and provided with new equipment. This attention to the military in the early years of power was reflected in public expenditures. In 1945 the

¹⁵Ray Josephs, Argentine Diary, (New York, 1944), p. 230.

¹⁶New York Times, June 21, 1943, September 18, 1945.

¹⁷Johnson, Political Change in Latin America, p. 114.

military was allotted 37 per cent of public expenditures; in 1950, 32 per cent; and in 1954, 23 per cent.¹⁸

Rank and file soldiers were given higher pay and better barracks. These men, recruited from the ranks of labor, came to love and worship Peron. There was a concentrated effort to peronize sergeants by providing them with a new style of uniform, one more like those of officers than of enlisted men. Thus, Peron appealed to their ingrained sense of Argentine dignity. In later years, he pushed a bill through Congress giving non-commissioned officers the right to vote.¹⁹

Edwin Lieuwen, describing the techniques of the charismatic military authority figure said,

He did not rise to the head of a revolution by his own individual initiative, as had the caudillos. Rather, he represented a substantial cross section of the junior or middle rank army leadership concentrated in a conspiratorial clique. To win the battle against the oligarchy he must pose as representative of the lower and middle income groups. . .to make them believe that the enhancement of his power would lead to a parallel advancement of their interests. If the people responded to his vilification of the old regime and his messianic promises, he was well on the way to the establishment of a kind of plebian dictatorship, whether or not he had the majority of the people behind him.²⁰

¹⁸New York Times, September 18, 1945, July 6, 1949.
June 1, 1954.

¹⁹New York Times, September 22, 1948.

²⁰Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America, (New York, 1961), p. 128.

To further develop support for himself, Peron encouraged the natural rivalry of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. "So long as their surplus energies are used up in fighting one another," he reportedly said, "they won't have the strength to bother me much."²¹

Peron also had to constantly placate the military ego. He did this in his rise to power by using his popularity in other segments of Argentine society. The G. O. U. had become very different from preceding reactionary regimes, due to Peron's influence. The military government became strongly nationalistic, seeking to revolutionize both the economic and social structure of the country. Authoritarian measures were taken, yet Peron only took credit for the ones which were popular or which succeeded. His rise to power was under the protection of the institutional shield of another in the presidency. Successive presidents fell by the wayside as Peron basked in glory. Peron could be as irrational and emotional in his appeals as he desired for he was a charismatic leader. No routinization of the process had yet occurred.

Peron consolidated his power in the G. O. U. clique by a series of behind-the-scenes maneuvers.²² When this

²¹Juan Peron quoted in James Bruce, Those Perplexing Argentines, (New York, 1952), p. 311.

²²These maneuvers are best described in Gontran de Guemes, Asi gesto la dictadura, (Buenos Aires, 1957).

provisional government announced support for Peron as President in 1945 there could no longer be any doubt who the real power in the military was, nor that Argentina had entered a period of revolution--a revolution defined by Juan Perón:

The Argentine Revolution proclaims social justice, which transcends individual nations, embraces all mankind, and passes from man to man, like the fundamental element of brotherhood, which arises from the conviction that man is made in the image of God. It points out the only road to salvation in this crucial hour in the history of the world. The Argentines have known how to find it. Their greatest ambition is that the sons of all nations should do likewise.²³

Perón was thus placing stagnant Argentina on the road to a glorious future. He would lead all its inhabitants to prosperity, brotherhood, and peace. He was their designated leader; all was possible if they would place complete trust and confidence in him.

Appeal to Labor

Revolutions need leaders who tell the masses how bad they have been living in the past and who promise them a better life. However, the Argentine masses had little to complain of concerning physical necessities in 1943 and even less in 1945. They were accustomed to the existing "dictatorships in democratic form." Economically, Argentina had reached almost unheard-of prosperity which was even more noticeable as other Latin countries labored under post-war

²³Juan D. Peron, Peron Expounds His Doctrine, p. 6.

adjustment processes. In these circumstances, the leader could hardly base his propaganda on the existence of a "state of intolerable hardships." Instead, he had to point out new horizons, new summits, whose conquest would be worth any sacrifice. Thus, Peron proclaimed that the "new Argentina" belonged to the masses and no longer to the oligarchy which had supposedly exploited it for generations.

Through his military connections, Peron had been appointed Director of the National Department of Labor in 1943. He began a two year campaign to organize labor's support. Peron worked to elevate the Department of Labor to a higher governmental status. In November, 1943, the Department was replaced by the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare.²⁴ Peron became first Secretary of Labor, and his former union lawyer and disciple, Juan Bramiglia, was made Chief Assistant Director. The two proceeded to tighten Peron's hold on unions while undertaking many long-overdue social reforms and other benefits for workers. Using the words "country," "duty," "sacrifice," and "glory," Peron charged his movement with ardent nationalism of strong indigenous roots. He identified himself with the nation, a symbol of the perfect Argentina with hope for the future of all "submerged ones." Peron spoke to the country in the

²⁴It became virtually a Ministry, although not entirely, since the Argentine Constitution forbade establishment of any new Ministries in government. New York Times, December 1, 1943.

language its peoples wanted to hear, and brought it, as Hoy de México reported, to "live in a patriotic, nationalistic euphoria."²⁵

Perón not only spoke, but actually delivered, the tangible labor reforms which he promised. Salaries were raised 15 to 20 per cent, and minimum wage laws were passed for the first time in the history of the country. Measures were initiated to provide paid vacations, resort homes for workers, and remuneration for workers who were fired. He brought the working groups to the surface and made them feel important. Eva Perón, his wife, later wrote of his actions in behalf of the poor, "And when I saw him stretch forth his calloused hands toward the workers' hands, I could not fail to think that in him and by him my people for the first time were given a friendly hand."²⁶

He instituted further interventions within the most important syndicates, La Fraternidad and Unión Ferroviaria, the railwaymen's unions, and also put labor supporters in union leadership positions. The metallurgic, press, building, and meat industries unions were then peronized. Using these docile syndicates, he proceeded to identify the Confederación General del Trabajo with the Peronista Party.²⁷ In 1945, the

²⁵Jorge Pinto Sandoval, "Eva Perón, La dama de la esperanza," Hoy de México (May 8, 1948), 16.

²⁶Eva Perón, La razón de mi vida, (Buenos Aires, 1952), p. 39.

²⁷The Confederación General del Trabajo, hereafter cited as C. G. T., was a coalition of trade unions similar to the American Federation of Labor. Organized before Peron era, it was badly split into two rival factions when Peron re-consolidated it and used it as a support for his regime.

National Institute of Social Security was founded. As a result, Argentina was converted from the most backward countries in South America in social insurance matters to one of the most advanced.

Peron in 1943 appropriated some half a billion pesos for the construction of low cost housing. In December of 1945 he issued his aguinaldo (Christmas bonus) decree in which the wages of all employed persons in the nation were raised. At the same time, employers were directed to pay every worker a bonus equivalent to one month's salary. Furthermore, Peron implied that this was but a taste of what might be expected when he became president. It was also made known that Peron favored a profit-sharing plan.²⁸ Ruth and Leonard Greeup reported that the aguinaldo purchased the support of tens of thousands of underpaid business, agricultural, and industrial workers. From the standpoint of the leftist parties, it was disastrous. Peron's move left almost nothing for them to offer the voters. "It was thus useless to campaign for social justice when Peron was already ladling out millions of pesos to labor."²⁹ Peron was thus effectively throttling his opposition.

Peron gathered into his own hands as much of the union collective bargaining machinery as possible. Unions and employees were invited to bring their problems to the

²⁸New York Times, December 28, 1945.

²⁹Greenup, Revolution Before Breakfast, p. 116.

Secretariat of Labor, where negotiations frequently resulted in sizeable concessions to workers. Strikers who refused to use the Secretariat's facilities for bargaining were usually forced back to work. By appealing to the personalist traditions between workers and employers, Peron inspired the confidence of laborers and led them to believe that an appeal to him would yield greater rewards than relying on their union leaders. He constantly identified himself with labor and called himself "first worker of the Republic." "Fortunately," he said,

. . . I am not one of those Presidents who live a life apart, but on the contrary, I live among my people, just as I have always lived; so that I share all the ups and downs, all the successes and all the disappointments of my working class people. I feel an intimate satisfaction when I see a workman who is well dressed or taking his family to the theatre. I feel just as satisfied as I would feel if I were that workman myself.³⁰

Peron's influence helped the organization of many unions. In this way he assisted a development which had been nearly impossible in pre-Perón Argentina. For the first time some of the most oppressed and backward unions were able to organize. In Tucumán province, Perón personally helped to form a Federation of Sugar Workers.

Personally visiting the packinghouse town of Berisso, he walked down the main street with his arm around Cipriano Reyes, the union leader. No doubt remained that the

³⁰Peron, Peron Expounds His Doctrine, p. 87.

meatpacker Laborers had the support of the most powerful man in the military. Robert Alexander reported in 1955 that

It was not long before the support of union members began to be transferred from the old trade union leaders to Peron. In fact, the old-line leaders themselves built up the mystique of Peron.³¹

Peron worked around the clock studying conditions of farm and railroad workers. Long hours were devoted to the analysis of pension funds which were in a state of virtual bankruptcy. He ordered the British-owned railroads to grant wage increases to their employees. Railroad pension funds were taken over by the government. This gave hope to thousands of retired workers that they would receive pension payments toward which they had been paying during their working years but which had been denied them due to depleted funds.

For the first time, public employees were given civil service, job tenure, retirement pay, and disability insurance. The Consejo de Nacional de Postguerra (National Post War Council), created in 1944, recommended coordination of all industry under the leadership of Colonel Peron.³²

The entire governmental top echelon followed Peron's example and worked long hours while shortening the working

³¹Alexander, The Peron Era, p. 28.

³²Consejo Nacional de Postguerra, Ordenamiento Económico-Social (Buenos Aires, 1945), p. 3.

hours of the masses; as the general rule in Latin America is that high-ranking officials should not be expected to be at their desks for more than three hours a day, the masses were deeply impressed.

Peron made the worker feel that he was an important part of the Argentine nation. He often said, "This nation is made up of two kinds of people, those who work and those who do not."³³ Clarifying this in a speech in the city of Mendoza in 1944 he said,

We are working and will continue to work day and night until the social policy we have devised is firmly established in the Argentine Republic. Our aims are simple: minimum salaries, social assistance, social provision, organization, and regulation of work and rest. We desire a just remuneration according to each person's work, so that everyone will be afforded the means to lead a decent life, but over and above everything else, we defend the supreme dignity of labor. We want each man to earn enough to clothe himself, eat, and live with dignity.³⁴

Walter Schuch, veteran economic and political analyst of the Argentine, reported that this aspect of Peron's program represented an enormous change. For Argentina was where the man who did not have to work for a living inevitably felt superior to the one who did--and where a working girl had long been considered a disgrace to the family.³⁵

³³Peron, Peron Speaks, (Buenos Aires, 1952) p. 65.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Walter Schuch, Argentina at the Turn of 1948/49, unpublished socio-economic report, (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1949), p. 30.

By 1946 a great many Buenos Aires workers considered Colonel Peron to be a more important man than their traditional leaders. No matter how demagogic his methods, he had accomplished more for them in two years than the Socialist Party had achieved in decades of constantly obstructed legislative effort.

Appeal to Argentinidad

Juan Peron knew his countrymen well. He knew how to play upon their predispositions, their national traits, prejudices and beliefs. He thus cleverly appealed to all Argentines by identifying himself as closely as possible with the inherent feeling of Argentine nationalism. It will be recalled that this spirit of Argentinism was an innate factor in the Argentine cultural heritage. The periods of crisis and anxiety of the depression and post-depression years of the 1930's and after had accentuated this characteristic.

During this time the spirit of economic nationalism had been stimulated.³⁶ Elite classes, traditionally

³⁶Internationally, Argentina has always sought to pursue a neutral course. This is graphically seen in the Irigoyen neutrality policies of World War I and the Ortiz-Castillo-Ramirez actions during World War II. Accompanying this feeling has been one of antipathy toward the United States' economic imperialism in the area. During World War II, Argentina was branded "pro-Nazi" by many in the United States for these and other attitudes. However, as E. Gil, Argentine sociologist, in a letter to the editor of the New York Times remarked, "regardless of what political party might control the government, the foreign policy of the country and in particular the continental policy would suffer no important change." E. Gil, New York Times, July 5, 1942.

dependent upon foreign manufactures, had incurred substantial losses. The expanded political role of the middle and lower classes caused acknowledged resentment against Argentina's inferior position in the world. This feeling quickly spread through all segments of the population. As Alexander Scobie related,

As a result of their particular position in society the middle groups found in the nation a symbol to which they could become passionately attached and which they tended to exalt, in part as a means of raising their own status.³⁷

A great and greater Argentina became a slogan accompanied by a revival of Rosismo (cult of Rosas) and an artificial admiration of the hero-warrior folklore of the nation. This worship of the strong national state had many followers in diverse groups. Yet there was no strong, united, nationalist movement, no single leader or organization of this spirit. A Mendoza University student expressed the country's situation in the 1940's when he said,

. . .In the next decade or two, no matter what influences may begin to modify our national character, our prosperity will mostly depend on our status as a colony of the world and we will be buffeted by all the whims and caprices, the hates and jealousies of the great commercial powers. How different this reality is from the way in which some other peoples, including the United States, look at us, pronouncing us without reason or sober judgement to be

³⁷Scobie, Argentina, p. 190.

fascists! We are not a military people. We are anything but a military people. We are confused and troubled and we do not know quite what to do about it.³⁸

Peron recognized the need for a central leadership symbol to represent these nationalistic feelings and to give them a national purpose. To accomplish this he repeatedly pictured himself as a national leader following the examples of Rosas and Irigoyen.

Playing on old fears and prejudices, Peron found a convenient scapegoat externally in the United States and internally in the Argentine oligarchy, Irigoyen's vendepatrias. On these two sources he blamed national problems as well as Argentina's increasingly isolated and weakened world position. In 1943 in an interview with the Chilean paper, El Mercurio he said,

Powerful foreign economic interests in Argentina have been accustomed to dominate the country. We are not anti-capitalist but we will not allow foreign capital to dominate us. . . . Foreign capital is mistaken if it believes that it can dominate the national Argentine spirit. . . . We will not tolerate impositions on the international order and much less on the national.³⁹

Thus, economic nationalism became an integral part of his drive to power. He later explained this facet of his revolution in his pamphlet The Economic Reform.

³⁸Quoted in Frances Herron, Letters from the Argentine, (New York, 1943), p. 68.

³⁹Recorded in the New York Times, November 9, 1943.

Any leader with a heart in his breast full of a great love for his country, understanding he should govern with an Argentine spirit and for the Argentine people, on coming into power would have realized that the first measure necessary for the national interests was to dam up the river of gold which was flowing from our land and. . . estancias. The first necessary measure, therefore, was to detain the escape of wealth. The second, to insure that this wealth, kept in this country, should not be monopolized by small groups but distributed equitably in proportion to the merits of each and according to the effort carried out to achieve national resurgence. And this is what I began to do as soon as I was able to make my voice heard in government spheres.⁴⁰

Appeal to the Church

In 1943 the secularization trend in Argentina was reversed with the formation of an alliance between the G. O. U. and the Church hierarchy. Catholicism was the state religion in Argentina, and its clergy were paid by the government out of the general revenues of the country. The Church's preponderant position should not imply, however, that all Argentines were devout or regular churchgoers. The attitude of many upper or middle class citizens was indifference. It was a matter of social esteem and propriety to belong to the Church. This attitude was reflected in the relations between the Church and the Conservative and Radical administrations.⁴¹

⁴⁰Juan D. Peron, "The Economic Reform," (Buenos Aires, 1948), p. 4.

⁴¹A thorough study of the Church in Argentina may be found in Lloyd Meham, Church and State in Latin America, (Chapel Hill, 1961), pp. 225-252.

The Church's traditionally authoritarian hierarchy tended to favor the authoritarian anti-democratic tendencies prevalent among Conservatives and small nationalist groups in the country. It was dogmatic, anti-Semitic, and it always stood for reaction rather than progress. In effect, it had always been one of the pillars of the Conservative social structure.

In the interior, the population generally accepted the paternalism of priests and estancieros. With industrialization, however, the Church felt that its grip over the masses was slipping. Thus threatened, the Church wanted to have more control over the populace.

Peron preyed upon this attitude. He knew that nominally, the Church still had much influence over Argentine women and the illiterate and uneducated of the interior and in Buenos Aires.

He reestablished compulsory Catholic religious instruction in all public schools, banned since the 1880's. Peron endorsed and actively supported the activities of the Church, and the Church in return, openly supported his candidacy. One anti-Peronista Argentine Catholic clergyman reportedly remarked to Robert Alexander, "Although the Church has not really endorsed any politician it is not hard to see how some might think that it has, since priests appear at all of the Peronista rallies."⁴²

⁴²Alexander, The Peron Era, p. 127.

During the election campaign of 1945-46, Argentine bishops issued a pastoral letter on the election, asking that no Catholic vote for candidates whose programs included the legalization of divorce, a ban on Church schools, or separation of Church and state. Peronistas immediately claimed that this letter was a condemnation of the anti-Peronista Democratic Union, since every party belonging to that coalition advocated one or more of these planks.

Some priests were particularly active in the Peronista movement. The most notorious were Cardinal Copello and Father Virgilio Filippo. Filippo, a vituperative orator, combined fanatic support for Peron with other authoritarian beliefs.

Maria Eva Duarte de Peron

Juan Peron's partner in his rise to authoritarian charismatic leadership was Eva Duarte de Peron. In many respects more charismatic than he, Eva appealed to and organized labor into a strong power structure. She was a woman of inordinate ambition and considerable beauty, and she had a hardness and fanaticism for vindictiveness which Peron himself lacked. While Peron was laying plans to control the army, Eva was a third-rate Buenos Aires radio actress. The illegitimate daughter of a poor coachman, she was born in Los Toldos, a miserable pueblo in the interior. Maria Eva Duarte enjoyed little education or luxury

in her early years and came to Buenos Aires in her teens seeking a stage career. She was strangely full of ambition for herself and receptive to any suggestion which might advance her career.⁴³

In the wake of the military coup of 1943, Eva's advancement was rapid. She was on friendly terms with a number of leading G. O. U. figures and by the end of 1945 her monthly radio salary had grown to eight times that of 1943.

An earthquake in the northern provinces which almost totally destroyed the old colonial town of San Juan gave both Peron and Eva their "big chance" for consolidation of power. Some 3,500 were killed and 10,000 injured. Peron, as Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, went on the radio appealing for aid and contributions of food, beds, medicine, and peas to help the "colonel's campaign." He departed from tradition to get his appeal across. With an actress on each arm, he strolled down Calle Florida, Buenos Aires' swank main street, soliciting contributions, and, at the same time, gaining tremendous publicity. No other staid government figure would have dared to do this, and the San Juan catastrophe came almost to be known as Colonel Peron's earthquake.

⁴³There is no factual information regarding Eva's early life as she forbade all mention of the past other than that she was of humble origin. She also destroyed what records existed relating to her early life.

Eva Duarte noticed the increasing popularity of Perón and began to laud him and his programs of social welfare on her radio show, "The Worker's Hour." She popularized the program among workers and fixed in their minds the image of Perón as their unique benefactor and champion. Fleur Cowles later reported on a 1951 trip to the country that she could not discover one member of the press or of society or intellectuals who really listened to Eva's program.⁴⁴ But thousands of poor people did--the illiterate, the dissatisfied, the angry, the have-nots. As Chilean Alejandro Magnet observed, "In the poor streets of La Boca they knew her: She spoke with passion and was a woman touching and influencing."⁴⁵

Her talents were used to transmute the worker's political support into a cult for Perón. She went down into the worker's districts and into factories and made the acquaintance of local bosses. According to German Arciniegas, "It was then that Eva found herself, and discovered her true vocation."⁴⁶

Juan Perón, initially attracted to Eva by her beauty and flattery, took her as his mistress and later as his wife. They worked together in earnest for his consolidation of

⁴⁴Cowles, Bloody Precedent, p. 152.

⁴⁵Alejandro Magnet, Nuestros vecinos justicialistas, (Santiago de Chile, 1953), p. 42.

⁴⁶German Arciniegas, "Is a Caudilla Possible?" in Hugh M. Hammill, Jr., Dictatorship in Spanish America, (New York, 1965), p. 197.

power--he as leader, she as disciple. She often spoke of her total loyalty to Perón . . . "I have ceased to exist and it is he who lives in my soul, is owner of all my words and my sentiments, is the man absolute in my heart and my life."⁴⁷ Eva presided over the symbol manipulation involved in the transformation of the worker's status. This made possible the division of labor between the two. Perón could henceforth concentrate on the major sectors of his programs and on the military, and she on labor. For both there was a deliberate challenge to remake Argentine society by putting down the mighty and exalting the meek.

They began vast speechmaking tours in two distinct styles: one, that of the severe and laconic military man, the other, that of the agitator at the barricades. This radio oratory became a key technique of gaining support, devotion, and loyalty. Jose Romero wrote that "the voice of Evita had a profound effect on the politically inexperienced masses, far different from anything to which they were accustomed, carrying people to the zone of instinctual reactions."⁴⁸ Both spoke to the masses in a language they could understand.

Catapult to Power

The end of World War II in Europe brought a clamor for a change of government in Argentina. Many Argentines were

⁴⁷Eva Perón, La razon de mi vida, p. 60.

⁴⁸Romero, Argentine Political Thought, p. 249.

humiliated as a result of the G. O. U.'s mistaken assumption that the Axis would win the war, and Argentina was in a state of isolation unparalleled since the time of Rosas. In response to this feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction, President Farrell lifted the "state of siege" which had been initiated by Castillo in 1941.

Relaxation of restrictions brought a group of leading industrialists to publish a charge that Peron ruined the country with his economic policies. Rural societies of cattlemen and a large segment of university students and the press added their cry of "down with dictatorship."⁴⁹ A coalition "Board of Democratic Co-ordination" was formed to fight the military regime, and particularly Peron, as instigators of class conflict between lower and upper classes. This coalition board called upon the Supreme Court to assume the reins of government and to call elections. Peron saw his chance to end the de facto control of the oligarchy and catapult himself into power by relying upon his army of four million loyal and trusting workers.⁵⁰

The Board had called a March of Constitutional Liberty on September 19, 1945, which was attended by thousands.

⁴⁹New York Times, June 17, 1945 and June 20, 1945.

⁵⁰Many workers were already enamored with the total mystique of Peron. Added to this, however, was that many workers were angered by the Board's suggestion that the Supreme Court take the reins of government. The Court, traditionally Conservative, in the position of head of state would promptly re-install the Conservative oligarchy to power, thus reversing any gains made by labor.

President Farrell reacted to this by reimposing the state of siege and rounding up or exiling opposition leaders and members of the Co-ordination Board.⁵¹ Despite his action, the government was forced into a defensive posture. There was an undercurrent of increasing dislike in popular attitudes toward the military.⁵² Pressure against Perón was great enough to force his resignation from all government posts.

Among military officers, there was considerable jealousy of Perón's ascendancy in the government and a dislike for his social revolution. Many officers were convinced that mounting verbal opposition to Perón might destroy the military establishment as well. Hence, a group of army and navy officers headed by Colonel Eduardo Avalos, commander of the Campo de Mayo garrison, staged a coup d'état on October 5, 1945, to remove Perón from power and save the military. Perón was arrested and placed on the prison island of Martín García in the La Plata estuary.

With "el líder" incarcerated by the military, the opposition elements in the country had a chance to remake the regime. However, they bungled badly, continuing their tradition of fragmentation and quarreling over succession. The average Argentine in the street had little knowledge of the entire situation, as the coup had been planned and

⁵¹New York Times, September 20, 1945.

⁵²New York Times, September 29, 1945 and October 8, 1945.

executed by a small clique in secrecy. Most Argentines continued their traditional apathetic attitude, accepting what occurred in government as conflicts between politicos.

Eva Duarte and Cipriano Reyes worked to arouse and consolidate the loyalty of the working elements for Perón. In her book, La razon de mi vida, Eva wrote that she "flung herself into the streets, searching here and there for help for him," and that she found help only in the barrios of the poor.⁵³ Both Eva and Reyes had direct contacts with the syndicated organizations in the country. They explained the recent happenings to the workers and declared that the events meant a regression to the former situation when laborers could neither organize nor fight for the defense of their interests. They would again be exploited by the oligarchy who actually controlled both important political parties. Conversely, Perón in office would guarantee the "great task of liberation that they could continue to realize." He would provide workers with an effective representative as a man occupying a key post in national politics. It was easy to see that the military government was no less than a bridge for the return of the oligarchy while Perón had already brought a new group, labor, into the political regiment.⁵⁴

⁵³Eva Perón, La razon de mi vida, p. 42.

⁵⁴Recorded in Pujades, El justicialismo de Peron, p. 8.

It was quite easy for Eva and Reyes to convince the workers for no other reason than what they said was true. Their explanations were aided by the slogans "Shoes yes, Books no" and "We want Perón! Perón! Perón!"

The workers believed and took up the fight. On October 15, 1945, they arrived in the center of Buenos Aires, shouting for the return of Perón--the only man in whom they could base their hope. The G. G. T. demanded his immediate release. Demonstrations lasted nearly three days, and there were simultaneous activities in the provincial cities of Salta and Tucuman. These strikes threatened complete paralysis for Argentina.

On October 17, 1945, there was a tremendous demonstration in the Plaza de Mayo. Thousands of workers crying "Perón! Perón! Perón!" marched through the plaza. Faced with the prospect of a blood-bath in order to keep him out of power, his military opponents capitulated and brought him back. Perón dramatically appeared on the balcony of the Casa Rosada (the Argentine White House overlooking the Plaza de Mayo) and exchanged the traditional abrazos of affection with President Farrell.⁵⁵ In a balcony speech Perón then proclaimed a pact with the descamisados who restored him to power.

⁵⁵An excellent pictorial but biased written account of the Buenos Aires demonstrations appears in the Peronista publication, 17 de Octubre. An adequate written account in English appears in the New York Times, October 18, 1945.

Henceforth Peron is marked; he is the man that the people have elected to overcome the epoch of crisis. . . . Thus, he is only daring enough to utilize a language truly revolutionary whose supremacy, already made definitely unquestionable, is disputed by no one.⁵⁶

Several weeks later at a fiesta for workers he said,

At this moment, when the destiny of the country and its history are changing its course, the debt we owe to the descamisado who did not hesitate to sacrifice his own convenience to the collective welfare of his countrymen, will be fully acknowledged and will always be recalled. Argentina owes her present and her future greatness to that mass of workers. And since this movement has already passed beyond our frontiers, ceasing to be purely "peronismo" to become the symbol of social justice, we may even say one day that the happiness of the world was wrought by the Argentine descamisado.⁵⁷

Peron's speech breathed a confidence so complete that at its end he bade his followers to take time to celebrate the victory and to rest as he himself planned to do. He had complete confidence in himself, his leadership, and in his relationship with his followers.⁵⁸ Pictured as irreplaceable in Argentina he had reached a pinnacle of charismatic leadership.

To consolidate his position, he had to gain constitutional control of the country. Thus, he resigned his commission in the Army and began his campaign for President.

⁵⁶Quoted in Pujades, El justicialismo de Perón, p. 9.

⁵⁷Peron, Peron Speaks, Speech during the celebration of "Labor Day" on July 9, 1945, p. 85.

⁵⁸A week after the October 17 demonstrations, Peron married Eva Duarte.

The campaign was full of political tricks. He kissed babies, initiated maternity wards, drank cheap wine, and dug ditches with workers--procedures practically unknown to an Argentine government official. American journalist Frank Kluckhorn was quite impressed with Perón's campaign performance. He reported that on a campaign trip into the interior, frantic Peronistas, mad with joy, often tried to mob the candidate and to touch his hand. He also noted that in every crowd along the route, there were almost no well-dressed persons.⁵⁹

Perón's opposition came from the Democratic Union, a coalition of Conservatives, Radicals, Communists, and Socialists. Its candidates were José Tamborini and Enrique Mosca, two competent but colorless Radicals who fought a hard but futile battle against Perón. The entire 1946 election was unique for Argentina. It was a study in contrast--a violent one-sided political campaign was waged before elections while there was an impeccable correct performance of law and order on election day. This order was guaranteed by the military. For the first time in history, the major established political parties united to defeat one man--Juan Perón.

Perón allowed the people a choice between himself and his opponents. He fulfilled some of his campaign promises before election and used government money and resources

⁵⁹Frank Kluckhorn, New York Times, February 11, 1946.

openly. The Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare, having branch offices in all principal towns and cities, provided him with funds and a tremendous propaganda organization. Peron was pictured as Peron the man, Peron the exponent of share-the-profits, and the aguinaldo, the hope of the country. This was contrasted by Tamborini and Mosca, ordinary Radical candidates for the office of President of the Republic.

Another factor propitious to the election of Peron was Spruille Braden, American Ambassador to Argentina from 1945-1946. Braden, convinced that the United States needed to pursue a "hard-line" policy toward the country to insure Argentine cooperation in future hemispheric unity plans, personally campaigned for the Democratic Union ticket. He spoke of the pro-Nazi activities of the G. O. U. and cried that a continuation of military influence in the government would insure Argentina's continuance as a fascist state.

Braden was recalled to Washington to assume duties as Secretary of State for Inter-American affairs. Under his direction, on Argentine election eve, was issued Consultation Among the American Republic with Respect to the Argentine Situation (The Blue Book), a document designed to expose Nazi Fifth Column activities in Argentina at the time of G. O. U. leadership. To the Latin American, and especially to the Argentine, nationalist feelings are so great that the slightest hint of outside intervention sends him into

the arms of his worst enemy. The Blue Book was far from a slight intervention.

Peron shrewdly played the role of a man persecuted by the Union Democratica and Braden, the poor criollo boy persecuted by the "Colossus of the North." As Cowles reported,

The Blue Book. . .put us on record against evil by means far from conventional. But it brought passion and a falsely heroic stature to Peron every time he denounced it. It may even have helped him to put on the halo of nationalist savior and thus assure his election.⁶⁰

All of these factors insured Peron's election. He received 55 per cent of the popular vote and three hundred and four electoral votes to seventy-two for the Democratic Union. All provincial governorships were won by Peronistas, as well as all thirty national Senate seats. In the Chamber of Deputies for the first time in thirty-four years, the Radicals were reduced to a minority of forty-four seats, while the Socialists were excluded. Observers from all parties agreed that it was one of the fairest elections in Argentine history.⁶¹

Thus, Peron institutionalized his charismatic power, and acquired an ideology of sorts. But as Daniel Friedenberg in his analysis of the Peron regime said,

⁶⁰Cowles, Bloody Precedent, p. 164.

⁶¹Reprints of leading Argentine newspaper articles and editorials stressing election honesty were reproduced in the Confederacion General del Trabajo, Comercios Ejemplares, (Buenos Aires, 1946).

Peron was not left-wing; he was not center; he was not even right-wing but purely and simply peronista. Any means to seize power was good and Peron merely used the violent social discontent as a tool to attain his objectives.⁶²

⁶²Daniel Friedenberg, "Peron, Peron, Peron," The New Republic, (September 26, 1955), p. 12.

CHAPTER V

ROUTINIZATION OF THE CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

Attempts to Maintain the Charismatic Image

Legally and officially the elected President of the Republic, Perón was the total inspiration to a large political force whose members he had organized and mesmerized into loyalty and submission. Perón's followers comprised a majority in the Chamber of Deputies and occupied all Senate seats. However, with his election, Perón's authority became institutionalized. The office of the presidency called for abandonment of the irrational and irresponsible characteristics of charismatic authority. Nevertheless, Perón maintained his charismatic authority while occupying this institutionalized role from 1946 until 1955. In this he played a dual role--the staid, official President of the Republic and the ranting leader of the masses. The ability of the President to maintain charismatic authority while at the same time occupying an institutional role is a tribute to his political genius and documents the scope of his charismatic qualities.

All of Perón's actions during the years of his regime reflect this struggle to maintain charismatic authority. He was quite aware of the routinization process which was

modifying his charismatic rule and sought to justify changes in his regime in his inaugural address in 1946. "I am convinced," he said

. . .that nothing prejudices the foundations of the economic life so much as brusque changes in legislation because they impede the formation of the necessary background which builds up support for the changes and despoil the individual will. The adaptation of the revolutionary principles to the national body of laws must be done little by little, in due time and season if we wish to arrive at the maximum stability in guiding the ship of state.¹

Evita Perón was equally aware of the problems that confronted "el líder" in his new role of national chief of state. She pointed this out in her book by drawing attention to his desires and his duties and the relation of these to the power of his position.

Perón, on arriving at the Presidency, little by little was convinced that the responsibility and tasks of his mission were almost incompatible with his desire to maintain close contact with the people. . . . the plenitude of power was what impeded the Leader's permanence in contact with the people. While he was in the Secretariat of Labor and Welfare, he had no other problems to resolve but the old, urgent problems directly affecting the people. But in the Presidency, the old and urgent problems gave way to those problems whose solution was indispensable in order that all that he had constructed in three years of social reform would not be wrecked.

Desiring to maintain the charismatic image, Perón became the state. The state was made manifest in his ego and

¹Peron, Peron Expounds His Doctrine, p. 332.

²Evita Perón, La razon de mi vida, p. 79.

embodied his person as head of state. All individuals were subordinate to him. As Radical Deputy Mauricio Yadarola wrote,

The history of the country must perforce begin with what the President's supporters term the "Peronist era," breaking apart from a past that--with every error and mistake characteristic of human enterprise--forms the moral and material inheritance that the Republic can still exhibit.³

Propaganda

Peron used many techniques during his regime to keep this image alive. He carried on a tremendous propaganda campaign throughout the country. Deputy Yadarola reported that the Subsecretariat of Information, Peron's personal propaganda tool, had a budget of \$27,522,367 in 1949 and spent approximately one million pesos per month for propaganda purposes.⁴ The government worked overtime to make sure the workers were told that it was thinking of their welfare. Furthermore, the official press and propaganda bureau utilized every opportunity to make it clear that all advantages came from Peron and Evita, the "defenders of Argentine workers." As Alejandro Magnet observed, submission to the leader was greatly influenced by the repetitious mechanical eulogies of the press and radio. Chantings of the mob, like the one quoted, developed a

³Mauricio L. Yadarola, Yadarola Judges Peron, Project presented to the National Chamber of Deputies of the Argentine Republic, (Buenos Aires, 1950), p. 41.

⁴Ibid., p. 39. In 1949 the peso was worth about eight cents in United States currency.

reflex conditioning of the masses, a mass destruction of the critical spirit.

Peron, Peron how great you are
 My general, how much you are worth,
 Peron, Peron great leader,
 You are the first worker.⁵

Crowds in the streets carried enormous placards bearing the smiling pictures of Peron and Evita. Public buildings and schools were plastered with their sayings and slogans. Signs on many buildings read, "Peron Completes, Evita Dignifies." Movie newsreels and showbills were controlled by the official propaganda organization, and a "Juan Peron Children's Library" was published in twelve volumes. Martial songs and hymns to the Leader abounded such as Los Muchachos Peronistas (The Peronist Boys).

The Peronista Boys, together we will triumph
 and as always giving a shout from the heart;
 Viva Peron! Viva Peron!
 For this great Argentine who knows that he is savior
 to the great masses of the country.
 Combatting capitalism.⁶

Evita Peron--Charismatic Heir

With Peron's inauguration as President of the Republic, Evita played an increasingly important role in the nation's public affairs. In the trade unions, Senora Peron took over the position her husband had occupied during the days of his de facto control of government. She took part in ceremonies,

⁵Recorded in Magnet, Nuestros vecinos justicialistas, pp. 49-50.

⁶Ibid., p. 50.

listened to the grievances of Argentine workers, and eventually chose the leaders of the individual unions within the C. G. T. itself. Since Evita became de facto chief of the Secretariat of Social Welfare, lines of people from all ranks of society besieged her office seeking favors or advice. Thus, she began to build up a personal following of her own. It was she who assumed the quasi-authority role of heir designate in continuing the charismatic aura of "la Revolución."

Evita, however, never assumed full and complete authority in a charismatic power relationship with the populace. Instead she constantly identified herself with Perón, saying that she was but an instrument of his to interpret his messages to the masses. She often said that some unknown divine force had destined her to fight for her cause--the welfare of the descamisados. In effect, Evita took over the charismatic arm of Perón and continued it, thus allowing him to concentrate on the day to day running of the country.

She proclaimed that Peronism was a magic formula for the good of the nation. Stated with greatest clarity, her monologue maintained that institutions were the shabby invention of democracy and that the only trustworthy force was "the leader." The basis for her position in the movement was her contact with Perón. As she noted in her book,

I am only a simple meaningless woman. I was no better than you not long ago. Now I exist only to interpret Perón's great crusade

to you--his people. I am only here to save his energy, to explain his ideas, to carry out his glorious program.⁷

She wrote of the leader's difficulties as institutionalized head of the nation in finding the time to tenderly watch over his people. Hence, she collaborated with the leader and served as his intermediary with the workers.

I was elected to the humble task of taking care of the small requests.

I was elected to my people's post in order to see from there the barriers that could have impeded the path of the Revolution.

I was elected to be "Evita" . . . in order that through my mediation the country, and above all, the workers would always find open the pathway to the leader. . . .

Thus the country can be assured that between it and the government no divorce is possible. Because in our Argentine case, in order to divorce himself from his country, the Chief Executive would have to begin by divorcing his own wife.⁸

Thus the Peróns became inseparable in the public mind. Evita made possible the continuance of Perón's charismatic following even when he assumed an institutionalized office.

Evita raised the ego of the masses, giving a feeling of purpose by identifying them with the gaucho, the Argentine national folk hero.

The descamisado appears upon the Argentine political scene as a reincarnation of the gaucho; and in many ways the descamisado is to Peron's Argentina what the gaucho was to Rosas' regime.⁹

⁷Evita Perón, La razon de mi vida, pp. 46-47.

⁸Ibid., p. 42.

⁹Ibid., p. 14.

Peron and Evita had a deliberate challenge to remake Argentine society by putting down the mighty and exalting the descamisado.

The descamisado has ceased to be a victim of human exploitation and has been converted into a factor for making progress, for national, for collective well being. . . .The word descamisado has been transformed into a synonym for struggle for truth. It has created a state of national conscience. It has been implanted in the soul of the people, like a magic impulse, to carry them forward.¹⁰

Working to strengthen Peron's hold over labor, she reinforced his position when it began to decline. Touring the interior, going to out-of-the-way places which her husband was too busy to visit, she spoke before trade unions and propogandized Peron's fight for social justice. Her beauty, youth, and obvious proletarian origin all helped to win supporters.

Always appearing in expensive clothes, furs, and jewels, she adroitly used her dress as a political weapon. She was the career girl made good, the Argentine Cinderella. Telling the descamisados that she wore her elaborate wardrobe only in trust for them, she maintained that someday they would have similar luxuries if they would continue to follow Peron.

Her influence with the descamisados came to be greater than that of Peron. She readily identified with the masses, and they felt that she was more intimately bound to them. In addition to using trade unions, she influenced the workers

¹⁰Evita Peron, La razon de mi vida, pp. 13-14.

through the Eva Duarte de Perón Welfare Foundation, a gigantic charity monopoly established by presidential decree in June, 1947.¹¹ A virtual revolution in the Argentine approach to social assistance, its function was the distribution of medicine, food and money to the needy throughout the country.¹²

Income sources for the Social Welfare Foundation were numerous. Although publicized as a private foundation of Señora Perón, "voluntary" contributions were received from trade unions and businesses (those refusing to contribute found their facilities closed down by the government for such reasons as "infractions of sanitary laws"). Sizeable appropriations were also forthcoming from the Argentine Congress and from local and provincial governments.

There was little or no public accounting for the use of these funds. Evita reportedly said when asked about an audit of the funds, "Keeping books on charity is capitalist nonsense! I just use the money for the poor. I can't stop to count it."¹³ She also wrote, "The money for my works is sacred, because it belongs to those same descamisados who give it to me so that I may distribute it as equitably as

¹¹New York Times, July 19, 1948.

¹²Previously all welfare work was handled by the Church or by Catholic lay organizations. Evita's work is cited in a New York Times commentary. New York Times, June 12, 10:3, 1950.

¹³Reported in Cowles, Bloody Precedent, p. 188.

possible. That is why Peron says this is "a miracle unique in the world."¹⁴

As in all her other roles, Evita's main qualification for her position as head of all Welfare work in the country was her mandate from Peron. He had chosen her for this most important position.

Sometimes we wondered whether it would be convenient for me to take on the job of social assistance or should it be passed on to some Government department.

And it was Peron himself who told me: "The people who have been deeply punished by injustice have more confidence in people than in institutions. In this, more than in anything else, I fear the bureaucracy. In government it is necessary to have a lot of patience and to know how to wait for everything to move. But in the works of social assistance you cannot ask anybody to wait."

That logical and simple reasoning, characteristic of Peron, confirmed my fitness for the position which he, the descamisados, and I have chosen for myself.¹⁵

Evita worked hard to maintain the image that all good gifts came directly from Peron. German Arciniegas' study of the regime substantiated the fact that Peron maintained his spiritual leadership of the nation through Evita's influence.

Where the term "public welfare" was formerly employed, "Evita" is now used. When a worker receives an increase in salary, a student a book, an old person relief; or when a clinic, a hospital, a gymnasium, or a playground is opened it must be regarded as something done, not by the state

¹⁴Evita Peron, La razon de mi vida, p. 92.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 98.

or the law, but by Evita or Peron. When wheat is shipped abroad, it is not sent by Argentina, but by Peron. An earthquake occurs. . . Evita's airplanes immediately take off to bring Evita's aid to the stricken city, and the grateful city hangs out flags bearing the name of Evita. Help is not to be found in the law, but of Peron. There is only one legal norm: Peron. Little by little the name of Argentina is falling into disuse; everyone speaks of Peron, of Evita. The task of building a nation, with its legislatures, congresses, and executive branches, which involved a century and a half of arduous struggle has now culminated in a single name.¹⁶

Evita played on the engrained sense of Argentine dignity by instilling in the masses the desire to seek what was rightfully theirs as promised by Peron. She thus rejected the word charity by saying that in the "new Argentina" the poor did not receive charity. They received only that which was rightfully theirs by the standards of social justice.

Evita also supervised the Ministry of Health, inaugurating a series of successful campaigns against malaria, tuberculosis, and leprosy in the country. She also worked for equal rights for women. She became the nation's foremost feminist, organizing the Partido Feminista, the women's wing of the Peronista Party. In this way she created a potent force in support of Peron that had heretofore been untapped.

In November of 1951 Argentine women voted for the first time in a presidential election and provided strong support for the regime.¹⁷ The women's suffrage movement had been

¹⁶Arciniegas, The State of Latin America, p. 41.

¹⁷The bill granting suffrage to women was passed by the Argentine Congress in September of 1947. Reported in the New Times, September 10, 1947.

gathering momentum during the 1940's. Previously the Radical Party, the Anti-personalist Radicals, and the Socialists had given their official blessing to the idea. The chief opponent of reform in this area was the same as in all other facets of Argentine life--inertia. Evita took up the cause, however, and got things done.

As charismatic heir, Evita gathered together her own set of followers. Luis Gay, President of the C. G. T., Aurelio Hernández, and José Espejo were but three of her disciples who later fell from her favor and slipped into oblivion.¹⁸ Working for her own deification, she appropriated the title of "Eva Capitana." In Spanish, "Capitana" has a special meaning given only to saints, never to a living person. She thus cannonized herself and had a monument built to her glory and to keep alive her spirit after death. For as she said, "Long after I am physically gone, I will, through this monument, continue as a dominant force in Argentina."¹⁹

¹⁸Gay was removed from his job as President of the C. G. T. at the simple will of the Perons. Herling, a member of an United States AFL-CIO delegation to Argentina in 1947, reported Gay's sudden demise in this manner.

¹⁹Senor Gay met the delegation and presided at the reception the next evening. He did not keep an appointment the following morning and could not be reached thereafter, although the visiting labor leaders tried to find him during their three-week stay." New York Times, February 28, 1947.

Evita's displeasure touched even some of Peron's own deputies. Foreign Minister Juan Bramuglia was ousted due to her influence.

¹⁹Quoted in Bruce, Those Perplexing Argentines, p. 283.

Evita spoke for the poor and gave them a dignity which they had never known before. They came to love and revere her and to look upon her almost as their salvation. She gave the mystic sentiment of the masses a living incarnation.

She plunged into everything she did with unbounding ambition and drive. Always the center of attention, the bitterness and adoration she aroused made her career unprecedented and dazzling. Set on achieving her ambitions, she was unable to compromise. Bruce reported that she frequently told friends, "without fanaticism one cannot accomplish anything."²⁰

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that she always portrayed herself as collaborator of Perón, and worked to give him divine status in the country. She was but his eyes and ears. Her public appearances were staged for his deification. Her speeches always began with a lowering of the eyes, a softening of the voice, and a hushed reference to Perón.

Perón is the air we breathe; Perón is our sun; Perón is life. I want nothing but to be the heart of Perón. Because, though I do my best to understand him and learn his marvelous ways, whenever he makes a decision, I barely mumble. Whenever he speaks, I hardly utter a single word. Whenever he gives advice, I scarcely dare make a suggestion. When he sees, I hardly glimpse. But I see him with the eyes of my soul. . . And I have pledged myself to collect the hopes of the Argentine people and empty them in the marvelous heart of Perón so that he may turn them into realities.

²⁰Bruce, Those Perplexing Argentines, p. 281.

The humble people, my general, have come here to prove, as they have always done, that the miracle that happened two thousand years ago is occurring again. The rich, the learned, the men in power never understood Christ. It was the humble and the poor who understood, because their souls, unlike the souls of the rich, are not sealed up with avarice and selfishness.²¹

Desire for Complete Acceptance

During the first years of his administration, Perón was the most popular president since Irigoyen. Under such favorable circumstances, he did not need to resort to stringent authoritarian controls. Yet he chose to do so in order to satiate his desire to possess the complete adulation of the nation. Pursuing his goal of organizing a social and economic revolution that would convert Argentina into a modern, self-sufficient state, he set out to remove all opposition to his regime and to install himself as the accepted and desired leader. His method was to retain the facade of free government while rejecting the spirit, principles, and substance. That is, congresses, courts, and the press remained, while institutional and verbal opposition to his regime were stifled.

Attacks on the Opposition

The courts.--The National Supreme Court of Justice, whose members held life tenure and exercised judicial review,

²¹Evita Perón, La razon de mi vida, p. 50.

had always been hostile to Peron's revolution. Even before his inauguration, Peron accused the Court of political bias against him.²² Stating that the spirit of justice was more important than the law and that a Supreme Court which did not acknowledge this truth was unworthy to exercise judicial power, Peron personally led the attack on the Court soon after his inauguration as President. The Peronista majority in Congress followed Peron's lead and in 1947, voted the impeachment and conviction of four of the five Court Justices. Grounds for this action were fifteen farcial counts, the most ludicrous being the fact that the Court's membership had upheld a military de facto dictatorship (the G. Q. U. regime) and had thus set itself above the National Constitution.²³ The Court was also accused in the Peronist press of being reactionary and ultranationalistic, ironic crimes when considering the nationalistic euphoria of the Peron regime. Many judges of the lower courts were also purged for similarly ludicrous reasons and reappointments made from loyal Peronist ranks. With judicial opposition out of the way, Peron then began a campaign against the Argentine university system.

The universities.--Universities had long been a source of opposition to the leader. They were administered in the

²²New York Times, April 12, 1945.

²³New York Times, May 1, 1947.

Latin tradition by a mixed council of students and professors. The national government retained the right of intervention, as well as the right to remove any university authorities. These latter provisions were made to order for Perón's purposes--to control the thinking of Argentine university students.

Speaking out against many discrepancies in the educational system, Perón intervened in the six national universities. Henceforth, all university rectors would be appointed by the President of the Republic, and they in turn would appoint all teaching faculty. By these methods some 70 per cent of all faculty members in the country were dismissed. Hundreds of eminent scholars resigned and fled the country. Students failing to cooperate with the new administrations failed to pass their examinations at Argentine schools and were prevented from studying in other countries.²⁴

In the end, virtually the entire public education system was converted into a propaganda machine for the indoctrination of Argentine youth in Peronist ideology. The political slant of the new teaching faculties is exemplified in the words of the Peronist rector of the University of Cordoba.

²⁴New York Times, January 24, 1947. An interesting example of the adherence of university professors under the Peronist thumb is a series of questionnaires completed by the post-1949 faculty of the University of Buenos Aires and published under the title, El movimiento justicialista y la facultad de derecho y ciencias sociales, Buenos Aires, 1952. The individual answers recorded were unanimously chants of praise to justicialismo and to university policies.

I know that, within this great movement, there are Peronists in disguise who are the enemies of Peronism. We have them inside the universities. Some are Peronists in disguise, others are Peronists for profit. They do not partake of the mystic feeling of the Revolution; they work in shades of darkness, undermining consciences, broadcasting arbitrary versions. Neither patriots nor Argentines they are. Moreover, they are also ungrateful.²⁵

Freedom of Expression.--All radio stations also came under government control. Perón progressively increased his use of radio facilities to proclaim his programs and policies to the nation. As President, he made an average of one major speech per day.

In 1947 the Desacato Law (Disrespect) was enacted providing that criticism or attack upon the President or others in public office was treason. This ensured Peronista control over much overt public behavior. An electoral law passed in 1949 prevented opposition parties from forming a coalition.²⁶ Every party was forced to nominate a candidate--and then to campaign openly for him or be outlawed by the government. Thus Perón acted to ossify his opposition and bring their campaigns into the open.

²⁵Cited in Yadarola, Yadarola Judges Peron, p. 37.

²⁶This law carried a penalty of imprisonment for whatever act Peron decided was treason against the country. Treason included a spectrum from attempted assassinations to discussions of office holders' capabilities for a job. If Deputies in the National or provincial chambers were critical of Presidential acts, they were expelled from their respective legislatures. Main provisions of this law recorded in the New York Times, October 15, 1949. The passage of the 1949 law is reported in the New York Times, October 2, 1949.

Freedom of the press was also gradually destroyed. Senora Perón herself bought three Buenos Aires dailies and one of them--Democracia became the mouthpiece of the Casa Rosada. A committee set up by Congress investigated many anti-Perón newspapers, and shut down many of them, such as the Socialist organ Vanguardia, for what the committee called "infractions of the sanitary laws." Other presses were permitted to publish but suffered constant regulation and intimidation from the government and Peronista mobs.

Perón's bitterest campaign was launched against the internationally distinguished paper, La Prensa. This publication was plagued by government regulation and withholding of newsprint. Authorities systematically tightened and restricted La Prensa's supply until the accompanying reduction in the paper's advertising space made continued publication difficult.²⁷ The climax to the affair came in 1951 when the news vendor's union, affiliated with the C. G. T., refused to distribute the paper unless the owners agreed to close all branch offices, to give up their mail subscription lists, and to contribute 20 per cent of their advertising revenue to the union's special assistance fund. La Prensa owners closed the plant rather than comply. Perón then completed what he had begun. The Argentine Congress voted the

²⁷As no newsprint was manufactured in the country, all imported material was carefully and effectively dispensed by the government. Rationing this material was an effective weapon against many liberal newspapers.

expropriation of La Prensa, and it was turned over to the C. G. T., later reappearing on Buenos Aires streets as the mouthpiece of that union.²⁸

The Peronista Party

Perón did not initially have complete control over all the political groups for he had been elected and supported by a coalition of forces, any one of which could desert him at any time. Thus, a hegemonic consolidation became necessary. Perón felt that these diverse factions should be dissolved and then integrated into one great force--the Peronista Party.

Previously, Perón had insisted upon a national movement which would be above political strife and had joined with the G. O. U. in condemning parties. His decision to maintain a pretense of constitutional democracy, complete with elections and opposition parties, however, forced him to reverse his original position and to create a party of his own. This organ was to have greater centralization and tighter discipline while retaining the personal aspect. Membership was to be the privilege of a small minority whose number was kept secret.²⁹

²⁸The owner's viewpoint of the struggle is presented in The Editors of La Prensa, Defense of Freedom, (London, 1952), The New York Times, March 20, 1947 carries a relatively unbiased account of the affair.

²⁹The Laborista Party had been created in 1946 to elect Peron. This party soon gave way to the Peronista Party. Blanksten estimated the new party's membership to be about 2 per cent of the total population of the country. George I. Blanksten, Peron's Argentina, (New York, 1962), pp. 335-342.

It is to create a really intelligent idealistic party that we wish to organize our political forces, a party with profoundly human sentiments without which masses become the helpless instruments of men who may be enlightened, or who may be wretched and self-seeking.³⁰

The new party was founded at a mass meeting of delegates in Buenos Aires in 1949. The delegates dutifully adopted the title Partido Peronista. Perón attempted to enhance his charismatic authority by lifting Peronismo from the status of a political doctrine to an article of faith for all Argentines--a nationalist movement with a personalist aspect--all based on his personal authority.

We interpret the peronista movement differently from previous Argentine revolutions, which changed men but continued with the same system. We believe that the Argentine problem is not a political problem. It is an economic and social problem which the nation is demanding to be solved after almost a century.³¹

The Constitution of 1949

To insure his continuance in office, as re-election was prohibited under the Constitution of 1853, Perón declared that the old constitution was out of date. With his guidance, legislation was drafted to provide for a Constitutional Convention and was quickly pushed through Congress. The

³⁰Juan Peron, Peron Expounds His Doctrine, p. 20.

³¹Juan D. Perón, Discurso del presidente de la nacion argentina, General Juan D. Perón pronunciado durante la visita de los delegados del Congreso General Constuyente del Partido Peronista, (Buenos Aires, 1947).

resultant document, the Constitution of 1949, retained much of the form and language of the 1853 work, but its basic spirit was much different.

Peron amended the earlier Constitution to establish direct popular elections of President and Vice President; and permit consecutive re-election of these officials. It provided that public services become properties of the state, outlawed national and international organizations opposed to democracy and freedom, augmented the power of government to intervene in civil disorders and increased the number of government ministries from eight to twenty. The terms of office of senators and deputies were lengthened, and a new quotient for proportional representation in the Chamber of Deputies was established.³² The "state of siege" provision of the old Constitution was expanded to include the "disturbance of public order threatening to disrupt the normal course of life or the essential activities of the population."³³ The interventor system was retained and the electoral college abolished.

Throughout the document various Peronista concepts were found regarding social welfare and economic nationalism. Thus, by means of the new Constitution Peron acquired even

³²Constitution of the Argentine Nation, 1949, Articles 78 and 83. Text of this document appears in Luis Piazza, Constitution of the Argentine Nation, reprinted from the Inter American Judicial Yearbook, 1949, (Washington D. C., 1949).

³³Ibid., Article 34.

greater powers to prevent the growth of an effective opposition, and he secured the legal right to prolong his rule indefinitely. Private property was kept as assets "in trust" for the state, i. e. government ownership of all public services.³⁴

It is important to note once again that Peron invariably acted within the law and in accordance with the will of the people. The Constitution of 1949 was passed by a legal Assembly whose members were chosen by popular vote, and their decisions and actions were valid. Subsequent laws to suppress the opposition and carry out the social and economic revolution were approved by Congresses chosen by the people in elections acknowledged by opposition leaders to be among the fairest in Argentine history. Peron's suppression of the opposition was in line with Argentine political tradition, and his concept of Presidential institutionalized power was little different from that of past Argentine presidents. By including labor in the processes of government and by extending suffrage to clergy and to women, Peron could perhaps be considered in this area to be even more liberal or "democratic" than many of his predecessors.

Again too, Peron's actions must be considered in the context of the Argentine milieu. Many Argentines, devoted to legalism, expected Peron to maintain all forms

³⁴Argentine Constitution, 1949, Articles 37 and 38.

of democratic republicanism. Perón complied by never making any move to abolish opposition seats in Congress completely. To have done so would not have been in keeping with the Argentine character--that character which accepted and nourished the charismatic authority of their leader.

Programs and Policies

Perón's authority over the people was primarily due to his charismatic qualities and this required that he fulfill the promises he had made to them. Toward this end he plunged into planned programs of action and progress. The "Revolution" was strongly nationalistic in character, and thus opposed foreign ownership of public services, economic dependence on foreign markets and imports, and the oligarchy. In this connection, two major projects became basic to the life of the regime: the elimination of foreign interests, and the expansion of local industry.

The First Five Year Plan

To carry out his vision of industrialization and managed economics, Perón had devised an elaborate economic five year plan. Beginning in 1947, it included all the reforms which Perón hoped to accomplish during his term of office. Compensated nationalization of the foreign-owned railroads, river steamship lines, and public utilities was designed to promote Argentina's economic independence without alienating its world trading partners. According to the

plan, Argentine industry would be stimulated and decentralized and Argentine wealth would be re-invested internally to enhance the nation's power and prestige. Government participation would be by direct investment through the formation of state-owned or mixed corporations and by extension of preferential customs treatment to companies establishing new industries.³⁵

Peron took charge of all financial resources of the nation when he nationalized the Central Bank in 1946. The insurance business was made a state monopoly. Labor was controlled through the new Ministry of Labor and strict import licenses issued by the government controlled foreign trade. Following more Plan promises, Peron paid off the Argentine foreign debt. (much of which was held by Britain in blocked sterling) and purchased the North American-owned telephone system and many other foreign enterprises. Finally the British-owned railway system was purchased.³⁶

In 1946 at the inception of the Plan, Argentina was a creditor nation. Its large foreign exchange surplus, accumulated during the war, enabled the country to buy materials necessary for accomplishing the preliminaries of the Plan. These reserves, however, melted away more quickly

³⁵Provisions of the Five Year Plan are recorded in the New York Times, October 22, 1946.

³⁶In 1947-1948 the Argentine Declaration of Economic Independence listed these achievements. They were later published for foreign consumption in a pamphlet, The Economic Reform, (Buenos Aires, 1948).

than had been anticipated as dollar loans were repaid for prestige reasons and arms and industrial equipment were purchased at high prices.³⁷

Various institutions were created to supervise the development of the national economy. Perhaps the most important was the Instituto Argentino de Promoción del Intercambio (IAPI), created by executive decree in 1946. It was given the right to buy virtually the whole of Argentina's agricultural and pastoral production and to sell it wherever the best price could be found. Low prices were paid to farmers while high returns were received on the world market. (Argentina was charging starving war-ravaged Europe as much as \$5.00 (United States dollars) per bushel of wheat during these years.)³⁸ Agricultural profits were poured into the industrialization process. Thus while building up the Argentine reserve and favorably affecting the balance of payments, this method of pushed industrialization had an adverse affect on internal production of agricultural goods.

Agricultural sectors were saddled with the burden of supporting the ambitious industrialization program to make the nation more self-sufficient and provide employment for

³⁷The British railroads, already run-down, were bought at an inflated price by the Argentine government. No attempt was made to finance this purchase on credit and thus save some money for the renovation purposes. Further, railroad payrolls were soon overloaded with loyal Peronists.

³⁸United Nations, Economic Survey of Latin America, p. 112.

Perón's mass following. Inequality of prices between farm and factory were drawing labor from the countryside to the cities. As a consequence, acreage planted in grains and cereals steadily decreased under Perón. Droughts hit Argentine crops in 1951-52, and Argentines, to their horror, experienced meatless days and actually had to import wheat and potatoes. The gap between agricultural and industrial prices became greater than during the pre-war years. As industrial development was made largely in the already well-developed consumer goods field, enormous demand for capital goods remained, thus making the country more dependent upon foreign purchases and foreign credits than ever before.³⁹

It is ironic that Perón made economics the base of his interpretation of history and human nature and of top priority in his policies. Actually he was quite incompetent in the field. He relied on the mind and planning of two of his deputies for many economic policies--Miguel Miranda and José Figuerola.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Perón's goal of making Argentina a self-sufficient independent continental leader and world power appealed to his countrymen and silenced

³⁹United Nations, Economic Survey of Latin America, p. 119.

⁴⁰Figuerola was chosen by Perón to run the Five Year Plan and Miranda headed the National Economic Council. Both sought to improve the worker's living conditions and industrial progress was made under their leadership, but often at agriculture's expense. Figuerola had been named in the United States Blue Book as a collaborator of Spanish dictator Primo de Rivera and as an expert on government controlled labor unions. Sketches on their careers are seen in Frank Kluckhorn's report to the New York Times, December 4, 1946.

many dissenters. These moves, coming just before the 1948 congressional elections proved to be a political bonanza, for although Peron's economic policies caused suffering, the people still worshipped him.

Labor and the Masses

Peron was always more successfully in his charismatic role as leader of the masses than as institutionalized President of the Republic. He frequently promised labor that a new phase of the revolution would emerge in which the power of the masses would replace the power of the army. Then this time arrived, he said, the officers would return to their barracks. Such assurances by the leader were appealing because the populace had always been told that the revolution was designed to improve the lot of the common man, to end the exploitation of man by man.

Toward this end, Peron initiated an extensive program of state-executed public works. Though quite useful for propaganda purposes, many of the projects were abandoned before they were completed. Workers also continued to enjoy increases in wages between 1945 and 1949. Discontent began to manifest itself during these years among labor however, and Consejo de Postguerra figures indicate that not only the workers continued to be backed by the government but also that some discontent and unrest was present (manifested by

the increase in the number of strikes throughout the nation) in spite of rising nominal wages.⁴¹

To insure the continued loyalty of many labor leaders, prominent posts were still offered them in the C. G. T., in the Party, and in the government bureaucracy. This development--the increase in the number of employees and workers directly dependent upon the state for their livelihood--was one of the most obvious results of the revolution. As Socialist Americo Ghioldi observed, the number relying upon state payrolls jumped from 150,000 in 1943 to 600,000 in 1947-1948.⁴²

To dwell on material contributions misses the basic point, however, Peronismo was accepted because it aroused the masses and boosted their ego. No matter how artificial their standard of living, peronismo gave them dignity and a sense of participation in national affairs. As Gino Germani observed,

The dictator made demagogy, it is true. But the effective part of that demagogy lay not in the material benefits, but in having given the people the experience (real or fictitious) of having won certain rights which they now exercised. Workers who supported the dictatorship, far from feeling deprived of liberty, were convinced they had won it. Of course, here with the word liberty we are referring to two different things: the liberty they had lost was one they had never really possessed, political liberty to choose

⁴¹Consejo de Postguerra, figures cited in Schuck, Report on Conditions in the Argentine, p. 166.

⁴²cited in Arciniegas, The State of Latin America, p. 43.

at the level of high policy, of distant and abstract politics. The liberty they believed they had gained was concrete, immediate liberty, to affirm rights against foreman and owner, to win decisions in the labor courts, to feel masters of themselves. All this was felt by the worker as an affirmation of personal dignity.⁴³

Military Policies

The Argentine military had formed an institutionalized pressure group which both precluded and succeeded the leadership of Perón. Their support was necessary to keep him in power. As the descamisados were both a threat and an irritation to the military, Perón constantly had to ply and to reinforce the tremendous military egos.⁴⁴ From the beginning he made it clear that as long as the military supported him, he would take care of them and share the conduct of public affairs.

Professional advancement was made dependent upon loyalty to Perón. Officers' pay was raised to unprecedented heights, and by 1949 it was higher than in any other Latin American country. Special privileges for the favored included opportunities for graft in connection with government contracts and licenses to import automobiles. Perón encouraged

⁴³Germani, Política y sociedad en una época de transición (Buenos Aires, 1962), p. 244.

⁴⁴Formation at political clubs and cliques such as the G. O. U. was long the accepted practice in the Argentine military. The G. O. U. itself crumbled soon after Perón's assumption of leadership. Yet other officers did not cease to form additional cliques for and against Perón.

professionalism advising young officers to confine themselves to military matters and to stay out of politics.⁴⁵

In an attempt to develop public interest in the Army, Perón often wore his general's uniform, appeared at parades and military ceremonies, and spoke in favor of Army ideals. He juggled the military against other factions in the country. In a speech to the armed forces academy in 1947 he said,

The Armed Forces are the synthesis of the people. They do not belong to certain parties or sections, nor can they be used as an instrument at the service of personal ambition. They belong to the mother country, to our common home and they must be ready to die for it.⁴⁶

In another statement he appealed to them to respect authority. It was obvious, however, what he thought the source of his authority was.

Soldier by vocation and by profession, I am proud of placing my trust in juridicial methods and institutions, without which civilized life would be impossible. Deep in my heart, as do my comrades in arms, whom I believe I interpret correctly, I am convinced that the Argentine army, more than any other, has as its sole mission to uphold law and justice, not only in the national but also in the international order.⁴⁷

With Perón popularly in power the military basked in his reflected glory. He, Colonels Domingo Mercante and

⁴⁵This idea was included in the Five Year Plan, cited in New York Times, October 22, 1946.

⁴⁶Juan Peron, Peron Speaks. Speech to graduation ceremony of Armed Forces of the Republic, December 20, 1947, p. 20.

⁴⁷Ibid., Speech to Academy of Letters, October 12, 1947, p. 36.

Filomeno Velazco (his deputies) were well liked, and, as a result, the whole army experienced public approval for the first time.⁴⁸ Many Argentines liked the polished show of strength put on by their armed forces. Nevertheless, as Bruce reported, in order to ensure that his loyal followers were in the Campo de Mayo and other strategic bases, Peron constantly moved men and officers to avoid the formation of lingering subversive cliques. Divisions of officers in whom Peron had confidence were supplied with weapons and arms, while others of questionable loyalty got one or two bullets per rifle and no heavy arms.⁴⁹ To gain more control over young officers, he took away the power of the military to appoint cadets and placed it in the hands of the Peronist Party. He moved party procedures into the barracks to convert enlisted personnel into loyal supporters.

Although these efforts were successful in prolonging peace in the power structure of the regime, they caused friction and resentment in the officer corps. Resistance had always been strongest in the Navy, as its officer corps generally came from the rural oligarchy and wealthier urban families. They resented a regime bent on upsetting the nation's basic institutions.

⁴⁸Traditionally the military has been suspected by the general populace in the country of continually plotting to assume power by illegal means.

⁴⁹Bruce, Those Perplexing Argentines, p. 311.

As the power position of the Army and Air Force was increasingly jeopardized by the rising strength of labor and the Peronista Party, the Army became restless. When Evita Peron, noted for meddling in army affairs and for her pro-labor attitude, became the candidate for the vice-presidency of the nation in 1951, dissatisfaction came to a head. Military factions attempted a coup. Peron and Evita's combined charismatic authority called forth thousands of indignant workers into the streets of Buenos Aires and they built barricades to halt the rebelling military factions. With this mandate of authority, Peron seized the military, and his Peronist Congress empowered him to promote, demote, and retire officers at will. A death penalty was declared for his enemies.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Peron could still depend on the loyalty of a large segment of the armed forces. Many non-commissioned officers and enlisted men refused to obey their officer's orders to revolt. Hence, Peron's social revolution was paying off in mass support. In November, 1951, he was re-elected to the presidency with some four million votes against the Radical two million.⁵¹ Thus, in 1952 Peron retained his power with the loyalty, or at least the acquiescence, of most of the nation at his command.

Confident from his winning majority, Peron placed the entire high command of the Army on the retired list and

⁵⁰New York Times, November 12, 1951.

⁵¹New York Times, November 15, 1951.

appointed nine new generals. Despite this extensive purge, Perón never fully regained the wholehearted support of army leadership. Hundreds of purged officers waited for revenge. They sought a time when Perón would be at his weakest point.

Sensing the increased power of labor, however, in 1952 Perón again resorted to his juggling act. To offset his dependence upon labor, he increased his adulation and cooperation with the military. He gave unusual attention to naval demands. Argentina purchased two light cruisers from the United States and in 1953 engaged Japan to build some destroyers and frigates. Perón was also willing to sign a Mutual Defense Assistance Pact with the United States to keep the armed forces on a par with those of Brazil (Argentina's chief rival for continental supremacy).⁵² In addition, the numerical strength of the Army began to rise after 1951.⁵³

Justicialismo: The Third Position

Perón was not content with appealing only to existing or established influences. He aimed at regrouping the nation's economic forces or energies and placing them definitely and

⁵²United States Department of State, Department of State Bulletin XXIV (January 15, 1951), p. 104.

⁵³In the four years between 1945-1949, to increase descamisado strength, the Army was reduced by one third to 70,000. The military budget was cut 25 per cent. Quoted in Alexander, The Peron Era., p. 118.

irrevocably in another position, which he named the "Third Position." The title caught on immediately. Realizing another political bonanza, Peronists expanded its implications into as much of a full-blown national doctrine as could be extracted.

Justicialismo was a doctrine of beliefs picturing the nation as world umpire, judging and censuring the power nations. The theory was a compromise between totalitarianism and unfettered free enterprise as well as abstention from any foreign commitment depriving Argentina of freedom of action. Peron noted that justicialismo's essence was pragmatic, meeting each problem on its own terms rather than with some pre-determined set of solutions.

It would appear that a third concept might constitute an acceptable solution, by which we would not arrive at state absolutism, nor would we return to the absolute individualism of the previous regime. It would be a concordant and balanced combination of forces that represent the modern state, designed to avoid strife and the annihilation of one of those forces, endeavoring to conciliate them, to unite them, to put them in parallel motion to be able to form a state in which, harmoniously, the state, the forces of capital, and the forces of labor, combined intelligently, might devote themselves to building up a common destiny with benefit for the three forces and without injury to any one of them.⁵⁴

The entire idea proved useful as a standard vindication of Peron's habit of playing off or juggling one section of

⁵⁴Juan Peron, Speech to the representatives of commerce and industry, November 27, 1946, translated and reprinted in Leonard Richmond, Argentina's Third Position, (Buenos Aires, 1949), p. 102.

the community against another. It connoted primarily social justice at home, though international justice, too, was understood. Through justicialism and The Declaration of Economic Independence, Perón made a host of Argentines believe that they were embarked with him in a great enterprise which was Argentine in conception and which had noble goals, chief among them being social justice and national grandeur. Alejandro Magnet observed, however, that justicialism never comprised a political ideology, for political ideology comprises a totality of beliefs--and Peronismo's totality was the person of Juan Perón, himself.

. . .the regime was never able to rise above the doctrinal primitivism of of its early days and in its later years it covered its ideological nakedness with increasingly pretentious and rhetorical vestments and that under this covering there was never anything substantial, except for the personality of Perón.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Magnet, Nuestros vecinos justicialistas, p. 112.

CHAPTER VI

LOSS OF CHARISMATIC QUALITIES

Death of Evita

On July 26, 1952, Evita Perón died of cancer. She was about thirty-three years old. Her death was a turning point in the charismatic leadership career of Juan Perón. From that time forward Perón had to struggle to survive. He had lost the second arm of his charisma. Hereafter, he was held responsible for all the failures and programs of his regime as his charisma diminished. After Evita's death, slogans and phrases had less affect on the poor.

There had been quite a bit of preparation before her death. In 1951, her book, La razon de mi vida, had been published all over the world. Not an autobiography, the work had the manifest purpose of making certain that on her death Perón would inherit the whole legacy of the descamisados' devotion to her. Theoretically, this would not be too difficult as he had always been pictured by Evita as "Leader" and foremost in the nation. To insure mass circulation of this preconditioning work, the book was made a required text in all schools and universities.

On her death, Perón promptly assumed the most important of her former roles--succeeding her as head of both the Social Aid Foundation and the Partido Feminina. Perón even

attended the weekly Wednesday afternoon labor meetings at the Ministry of Labor where she had given personal interviews and handouts to her descamisados. To completely reassume the charismatic mantle, soon Perón eliminated her chief disciples.¹

Still, Evita remained loved and revered in the country. For a week, all public activities ceased in her honor. She was proclaimed a saint by the descamisados--"Saint Evita of America." Even her remains were to be kept perpetually on view in a \$30,000 (U. S. dollar) coffin covered with a glass lid one inch thick and encased in a monument built to her glory.

Perón successfully regained part of the charismatic leadership mantle left by Evita, and no opposing force arose to defy the two pillars of his regime--the military and the masses. More and more, however, Perón had to struggle to survive. Problems increasingly beset his regime, problems with which he was unable to cope. Unable to meet some of the requirements and standards set upon him by his charisma, he appeared more and more to possess the frailties of the human institutions.

¹José Espejo was deposed by Perón's favorite method. Suddenly Espejo's appearance at a labor meeting became the signal for catcalls and boos. This "proved" that he had lost the workers' confidence. In 1953 two more of Evita's disciples, Juan Duarte, Evita's brother, and Labor Minister Freire, suddenly resigned their posts.

Economic Factors

The economic disorientation of the country was apparent in 1948 and 1949. Internal droughts, and the vagaries of international trade movements hindered national progress. The failure of the tremendous industrialization process also contributed to Peron's loss of charismatic authority. Here was a case of both the leader and society desiring to achieve power and authority without adjusting to the consequences of the psychological and social transformation necessary to build a modern industrial society.

The end of the First Five Year Plan came in 1952. At that time there were shortages of electric power, raw materials, and parts and replacements for worn out machinery in the country. Inflation, speculation, and rising prices were the rule. The newly nationalized railroads had been allowed to deteriorate further, and automobiles were fewer and more costly than during pre-war years. Meat production had dropped, and the government decreed meatless days. In meat-rich Argentina this action brought home to everyone the depth of the crisis. No steel industry had been established as promised by the regime, nor was there any attempt to implement agrarian reform in land redistribution. Yacimientos Petroléos Fiscales² production fell. Why Peron failed to make a major effort in this case is hard to

²Yacimientos Petroléos Fiscales was the state-owned petroleum producing company. Created in 1936, it had a monopoly of the Argentine oil industry.

understand, especially since this program had become a leading symbol of national economic independence to which his regime was intimately tied. Perhaps the explanation lies in his faulty grasp of economics or perhaps in the corruption and technical inefficiency that characterized his whole regime.

Perón was in a quandary. His chief problem was how to put the economy back on a sound footing and to promote further development. Convinced that the descamisados would remain loyal to him, Perón switched from social justice to sound business policies. He reduced his concessions to the C. G. T. and sought to widen the basis of his regime by adopting a more orthodox program which would gain the approval of the managerial classes and thereby likely attract the desperately needed foreign investment capital.

The policy of almost unreservedly supporting the worker's demands against their employers was abandoned. Prices and wages were frozen--the latter for a two-year period. To counterbalance the power of the manual workers of the C. G. T., a separate federation was created for white collar workers, and a series of employers' associations were begun. All were grouped together under the title of the Confederación General Económica (General Economic Confederation).³

³Reported in the New York Times, April 15, 1954.

Peron continued to express concern for the welfare of the descamisados and especially for the sumergidos, the poorest of the poor, but his speeches on economic affairs became noticeably more sober and orthodox. He lifted for a time his campaign against the oligarchy and foreign investors. An example may be found in a speech made to the Peronista Party on September 15, 1955.

My own situation has undergone a complete change by virtue of which I must remove all the restraints and limitation which, as applying to the activities of our adversaries, had to be imposed to enable us to attain our objectives. They must now be left to act within the law, enjoying all the guarantees, rights, and freedom which are their due. That is the justice of the matter and that is what we are going to do.⁴

The year 1953 saw a stoppage of the handouts to the descamisados and an actual beginning of a rapprochement with the United States. Peron signed a contract with Standard Oil of California to increase oil production in the country and thus to solve Argentina's balance of trade deficit. He also obtained a \$125,000,000 (United States dollar) loan from the United States' Export-Import Bank for the construction of a steel mill.⁵ For a man who had often remarked that he did not want foreign loans for Argentina, this was a veritable about-face.⁶ It strained his regime's concept of economic

⁴Review of the River Plate, July 17, 1955, pp. 16-17.

⁵Virginia Lee Warren report to the New York Times, May 21, 1955.

⁶Juan Peron in the New York Times, December 13, 1953.

nationalism and raised a cry from nationalist factions in the country that Perón was betraying their cause. The long-range benefits to be gained from these contracts meant nothing to a host of Argentines who reacted only to the betrayal of their principles.

Lacking the irrational rantings of Evita to keep his charismatic image before the masses, Perón used justicialismo as ideological justification for this new direction. Lost, however, was much of the mysticism of the absolutist cult and the imposed justicialist doctrine began to drone to the masses.

A second Five Year Plan was inaugurated in 1952. Nevertheless, the rate of industrial growth in Argentina slowed during 1952-1955, leaving the country far behind Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico in this category. Argentina lost her cherished position of continental economic leader to Brazil.⁷

In the face of all these problems, Perón retained some of his magic. It is significant that in 1954, Perón's hand-picked replacement for Vice President, Admiral Teissaire, won the election with a two-thirds majority of the vote. (This was due to Vice President Hortensio Quijano's death.) The electorate seemed to understand that many of the adverse economic developments were not Perón's fault. Droughts, international movements, and the peak boom-bust periods of

⁷Aldo Ferrer, The Argentine Economy, translated by Marjory M. Urquidir, (Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 203-205.

the post war years all contributed to economic fluctuations. It was evident, however, that Peron was gradually losing support of the workers. It is true that most of the opposition to his rule came from the middle and upper classes, but it is equally true that the workers did not join it and were no longer turning out en masse for demonstrations of loyalty to the leader. Feeling the threat to his rule, Peron tightened control over the country and became more brutal toward opposition.⁸

Loss of Church Support

Rifts began to appear about 1950 between the Peron regime and the Church. Church displeasure was concentrated on Peronista measures such as demands by the descamisados for Evita's canonization, the movement to Peronize the Church and Christianity in Argentina, and the attempt to establish Peronist religious and educational control over every Argentine from cradle to grave. Perón sought to displace the Church as spiritual leader of Argentina, a task for which the groundwork had already been laid. Evita, it will be recalled, had used the Social Aid Foundation to usurp a field which the Church had dominated since the colonial period. All of these things disturbed the power

⁸Following the bombing of a Peronist rally, Peronist mobs attacked and looted Radical and Socialist Party headquarters as well as the stately Jockey Club (frequented by the oligarchy). New York Times, April 16, 1953.

structure of the Church, powerfully influenced by the oligarchy, which detested Perón personally and politically.

Attempts had been made on both sides to influence the nation's youth. Perón, on Evita's death, had turned over his summer home in the Buenos Aires suburbs to the high school girls of the Union of Secondary Students and had begun spending time in their company. A riot of salacious stories rocked Argentina. The Church did not hesitate to register its disapproval. A concerted effort was made to disassociate the Church from any connection with the regime.

Perón, now more sensitive than ever before to any movement that threatened to erode his popular support, launched an attack on the Church. (This could also have been done to divert attention from the deteriorating economic situation.) Appealing to the right of free thought and liberalism, Peronist congresses enacted legislation, giving illegitimate children the same rights as those born in wedlock, ending Catholic instruction in public schools, legalizing divorce and prostitution, and finally initiating a movement to separate Church and State.⁹

Perón was also upset by clerics who formed a Christian Democratic Party along popular quasi-socialist lines which might make inroads into his descamisado following. He was disturbed by the increase in the influence of Acción Católica.

⁹Herbert L. Matthews, "Peron's War With The Church," The Reporter, XII (June 16, 1955), pp. 19-22.

a lay group which Perón felt was infiltrating popular movements, especially labor organizations, for the purpose of subverting the loyalty of members and turning them away from him. Perón publicly branded this group fascist.¹⁰ Demonstrations and clashes followed between Catholics and descamisado thugs. The unrest culminated in a Peronist mob attack on the archiepiscopal palace in Buenos Aires and Perón's deportation of two Catholic prelates from the country. For these actions, he and other members of his regime were excommunicated in 1955.¹¹

Perón was treading on dangerous ground. He was, in fact, destroying one of his chief supports. Traditionally Argentines were anti-clerical but not anti-religious. In these actions, Perón was violating Argentine tradition in a manner which rallied opposition forces against him and gave them a rallying cry stripped of sordid motive. His attacks on the Church, as John J. Kennedy noted, put the Catholic status in jeopardy--in a country where deep public sentiment found satisfaction in maintaining the religious status quo.¹²

Perón's action, backed by justicialismo, was attacked on all sides. Even the Radical party in the person of Deputy Arturo Frondizi attacked him on the radio and in the press.

¹⁰New York Times, November 11, 1954.

¹¹Reported in New York Times, October 22, 1955.

¹²John J. Kennedy, Catholicism, Nationalism, and Democracy in Argentina, pp. 213-214. Some commentators think that Peron was overthrown primarily by Church opposition. This is simplistic and therefore incorrect.

Perón sought to divide his opposition by policies of moderation as in the past--but to no avail. His charismatic image was weakened, and there was no longer an Evita to help him maintain his authority. He alone was the institutionalized head of the Argentine nation, held responsible for its successes and perhaps more responsible for its failures. As Daniel Friedenber^g put it,

For dominated by lust of power and not sound economic theory, demagoguery and not ideas, the dictator was moved on a flood of events rather than dominating them. . .he was incapable of transforming the revolt he initiated into a true social revolution.¹³

Fall of Perón

From mid-August to mid-September of 1955, Perón resumed the offensive and sought to revive the features of his regime's inception. Thus, the governing council of the Peronists Party announced on August 17 that it had decided to "renew in full force the brilliant political movement of 1946 in which the people, disgusted by fraud, oppression, and misery, determined to have a government of their own and to that end, elected Peron."¹⁴

The Leader had tried to placate the military and other opposition by moderation but soon saw by his increasingly weak position that moderation did not fulfill the irrational demands of charismatic authority. Hence, he changed his

¹³Fridenberg, "Peron, Peron, Peron," p. 14.

¹⁴Cited in Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval, p. 17.

policies abruptly and clamped down on his opponents as he had done in earlier years trying once again to rule as the driving force of all Argentines and to place all blame for his failures on others. On August 18, Oscar Albrieu, Minister of the Interior spoke for the President,

The time has come for the government to warn that tolerance has reached its limits and that the government's mission is to maintain order. . . . Two or three hundred families cannot be permitted to keep in a state of turmoil nineteen million Argentines whose desire is to live in peace and security.¹⁵

On August 31, 1955, Peron abruptly tendered his resignation to the Peronista parties, saying that he wished to be the leader of the whole nation rather than of just a part although that part comprised the overwhelming majority of the people. He also rejected the Radical charge that he had taken liberties with the Constitution only to carry out his revolution.¹⁶

. . . I have always been a man with an open mind, and I believe that, even though I am in office through the will of the overwhelming majority of the Argentine people, the dignity of the post and my manly honor require me to offer my resignation. . . .

I do not have the character to be a dictator, so if such an eventuality should occur, another, or others will have to replace me. . . . The changing of one man, regardless of his importance, should not give rise to the disruption of the lives of millions of men. Because of this, I humbly ask the millions of Argentines who have trusted me

¹⁵Cited in Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval, p. 17.

¹⁶Review of the River Plate, September 9, 1955, p. 21.

to free me from all commitments and accept my departure from the Government, so that I can take my place as a simple Peronista in our Movement.¹⁷

The C. G. T. and both Peronista parties naturally rejected his offer¹⁸ and immediately set in motion the machinery for a mass protest by the descamisados. Seeking to create another "October 17" to return Perón to full charismatic power, workers again filled the Plaza de Mayo, and Perón, acting on their mandate, withdrew his resignation. He spoke, as on the previous occasion, from the balcony of Casa Rosada. This speech, however, was a battle cry, one of the most incendiary addresses of his career. In effect, it was more typical of Eva's style than of his.

From now on let us establish as permanent conduct for our Movement that he who in any place tries to disturb order in opposition to constituted authorities or contrary to the law or the Constitution may be slain by any Argentine. . . And when one of our people falls, five of them will fall.¹⁹

It was unusual for Perón to revert to Evita's style of oratory. He must have realized that such inflammatory speech would offend the military and his two-pronged base balance would be upset. Arthur Whitaker contended that Peron thought that a descamisado demonstration would warn the Army

¹⁷Juan Peron, August 31, 1955, printed in Appendix III, Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval, p. 156.

¹⁸Alejandro H. Leloir, speech of the President of the Peronist Party Superior Council, August 31, 1955, printed in Appendix IV of Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval, p. 157.

¹⁹Cited in Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval, p. 21.

that if it tried to overthrow the leader, the result would be civil war and anarchy. (In 1946 this device had worked perfectly.) Perhaps Peron thought that it was more important for him to conciliate the descamisados than the Army. This was a fatal mistake at that stage of the game.

Peron, then appearing desperate, attempted to purge the party of "weaklings and traitors." A C. G. T. resolution was adopted on September 8 that authorized the discretionary formation of a civil militia of 6,000,000 descamisado members. This was the second step in the reliance on descamisado resurgence in the regime. A people's army owing allegiance to Peron would warn the Army to keep its place and would supplement army strength in the event of another emergency analogous to that of June 6.²⁰

Even the Army factions most loyal to Peron reacted violently against this proposal. Its rejection was in fact announced by Peron's own war minister and leader of pro-Peron elements, General Franklin Lucero.

On September 16 the final military revolt broke out. There were simultaneous military rebellions in the interior provinces of Corrientes, Entre Rios, and Cordoba. Towns and cities of the interior fell to the rebel factions. Resignation of the President and his government was demanded by

²⁰Accounts of events in English Review of River Plate, September 20, 1955. In Spanish Dioz Periodistas Argentina Así Cayó Peron (Buenos Aires), pp. 16-20.

the military under pain of naval aerial bombardment of Buenos Aires and the La Plata Oil Refinery.²¹

Perón signed a letter of resignation to the Army and the people of the Nation on September 20, 1955 and quickly left the country for political asylum in Paraguay. The Review of the River Plate reported on the actions in Buenos Aires following his ouster.

Spontaneous demonstrations of public enthusiasm and rejoicing at the news of the success of the revolution broke out in different parts of the city.

The streets were thronged with happy, excited crowds rejoicing simultaneously in the advent of spring and the country's liberation from a decade of tyrannical rule. . . . a veritable orgy of portrait-burning and the destruction of large numbers of commemorative busts of the late Eva Perón--and also of the deposed president--which of recent years, had been erected in distasteful profusion in plazas, official buildings, and other public places throughout the country.²²

Thus Juan Perón fell from power, by way of a simple cuartelazo or barracks revolt--an ignominious and ironical end for the once-beloved charismatic leader of the Argentine. His mistakes had been many--any one of which could have brought about the fall of a lesser leader much earlier. Agriculture, once Argentina's mainstay, was on the brink of ruin. The national treasury was empty as the result of fantastic and unworkable undertakings and mismanagement of

²¹Review of the River Plate, September 20, 1955, pp. 16-20.

²²Review of the River Plate, September 30, 1955, p. 9.

both domestic and foreign finances. The economic structure of the nation had become so distorted that it could no longer provide a sound basis for the livelihood of most Argentines.

For a time, citizens of the country discounted Peron's failures as not being his fault. He began to fail when he continuously failed to meet their demands and desires. During the revolt ending his regime the workers of Buenos Aires remained passive--reverting to their former political role of bystanders in the political process. No effort was made to save their idol. Curiously however, the love and gratitude of thousands of Argentine workers for him survived his fall. They were not economic analysts but simple men and women. To them the prosperity, excitement and pagentry of Peron's regime was a marvellous time. Ernesto Sabato, a well-known anti-Peronist reminded the nation that the humble felt that they had lost a champion.

That night in September of 1955 while we, the doctors, landowners, and writers, were in the parlor noisily celebrating the fall of the tyrant, I noticed how two of the Indian women in a corner of the kitchen were working there with their eyes full of tears. And even though through all those years the ten years of Peron I had meditated on the tragic duality which cuts through the Argentine people, at that moment it appeared to me in its most poignant form. For what nearer characterization could there have been of the drama of our country than that almost exemplary scene? . . . Great multitudes of humble compatriots were symbolized in those two Indian girls crying in a kitchen in Salta.²³

²³Ernesto Sabato, El otro rostro del peronismo, (Buenos Aires, 1956), p. 40.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Juan Domingo Peron's rule fit the definition of charismatic political leadership of a nation in a transitional process of development. Called forth from the Argentine environment, he stepped forward at a time which was propitious for his rule. The country was in the throes of depression. There was no channel available to the people to transfer power from one government to another by peaceful means. With the exception of the Radical regime, 1916-1930, which failed miserably to bring any orderly direction into the chaos of government, the country was ruled by oligarchical factions which did nothing to raise the standards and aspirations or to meet the needs of the masses. There was a dichotomy in the country, between the interior and Buenos Aires and between the rich and the poor. The middle class was an amorphous mass and did not function as a stabilizing factor in government. There was no sense of community or popular participation in the affairs of government.

The Argentine masses longed for a salve for their frustrations and anxieties at a time of crisis. Thus, they willingly accepted an authoritarian charismatic leader and delivered their destinies into his hands.

Argentina's culture was well prepared for the rise of such a leader. This propensity had historical roots. The country was deeply influenced by the Spanish authoritarian tradition in which every man had his rank. Also present in the environment was the mystical notion of the state as the directing force in all individual lives. Finally, most Argentines felt that their culture was superior to that of other nations in the hemisphere and that Argentina should be culturally, intellectually, and politically the hemispheric leader.

Juan Perón knew his countrymen well. His policies and programs, as well as his very being, fitted in perfectly with the native political culture. Perón supplied the needs of Argentines from all walks of life. He was their national hero, possessing all the personal qualities admired by the Argentines and which are necessary for leadership: buoyant confidence in himself and his mission; ability to inspire others to follow him; a magnetic personality; and the insatiable desire to possess and to exercise authority.

He was successful in his initial rise to power because he sensed what was happening in the underdeveloped nations of the world and applied what he understood to the Argentina he knew so well. By gaining control of labor unions, charities, and an all-encompassing political party, he initiated concepts of worker's rights, social responsibility, industrialization, state intervention in the economy, and extreme nationalism.

To be sure, Perón borrowed from abroad in technique and organization, but these were merely used to strengthen a system rooted in Argentine cultural tradition.

Throughout his regime Perón maintained his charismatic authority by continual support from the majority of the people. He was no tyrannical dictator but a popular leader with authority based on a mass following.¹ His two main support props were the military and the laboring masses--his descamisados. By utilizing these two powerful forces and at the same time inspiring individuals within both groups to be loyal and to worship him, Perón built perhaps the strongest popular regime in modern Argentine history.

Under his rule the country made great progress. He solved the most internal pressing problem--that of moving toward an orderly, progressive society. Whatever his motives for personal power, it cannot be denied that he demonstrated a real interest in the welfare of urban and rural wage earners and brought them tangible gains. He raised the living standards of the poor to unprecedented levels and gave them freedoms, privileges and, for the first time, a sense of participation in the affairs of the nation.

No matter how demagogic his method became, Perón left constitutional trappings intact. He held technically free and honest elections and never dissolved the Congress. All

¹In his continuing desire for more and more power, however, Perón increasingly demonstrated authoritarian proclivities in his later years as chief of state.

his actions throughout his years in power (1943-1955) were based on the premise of getting and retaining charismatic authority, and he continually depicted himself as the man with the divine mission. Thus, he was forced to constantly prove his charismatic abilities. His system was efficient, yet it had the essential weakness that too much social action rested on one mere man and not on continuing institutions. Perón himself realized this in the later years of his regime as he remarked, "Man has always been an obstacle to the establishment of institutions."²

Evita Perón contributed to the charismatic aura of her husband. During the process of power consolidation from 1943 until 1946, her presence and mandate as his disciple allowed a division of labor between the two. In their dual relationship, Perón concentrated on tangible social welfare programs and the military, and Evita assumed the position of Perón's intermediary with the laboring masses.

Upon routinization of his charismatic authority with his election to the presidency in 1946, Evita assumed a more prominent charismatic role and, in effect, became his charismatic heir. However, she never attempted to usurp Perón's basic charismatic legitimacy. She always identified herself with him and his authority, and served as the spokesman and liaison in the reciprocal relations between Perón

and labor. The poor could readily identify with Evita, and she spoke to them as if they were truly the only interest in her life. She set about doing good works throughout the country, seeing people from all walks of life, listening to their problems, and soothing their anxieties. The effect of the constant identification of the two made the Perons' authority inseparable in the public eye.

Thus, Perón's charismatic legitimacy prevailed even though it was routinized by the institution of the elected presidency. While President Perón was forced to set up rational policies for Argentine development after 1946, the very irrationality of Evita's economics--the Social Aid Foundation, the millions spent yearly on her fabulous wardrobe and jewel collection, and the blatant graft and corruption practiced freely by members of the regime--proclaimed the presence of the basically irrational charismatic authority.

The beginning of Perón's decline came with Evita's death in 1952. Provision had been made in advance for Perón to resume the full charismatic image with the descamisados, and this was fairly easily accomplished as he had never completely separated himself from authority over them. However, to retain power from 1952 until his fall in 1955, Perón had to fluctuate between the role of institutional President of the Nation and that of the ranting charismatic leader of the masses at the barricades.

The irrationality of continuing charisma by an institutionalized figure with such extensive authority had a

destructive effect upon the country. The intensive program of industrialization (concentrated in and around Buenos Aires) crippled the nation's basic pastoral-agricultural economy. Further, Perón's agrarian reform movement stagnated at a point which retarded both the economy and the productiveness of the oligarchy. The Argentine balance of trade experienced an increasing deficit.

In a desperate attempt to rejuvenate the faltering economy, Perón turned from the behavior of the charismatic leader to the principles of sound business. Daily handouts and increasing wages to the descamisados were halted. Economic nationalists in the country were disillusioned by the resumption of foreign contracts and foreign aid for basic capital development. In a desperate effort to maintain his authority in the face of rising unrest, Perón became increasingly dictatorial and uncompromising with any opposition--especially in his campaign against the Church. Through his dalliance with teenage girls after Evita's death, he alienated many of her former followers, and, to that extent, further contributed to his own decline.

Perón's rule had many failures, but his demise came from the simple loss of his mandate from the people to govern them and their lives completely. The spectacles, the speeches, and the glamour of his earlier days had become dry and ordinary. While losing charismatic authority, Perón could not overcome the very basis of this authority--his irrational,

demagogic, xenophobic nationalism. Nor could he transfer himself out of the charismatic aura to run Argentina with a form of legal-rational authority. Thus, his movement became bigger than the man. He could no longer satisfy the needs of his people. His former loyal followers became apathetic and disenchanted, and the military factions, in the traditional Latin American style, overthrew him in a swift coup.

Juan Perón left Argentina virtually bankrupt and with a foreign debt of almost two billion dollars. The country was in a state of political and social chaos, from which it still has not completely recovered. Yet, the greater part of his revolution in the people's behalf was irreversible. With populist style and programs he pushed industrialization of the Argentine economy. He improved the lot of the Argentine lower classes, both rural and urban, and gave them organization, better wages, social security, and other fringe benefits.³ More important, however, he gave them a sense of dignity and of counting for something in Argentine life. He revolutionized the implications of nationalism by identifying it with social revolution. In this, the Perón regime preceded what is commonplace in Latin America nationalism today.

³A glance at Carlos Alurralde, A Statement of the Law of Argentina in Matters Affecting Business, (Washington, 1963), indicates that most social welfare and pro-union provisions in Argentine law today were passed during the Peron years.

No Argentine leader has come forth since 1955 to give the people what Perón did in the way of appeals to their dignity and pride. The spirit of national superiority in juridical, political, and economic matters remains essentially intact. Thus, Peronismo lost its leader and became fragmented at the top, yet the basic environmental propensity for another leader, legitimated by charisma, remains. Kalman H. Silvert strengthened this observation when he wrote,

There is present in the country a strong nationalist element espousing the Argentine neutrality position; government is controlled and arbitrated by the military and there is no peaceful means of moving from one regime to the next; present are continued labor-management conflicts with the C. G. T. full of pro and anti-Peronist segments; the country is experiencing foreign exchange troubles; a state of seige is in effect; no armed consolidation is possible without the army which still controls the hinterland. Today, Argentine politics are in the Latin American mold.⁴

It is interesting that an examination of the four post-Perón elections in 1957, 1958, 1960, and 1962 indicate that Peronist strength ranged from 20 to 30 per cent.⁵ The various Peronist groups, although fragmented, comprise the largest and most coherent political faction in the country today. The memory of the glamour and prosperity of the

⁴Kalman H. Silvert, The Nature of the Argentine Emergency, (Washington, 1963), p. 22.

⁵Argentine Election Factbook. Some of these were blank ballots protesting prohibition of Peronists from participation in the elections of 1957-1960. Blank ballots cast each time comprised 25 per cent of the total vote.

Peron years remains with many Argentines. Though Peron's movement outgrew its leader, the propensity for a similar development remains. Only a new leader must step forth to be accepted.

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