

PERSPECTIVES AND ANGLES: A JOURNALISTIC HISTORY THROUGH THE  
ARGENTINE POLITICAL IDENTITY FROM 1946-1983

A Thesis  
by  
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## Abstract

### PERSPECTIVES AND ANGLES: A JOURNALISTIC HISTORY THROUGH THE ARGENTINE POLITICAL IDENTITY FROM 1946-1983

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Following World War II, nationalist strongman Juan Perón influenced the Argentine national identity through his controversial political, economic, and social reforms. Though a popular friend of the proletariat, Perón earned many enemies by ignoring and alienating the land-owning elites, the middle class, and the liberal intelligentsia. By following the personal histories of journalists Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox, editors of major Buenos Aires news sources *La Opinión* and *The Buenos Aires Herald*, this paper will chronicle and analyze the shifts in individual and national Argentine identities beginning during the polarizing era of Peronism and extending through the Dirty War.

Due to a series of personal and societal shocks, designed to simultaneously eradicate alleged political subversives and implement neoliberal economic policies via disaster capitalism, Argentines ceased to identify as pro- or anti-Perón, but rather developed their evolving personalities around the memory of the citizens disappeared at the hand of the National Reorganization Process, or Proceso, junta. Timerman, Cox, and their constituent readers, including the members of the human rights group the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, shaped their own histories and the history of their country by fearlessly carrying

Argentina through a bloody Dirty War, and fighting on behalf of the voiceless—  
the thousands of Argentine disappeared.

## **Acknowledgments**

I express my strongest gratitude to Lynne Getz, Ph.D., Jeffrey Bortz, Ph.D., and Renee Scherlen, Ph.D., who provided tremendous guidance and support through this seemingly endless process. Thanks to Victoria Cox, Ph.D., for piquing my interest in Latin American journalism, and attuning my ear to the intricacies of the Argentine Spanish dialect. Thank you to my mother and brother, L.D. Long, M.S.N, F.N.P., and Aaron Cusick, M.A., M.S.L.S., for your continual, unfettered support. And a special acknowledgment of thanks to Sunny Townes Stewart, M.A. graduate of the Appalachian State University history program; thank you for blazing a path before, giving me the benefit of your advice, and letting me use your Internet connection.

## **Dedication**

This master's thesis, laboriously prepared, is proudly presented in honor of the memory of my father, Michael Glynn Cusick, who was unable to finish a degree of his own. We did it, Pops.

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Chapter 1  
An Introduction

## Introduction to Historical Context

In 1930 Argentina experienced a political and economic turning point. As the Great Depression wreaked havoc upon most of the world's economy, Argentina found a niche in global trade by exporting grain, wheat, and other primary materials for production to the Northern Hemisphere. The Argentine ruling class, wealthy landowners with strong ties to imperialist Great Britain, pushed for a strengthening of bilateral trade with the United Kingdom via 1933's Roca-Runciman Pact, which gave the Argentine state greater control over the regulation of both capital and exports. The formation of a Banco Central in 1935 permitted the government to regulate the exchange of money; the formation of the National Grain and Meat Boards tightened regulations upon the prices of commodities for export. These regulations translated to a thriving economy. When the rest of the world went bankrupt, Argentina packed her coffers full. <sup>1</sup>

During the Depression, Argentina set itself upon a trajectory for future inward expansion, or a nationalized focus on regulation of capital and resources inside the borders of Argentina. In 1930, the economic successes of Argentina coincided with political turmoil; after sixty-eight years of civilian rule, Argentines witnessed the upset of their government. Between 1930 and 1976, nine successful military coups d'état and twenty-one separate presidents ruled Argentina. The varying agendas and tumultuous

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<sup>1</sup> James P. Brennan, "Prolegomenon to Neoliberalism: The Political Economy of Populist Argentina, 1943-1976," *Latin American Perspectives* 34, no. 3 (May 2007): 50, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/27648022> (accessed April 1, 2013).

escapades of dissenting military factions began shaking the foundations of the country's economy, though not disrupting it altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout World War II, Argentina's place in the global economic realm remained relatively strong. While surrounding Latin American countries experienced traumatic aftershocks of war upon their economies, Argentina distinguished its place in the Southern Cone region as a nation of means; the Banco Central continued accruing wealth to spare. Argentina granted rebuilding loans to neighboring countries and invested in the rebuilding of global economic networks following the war.<sup>3</sup>

In 1946 during this time of post-war success, military colonel Juan Domingo Perón triumphantly took the presidential office, introducing Argentina to the first wave of political, economic, and social Peronism.<sup>4</sup> Peronism became synonymous with the enduring cult around the populism of Perón. Perón's populism entailed a focus on the needs of the masses—the workers—over individual civic liberties. The masses were great in number, and appreciated a president who spoke on behalf of their previously ignored needs. Populist Peronism translated to a strong national Argentine identity, sentiments of

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 96.

<sup>3</sup> James Brennan, "Prolegomenon to Neoliberalism: The Political Economy of Populist Argentina, 1943-1976," *Latin American Perspectives* 34, 3, Contested Transformation (May 2007): 50. <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/27648022>.

<sup>4</sup> Though many definitions of "Peronism" exist, the concise, apt definition of Mark Falcoff will be utilized in this paper: "an ill-defined mélange of populism, personalism, and nationalism;" i.e., Perón's personal cult of popular nationalism based upon a unified national identity, championed by the popular class, which led Argentina into the formation of a nationally organized, inwardly focused corporate state. A more detailed discussion of Peronism will follow in Chapter 2. See: Mark Falcoff. "Orange Juice with General Perón: A Memoir," *The American Scholar* 62, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 383, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/41> (accessed April 1, 2013).

nationalism, an increasingly educated bourgeoisie class, and the implementations of centrist Raúl Prebisch's Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model of developmentalism economics. Perón's bottom line as a populist president was to address the needs of the proletariat, redistribute wealth, and allow the bulging national coffers to be shared among all Argentines. Rather than focus on the exportation of primary goods for production elsewhere, Perón and Prebisch preached that the best way to grow Argentina's economy internationally was to turn economic focus inward, developing technology and production.<sup>5</sup>

Perón augmented the economic reforms of the 1930s, continuing on the pre-existing political and economic trends of internalization and nationalization. The populist hero understood the limitations of local capitalists, specifically in relation to his changing policies, and in order to best grow the middle class, he nationalized the nation's railroads, protected tariffs, controlled imports and exports, and demanded import licenses—all direct extensions of the tenets set forth in the Roca-Runciman Pact. Perón did not turn the economy of Argentina upside down; rather he let it run an organic course on an existing trajectory. Within that trajectory, Peronism did not uproot the Argentine chronology or infuse a new-found national identity in Argentines; rather, Peronism, through economic and social reforms and with populism and sentiments of Argentine nationalism at the heart, deepened the identity of the Argentine citizen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007), Kindle edition, 66. See also: John Crabtree, "Review of *Populist Seduction in Latin America: The Ecuadorian Experience*, by Carlos de la Torre," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34, no. 4 (November 2002): 985.

<http://www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3875744> (accessed April 4, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Brennan, "Prolegomenon to Neoliberalism," 51-52.

However, regardless of the national identity being augmented by Peronism, Juan Domingo Perón as a man could not hold on to the power of his own name. Following repeated conflicts with the middle and upper class, the Argentine intelligentsia, the Catholic Church, and his own military, Perón fled in exile, traveling through Latin America and Europe, rebuilding his identity, and permitting, in and by his absence, the cult of Peronism to frenetically thrive as a subculture of underground politics. Peronist identities outside of Perón's personal identity took root. Many Argentines, dissatisfied with the state of political affairs, formed various left-to-right factions of Peronism. Perón the man had repeatedly winked at the use of violence to achieve peace, stating, "Violence from above engenders violence from below." Peronists began embracing this tit-for-tat ideology in response to real and perceived threats of oppression from the state. Though Perón had many followers among the working class, his opponents, including the junta that deposed him, held great political power as well. "Peronist" and "anti-Peronist" became national identities not just around the cult of a man, but also around the violent political policies he advocated.<sup>7</sup>

It was during Perón's exile that journalists Jacobo Timerman and Robert "Bob" Cox emerged upon the political scene. Jacobo Timerman, a self-described liberal Jew, immigrated with his family to Argentina in 1928 at age five from Soviet-controlled Ukraine. Growing up in the Jewish Quarter, a poor ethnic neighborhood in Buenos Aires, Timerman was bombarded daily by his family, neighbors, and fellow temple-goers to deepen his Jewish identity by participating in political activist groups that focused on the

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<sup>7</sup> Falcoff, "Orange Juice with General Perón: A Memoir," 383. See also: Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner Without A Name, Cell Without a Number*, 24.

implementation of Judaism and Zionism into global sociopolitical landscape, political ideologies that starkly contrasted with the nationalism and populism of Perón.

Timerman had just graduated university in Buenos Aires and was at the beginning his journalist career around the time Perón fled Argentina. Timerman's soon-to-be friend and colleague Bob Cox spent the 1950s working as a newspaper delivery boy, a reporter, and a British Korean-War soldier. Returning home to the United Kingdom following his participation in the Korean Conflict, Cox found England to be exceptionally "drab." Seeking to make his fortune, he moved, alone, to exotic Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he arrived five years after Perón's exile. Cox, armed with a strong sense of duty to his job and to the truth, accepted a job at *The Buenos Aires Herald*, the English-language news equivalent of *La Opinión*, the Spanish-language moderate periodical founded by Timerman in 1971.<sup>8</sup>

While these men were focusing on their careers as journalists, Hebe de Bonafini, Azucena Villaflor de Devicenti, and Matilde Mellibovsky were working inside their homes, raising children, keeping house, and remaining largely apolitical. These three women whose identities focused around being wives and mothers had little in common during the early foreshadowings of Argentine political unrest. These women would soon find, as they began running into one another in Cox and Timerman's news offices, that they shared a unique bond amongst themselves and thousands of other women: the loss of their children at the hands of state-sponsored terrorism.

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<sup>8</sup> David Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* (Charleston: Evening Post Publishing Company, 2008), Kindle edition. See also: Timerman, *Prisoner Without A Name, Cell Without a Number*, 22.

Cox and Timerman noticed this violent chaos in its earliest stages. Both journalists experienced Peronism and the contributing factors that came together to incite what would be commonly known as the Argentine Dirty War—this period of state-sponsored terrorism against alleged subversives and political dissidents. Both journalists, Timerman with his fearless activist mentality, and Cox with his deeply rooted British sense of duty to job and truth, observed the increasing amount of violence incited by underground Peronist and other anti-governmental guerrilla groups. Timerman and Cox witnessed, reported upon, and regularly published about those who became known as the *disappeared*. The *disappeared* were the citizens who were arrested by the Argentine government without warrant or writs of habeas corpus. These innocent citizens were often tortured and killed, many dropped into the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>9</sup>

In solidarity with those targeted by the government, both journalists printed names of the *disappeared* and reported in code about the political intrigue of Argentina. Both journalists came to understand from both an outsider's and insider's point of view the terror of disappearance. Both journalists observed the tragic loss of identity and personhood of thousands of Argentines—both on the left and the right side of the political spectrum. *Disappeared* persons were assumed to be neither dead nor alive. Timerman and Cox assisted hundreds of relatives of the *disappeared* who sought justice for their lost family members. Timerman and Cox were engaged daily in investigative journalism and editorial writing, seeking to expose the Argentine government for waging war upon its citizens.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>10</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition. See also: Marguerite Feitlowitz, "Night and Fog in Argentina," *Salmagundi* 94/95 (Spring-Summer 1992): 43-44,

These newsmen, too close to breaking the full story, were perceived as a threat by their government. Both journalists miraculously lived through the Dirty War, in spite of receiving numerous threats from varying military-terrorist factions, in spite of being arrested unjustly, and in spite of being released into exile, Timerman to Israel, Cox to the United States. While Timerman, following his disappearance and four-year span of journalistic inactivity, channeled all his previously preserved energy into the creation and publication of politically driven memoirs, letters, and exposés. *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* was the culmination of Timerman's pleas for international attention on behalf of the *disappeared* Argentines, specifically Jewish-Argentines.

Robert Cox, traumatized by the direct effects of socio-political intrigue upon his person(al life), was content to be alive and have his family intact in their new South Carolina home. Cox, in fact, "still find[s] it too painful to relive those malevolent times by writing about them." He did not speak of his traumatic experience with Argentine politics for twenty-five years. Finally, he permitted his son to write his memoirs on his behalf. He called David's subsequent (auto)biography *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* the book that he emotionally and physically "could not write."<sup>11</sup>

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<http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/40548602> (accessed April 1, 2013). See also: Mabel Bellucci, "Childless Motherhood: Interview with Nora Cortiñas, a Mother of the Plaza de Mayo, Argentina," *Reproductive Health Matters* 7, no. 13 (May 1999): 84, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3775707> (accessed April 1, 2013); Robert Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* (Charleston: Evening Post Publishing Company, 2008), Foreword, Kindle edition.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* (Charleston: Evening Post Publishing Company, 2008), Foreword, Kindle edition.



## Primary Sources and Historiography

The historical context of this paper is built upon relevant primary and secondary source material from and about the events surrounding the Dirty War, including the (auto)biographies of Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox. The first and most utilized source for this paper is the autobiographical account of Jacobo Timerman's disappearance, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*. Timerman's work, part memoir, part horror story, part invocation, serves as the insider's point of view of the evolving discourse of one who was *disappeared* by his own adopted government.

Timerman's history is disoriented, emotional, and anachronous, which directly contradicts his orderly journalistic training and expertise. This out-of-order, down-the-rabbit-hole style of writing deftly succeeds in mirroring the tone of unbridled chaos that he and his countrymen experienced surviving the shocks and terrors of the Dirty War—that is, the resounding shocks that echoed from inside the torture cell in waves across the entire Latin American region. The title of Timerman's book evokes the status of the faceless, numberless, sightless, meaningless *disappeared* prisoner. Timerman's training as a journalist and knack for weaving together a story give *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* an inherent eerie feel: as one reads through the book, in or out of order, one sees immediately, at a glance, the conglomeration of factors that came together to create the identity of one man, a typical Argentine citizen of his time.

Timerman, an immigrant boy from humble Jewish beginnings; an educated professional; and a life-long social activist and an avid participant in politics was in the cross section of the ideal candidate who would find himself among the *disappeared*. *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* describes three major events of

Timerman's life. These events correlate to three identity-shaping events that took place over the course of Timerman's life: his introduction to Zionism, his disappearance, and his exile to Israel. Timerman's book leaps around from his childhood to his imprisonment to his exile, echoing motifs of chaos, disorder, and confusion—the resounding sentiments from inside the cell without a number.

Robert Cox was never able to tell the story of his own interaction with Argentine journalism and politics. Rather, he finally commissioned his son, David Cox, who lived through the Dirty War as well, to chronicle their family's personal history in *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*. David Cox's book is a well-researched (auto)biography, placing one family in the context of broad-scale trauma and torture. Cox presents his father's opinions as opinions, observing that Bob Cox's conservative views and firm establishment in the upper-middle class of Buenos Aires society contributed to his stark anti-Peronist sentiments. Robert Cox's motto of “do your job, report the truth” placed him squarely against the oppressive military regimes of Argentina, including those of the Peronists and the subsequent National Reorganization Process, or Proceso, regime, which was designed to violently, upon the blood of its own citizens, reorganize the Argentine political and economic structure in favor of neoliberal capitalism.

David Cox chronicles his father's history seamlessly; he himself was an integral part of that history, after all. David, his siblings, and their mother were the main reasons that Cox left Argentina following his political arrest and never looked back. By saving the lives of his son and his family, he unwittingly provided a channel for his own history to come forth into the permanent record.

Perhaps most interesting is the length of elapsed time from Cox's exile to his son's writing of his memoirs. Juxtaposed with Timerman's immediate and frenetic writing following his release, the historian can observe the different aftereffects of traumatic shocks on individuals, proving that the human factor cannot be whittled out of so-called "forced disaster capitalism" and the pure "blank slate" ideology. Cox, a man with a large family, had much to lose during the Dirty War. If the shocks of neoliberalism succeeded in silencing Robert Cox, it was but for a time, until his son was academically and emotionally prepared to write Robert's story on his behalf. In this manner, David Cox echoes the sentiments of key figures in *Dirty Secrets*, *Dirty War*, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.<sup>12</sup>

Though much academic research has surfaced in response to the role of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, this paper will concentrate on Matilde Mellibovsky's *Circle of Love Over Death*, scraps of the stories told by the mothers themselves. Mellibovsky provides insight to the overlapping identities of the Argentine woman and mother, piecing together the smatterings of social views, religious affiliations, and academic achievements of the members of the now-famous human rights groups. Through the words of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo themselves, Mellibovsky edits together their story in a piecemeal, anachronistic, highly disoriented style à la Jacobo Timerman.

Individual mothers recount their experiences: that of a son's mischievous smile, their daughter's academic achievements, and poetry about "childless motherhood."

Different mothers provide their perspectives of joining together on Thursday, April 30,

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<sup>12</sup> Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007), Kindle edition, 23, 33-34.

1977 to march quietly, arm in arm, two by two, in circles around the plaza of Buenos Aires in honor of their *disappeared* children.<sup>13</sup>

Softly circulating among military guards and civilians, the mothers wore white kerchiefs on their heads, symbols of the diapers of their lost babies. Their head coverings stood out as a symbol of peace, of femininity, and of the intangible, unbreakable bond between mother and child. Though Mellibovsky's book is not academic, *Circle of Love Over Death* provides an unpretentious insider's peak into the lives of those most tragically indirectly affected by the aftershocks of neoliberalism, the mothers of the *disappeared*.

Secondary sources consulted include well-researched recent contributions to Latin American and global history. Naomi Klein said her book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, is an extension of Susan Sontag's *Illness As a Metaphor*. *The Shock Doctrine* explains how a society viewed both inherently and externally as "sick" has no choice but to accept treatment from whatever charlatan willing enough to offer it. With no other alternative for their society, citizens accept forced political, social, and economic "reforms" that they would ordinarily, under stable conditions, never consider permissible to democracy.

The doctrine of shock works on three levels and describes three main events that shock the macro and microcosms of a society. The first shock occurs as a natural or seemingly natural traumatic event like a famine, hurricane, fire, or war. This widespread, devastating shock is followed by a shock from power-hungry politicians and capitalist

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<sup>13</sup> Mabel Bellucci, "Childless Motherhood: Interview with Nora Cortiñas, a Mother of the Plaza de Mayo, Argentina," *Reproductive Health Matters* 7, no. 13 (May 1999): 84. <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3775707> (accessed April 1, 2013).

corporations to the existing social, economic, or political systems. Said politicians and capitalists, exploiting the horror of the initial shock, frame a second shock as “shock therapy,” or the necessary medicine administered by the capitalist doctors of Milton Freeman’s Chicago School of Economics as the only way to obtain a better prognosis for such an ailing, injured, ill society. The third, possibly most disturbing shock is the physical, torturous shock administered by the government; both covert and open violence is administered to citizens as a necessary response to control the “subversives” who do not comply with the new, shocking system of rule. In the case of Argentina, the blueprints for Klein’s *Shock Doctrine* seem to line up directly over Timerman’s shocking account *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*.<sup>14</sup>

While Klein discusses the shock doctrine in terms of economics, John Dinges’s *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* interconnects the political fates of Milton Freeman, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Augusto Pinochet, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, and thousands of *disappeared* in his history text turned thriller. Dinges’s work effectively displays both the internal situation of Argentina and Latin America, as well as the correlation of Argentina and Latin America to the large-scale scheme of global politics.

Dinges utilizes recently declassified documents of the United States military to create an exposé on “Operation Condor,” the code name for the operation of six Latin

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<sup>14</sup> Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007), Kindle edition, 25-26. See also: Reyhan Harmanci, “Out Loud: Naomi Klein discusses ‘The Shock Doctrine,’” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 26, 2007. <http://www.sfgate.com/thingstodo/article/Out-Loud-Naomi-Klein-discusses-The-Shock-2500992.php> (accessed April 1, 2013).

American military governments' information-sharing network. Officially formed in 1975, this operation was directly responsible for the disappearance of thousands of Latin Americans. What is even more shocking is that many of the governments and operatives of Operation Condor received direct financing, information, and manpower from the United States C.I.A. The Cold War binaries of capitalism and communism became swirled into Argentine economics and politics, affecting individuals' identities and national identity simultaneously.

Thomas C. Wright's *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* compares and contrasts the chronologies of Chile and Argentina through not only their mutual military cooperation in Operation Condor, but also through the human rights organizations that sprung up within both countries as a result of the need created by the violence of said oppressive military regimes. Wright's work seamlessly aligns the naturally occurring parallels in both countries' political and social histories, speaking in a voice that echoes the call of Timerman, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, and the world. Clearly demonstrating the overlapping trends, political evolutions, and violent and nonviolent social revolutions of Chile and Argentina, *State Terrorism* examines the human rights violations that occurred within each country, proving that the human rights organizations and the military regimes that oppressed them possessed a reciprocal relationship, each affecting the identity and strength of the other.<sup>15</sup>

Wright points out that during times of state oppression most of print media was controlled, or at the very least censored, by the government. Wright explains that

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2007), xv.

newspaper articles, books, and films of the Dirty War era must be taken at face value as potentially tainted primary source materials. Press releases and news articles written by or on behalf of the military junta often expressed a direct disconnect from the obvious and visible truth experienced by Argentines at large. Instead of studying explicitly traditional primary sources, Wright values memoirs and testimonial writings of those who were *disappeared*—those who actually lived through violent torture and survived to tell. Wright’s sources also draw from the collected testimonies from truth commissions and other human rights organizations, highlighting the story of individual Argentines. By compiling together biographies and demonstrating the disconnect between the viewpoints of the oppressors and the oppressed, Wright analyzes the public and private transcripts of Argentina to paint a complete picture of the history of the region.<sup>16</sup>

Though Wright does not make an emotional appeal to his readers, he chronicles the many ever-growing appeals of human rights organizations such as the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo, who, to this day, march to remember the atrocities of the last century. The Madres and their allies have demanded, and in many cases obtained, justice on behalf of their loved ones, the *disappeared*. Incorporating journalistic tendencies in the manner of Timerman, Klein, and Dinges, and evoking the call of memory in the vein of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, this examination of Dirty Wars of Chile and Argentina synchronously joins two countries’ histories together, and sets the tone for a history of interweaving stories, overlapping examinations of cause and effect, and evolving identities within the macro and microcosms.

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, xiii-xiv.

Naomi Klein never lived in Argentina, but she focused much of her research on Argentina and the Southern Cone of Latin America. With a knack for connecting seemingly unrelated events, locations, policies, philosophies, governments, institutions, and individuals all together, Klein, a Canadian journalist, stumbled upon the intricacies of Dirty War politics whilst researching to write a book exposing the utilization of torture in modern history. Klein's book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, analyzes both shock treatments to the individual and large-scale shocks in the form of disaster capitalism, which thrives on country- and region-wide shocks as a means of economic "reform."

Klein, in true journalistic style, sniffed out a story, revealing that since the Cold War the United States perceived an antidemocratic threat in Latin America and utilized experiments with electroshock "therapy" as a way to brainwash people, i.e., completely wipe a human being's brain and create a "blank slate" to "unmake and recreate" faulty brains into "reformed," highly functional personalities. In laboratory settings, patients could indeed be completely broken down; however their personalities could never be correctly reprogrammed. The shocking experiments proved little else than that there was no sure-fire way to clear out the human brain into a perfectly blank slate, and there was certainly no way to rebuild a personality successfully.<sup>17</sup>

Predatory capitalists, specifically followers of Milton Friedman and his neoliberal policies, often utilized the philosophy of this torture methodology on a grand scale. Following a major crisis, such as a military junta, a war, a famine, or a flood, these so-called "disaster capitalists" swooped in upon the newly shocked, disoriented victims,

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<sup>17</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 33-34.



defunding and privatizing social programs, and deregulating state control of capital and assets. Friedman states in his essay “Capitalism and Freedom” that only disasters, whether real or perceived, produce true change. Klein notes that Friedman’s actions were equivalent to Machiavelli gone out of control: injuries must be inflicted all at once for a permanent departure from the “tyranny of the status quo.”<sup>18</sup>

This shock doctrine, popularized by Milton Friedman and exposed for what it is by Naomi Klein, directly affected every Argentine during the Dirty War. What translated as state-sponsored terrorism to Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox was actually, Klein reveals, the purposefully shocking trauma of the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. Argentina, following the coup d’état of 1976, was indeed disoriented and reeling. Though most Argentines were accustomed to coups d’état and authoritarian military regimes, they were certainly *not* accustomed to their own government disappearing between 10,000 and 30,000 of its own citizens.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Silvia R. Tandeciarz, “Citizens of Memory: Refiguring the Past in Postdictatorship Argentina.” *PMLA* 122, no. 1, Special Topic: Cities (January 2007): 152. <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/25501677> (accessed April 1, 2013). See also: Kristina E. Thalhammer, “I’ll Take the High Road: Two Pathways to Altruistic Political Mobilization against Regime Repression in Argentina,” *Political Psychology* 22, no. 3 (September 2001): 494 <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3792424> (accessed April 4, 2013); United States Institute of Peace, Truth Commission: Argentina, Truth Commissions Digital Collection, <http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-argentina> (accessed April 4, 2013).

## Purpose and Methodology

After World War II, Argentines, political or not, loosely identified as either pro- or anti-Peronist, with other facets such as family ties, religious affiliations, and professional positions affecting personal identities. This paper will track identity shifts in Argentines, beginning at the close of World War II with the implementation of the Import Substitution Industrialization model through the shocking traumas of the Dirty War of the 1970s and early 1980s when thousands of Argentines were *disappeared*.

This paper amplifies the unified message of thousands of (a)political activists across Argentina and the globe: the call for a government to value the freedom of humanity over freedom of the market. Two local newsmen printed this call in their respective newspapers each time they publicized the names of the *disappeared* and called for social justice on their behalf. When these men were wrongfully arrested, the relatives, specifically the mothers, of the *disappeared* stood up on their behalf, publically organizing and creating a social platform calling attention to the abuses of human rights in Argentina and the Southern Cone.

Within a very short time of the organization of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, not only were the *disappeared* receiving increasing levels of national news coverage and support from international human groups, but also those demanding their release, such as the mothers, began gaining a global following as well. This paper tracks self-adopted identities such as “Peronist,” “anti-Peronist,” “journalist,” and “childless mother” and juxtaposes them with governmentally assigned labels such as “subversive,” “terrorist,” “undesirable”, and “no one.” All these identities coalesce into one super-identity concerning disappearance: the identity of and around the *disappeared*.

This paper contributes in a unique and new way to the historiography of Argentina by filtering the (auto)biographies of *disappeared* journalists Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox through Naomi Klein's journalistic exposé of the true cause of the Dirty War in Argentina—the joint effort of the U.S. C.I.A., Milton Friedman and his Chicago Boys, and the Proceso junta to shock Argentines and create a blank slate upon which to build an unimpeded laboratory setting for disaster capitalism to thrive. Further contributing to the breadth of research on Dirty War Argentina, this paper will demonstrate the shifting role of women in reference to their identities as mothers, which further demonstrates the change in Argentine identities from apolitical to actively political, caused directly by the shocking occurrences of disappearances within Argentina. By examining and analyzing the pre- and post-Dirty War identities of Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox and chronicling the evolving role of Argentine motherhood, this paper will prove that the traumatic shocks of forced neoliberalism failed to create a blank-slate Argentine political identity, but rather succeeded in shifting the Argentine identity from the cult(s) of (anti-)Peronism to a new, unified focus around the identity of the *disappeared*.

## Content and Chapter Map

The first chapter of this paper serves as an introduction and states the purpose of the paper. By creating a backdrop to the historical context of Argentina's place in twentieth century history, Chapter One empowers the reader, without being a subject-matter expert, to follow the remaining chapters as they chronicle the impact of Argentina's social, political, and economic identity. By introducing three journalists, Jacobo Timerman, Robert Cox, and Naomi Klein and by broadly analyzing their overlapping journalistic content, Chapter One demonstrates the unified message of the call to social justice as rooted in human connections, which are transcendent of print or electronic media, and which cannot be rooted out of the human brain, regardless of the oppressive infliction of repeated shocks upon an individual or a society.

By connecting journalists Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox to Naomi Klein's shocking picture of the socio-political ramifications of the forced implementation of neoliberalism, Chapter One introduces the central thesis of the paper: Though the puppet masters of the Chicago School of Economics succeeded both in implementing their sordid brand of disaster capitalism and in silencing the perceived subversive threat of thousands of moderate to left leaning citizens, they failed to factor in the emotional impact of the aftershocks of said trauma on the existing members of society, i.e., the outcry of those who escaped torture and disappearance, as well as those left behind by *disappeared* Argentines who never reappeared.

Chapter Two scaffolds the introductory material of Chapter One into a historical framework for analysis. This chapter begins by introducing the international discourse of the human rights movement, which began synchronously with Juan Perón's rise to power.

By exploring the identities of Juan Perón and his supporters through the eyes of Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox, as well as by understanding the personal histories of these two journalists, which affects their perceptions and interactions with Peronism, Chapter Two synthesizes a composite of factors that shaped the Argentine identity, e.g, post-war politics and economics, and an explanation of Peronism, populism, nationalism, and ISI developmentalism.

This portion of the paper will also examine the role of Eva Perón in altering the political status of women in Argentina. Mrs. Perón's captivating charms, which engendered the support of Argentine women, helped paved the way for the female voice in Argentine politics, cutting a niche for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to later fill. Chapter Two will also provide an adjacently running chronological timeline via Naomi Klein. While Perón was attempting to appeal to the masses, the United States government was backing social and psychological experimentation in applying shocks to individuals and societies.

In secret laboratories at McGill University and in public classrooms at The Chicago School of Economics, two separate veins of torture were being explored: electroshock therapy upon individuals as a way to remake personalities, and wide-scale disaster capitalism on regions and countries as a precursor to reforming (remaking, repatterning) economic policies. These variations of "the shock doctrine" set the stage for a violent military junta to overthrow the Argentine political and social order and implement neoliberal capitalism, undermining a forty-year trajectory of economic stability and a sense of pride in national identity.

Chapter Three will bring together the Argentine players with those from the United States. By exploring the factors that contributed to the Dirty War and the Dirty War itself, Chapter Three will begin to tell the story that Robert Cox was too traumatized to tell himself. This chapter examines the actual implementation of torture upon unwitting “patients,” i.e., those Argentines oppressed by a “sick” political and “dying” economic system. It is during this time that our journalist-protagonists encroach too closely upon the hidden transcripts of the junta-disaster capitalist regime and are *disappeared*.

Chapter Four takes over during the silent period of Timerman, when Cox continued their journalistic quest for justice by working closely with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. While Chapter Two demonstrates the national Argentine identity around Peronism, and Chapter Three examines the shift in sociopolitical factors that served as impetus for the evolution of this identity, Chapter Four is an examination of a collaboration of personal identities, i.e., the organization of the unified voices of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Chapter Five’s conclusion serves to bring together Timerman, Cox, Klein, and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo by chronicling the return of Timerman’s voice, which both sang in harmony with the ongoing political activity of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, as well as echoed the silence of a highly traumatized Robert Cox, and the post-traumatic effects of disaster capitalism upon a previously nationalized country. Chapter Five is the culmination of nearly forty years of history, reiterating the backfire of forced disaster capitalism upon Argentina. Though Friedman’s Chicago Boys and the combined Proceso junta of Argentina attempted to shock Argentines on both a personal and national level in

hopes of erasing pre-existing nationalist, populist, socialist, and Peronist identities, this scheme failed; instead the disaster capitalists niched out a stage for the global presentation of an evolved Argentine superidentity—the identity surrounding the memory of the *disappeared*.

## Chapter 2

### The Backstory: Peronism, Anti-Peronism, and Post-World War II Argentine Identities



The Cult of (Anti-)Peronism as a Polarizing National Identity and the Introduction of Women to the Political Sphere

“Human rights” as a concept was not well articulated until the close of the Second World War. Following the violence of and apart from war, much of the globe had been physically and psychologically wrecked. Europe and the United States, the seats of Western democratic practice, initiated a platform of international discussion to define and adopt a set of policies that granted individuals and ethnic groups rights and freedoms, as well as to hold individual governments responsible for internal instances of injustice. By the 1950s, human rights monitoring entered a new phase, with nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, sprouting up globally in response to domestic and international issues. By the 1970s, human rights awareness entered its third phase, becoming an integral piece of international law, and paving the way for 2003’s implementation of the International Criminal Court, whose inherent purpose was to prosecute crimes against humanity.<sup>20</sup>

During the beginning of the global human rights discussion, Juan Domingo Perón rose to power for the first time in Argentina. Human rights were far from his agenda, for after all, “violence from above engenders violence from below.” Perón saw casualties as a necessary part of his military rule—on all sides of the political spectrum. Juan Perón, born in 1865 in a small town south of Buenos Aires, was educated in a German mission

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas C. Wright. *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 4. See also: Sumner B. Twiss, “History, Human Rights, and Globalization,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 41-43, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/40018154> (accessed April 4, 2013); Eric Neumayer, “Do International Human Rights Treaties Improve Respect for Human Rights?” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 6 (December 2005): 927, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/30045143> (accessed April 4, 2013).

military training school. Perón spent his education and uneventful early career learning how to appeal to people. Perón found it politically useful to identify as a jack-of-all-trades, studying boxing, archery, skiing and horseback riding, as well as authoring five books. Following the Great War, Perón went on an army delegation to Germany and Italy, where he became transfixed with the oratory skills of Benito Mussolini. Fancying himself a Mussolini of sorts, Perón returned to Argentina's political scene, freshly steeped in the nationalist culture of right-wing, pre-World War II Italian and German fascism.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 1940s, Perón served his country in the offices of labor secretary and vice president. His reforms, his nationalist spirit, and his pro-worker sentiments quickly converged into an identity strongly tied to populism. Indeed, at the heart of Perón's reforms was the redistribution of wealth in favor of the common man; his major political task of the time was settling labor disputes. Out of his work with those who controlled the capital and those who contributed labor, Perón came to advocate populism as a method of alleviating wealth inequity and growing the Argentine economy.<sup>22</sup>

Populism, which has many connotations, has been most succinctly defined as a workers' movement designed to address inequalities, specifically of the allocation of property. Along with his emotional speeches and Mussolini-esque charm, Perón catapulted himself high into the upper echelons of political power. As vice president,

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<sup>21</sup> David Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* (Charleston: Evening Post Publishing Company), Kindle edition.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Adelman, "Reflections on Argentine Labor and the Rise of Perón," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 11, no. 3 (September 1992): 243, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3338863> (accessed 1 April 2013). See also: David Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* (Charleston: Evening Post Publishing Company), Kindle edition.

Perón condemned Argentina's dependence on Great Britain's imperialist tent. Perón's populist spirit endeared him to working-class Argentines, but earned him many enemies among the upper class and the evolving middle class.<sup>23</sup>

By 1944 full-blown "Peronism" had evolved under the auspices of Vice President Perón. Peronism has been described as not necessarily being any political ideology at all; rather Peronism is Perón, and Perón has no inherently definitive principles, but plenty of random ideas and an infinite resource pool from which to consolidate and exert power. If facets of fascism appealed to Perón, which they did, he utilized them, the same way he employed a panoply of other political "isms" such as corporativism and nationalism as needed for his own success. Perón, the army colonel with great expectations, engendered thousands of avid supporters by simply being himself; he also made enemies the same way.<sup>24</sup>

Peronism can also be interpreted more concretely as "an ill-defined mélange of populism, personalism, and nationalism," i.e., the inward-focused, perpetuating Argentine spirit of nationalism, compounded with the growing populism movement, swirled around the person of Juan Perón. Peronism simply provided a name for the new political identity that emerged out of pre-existing sentiments of nationalism, which pervaded and polarized Argentine politics for decades. Peronism drew the sharp indelible political line between populist anti-liberalism and anti-liberal modernism. Indeed,

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<sup>23</sup> Jeremy Adelman, "Reflections on Argentine Labor and the Rise of Perón," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 11, no. 3 (September 1992): 243, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3338863> (accessed 1 April 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Mark Falcoff. "Orange Juice with General Perón: A Memoir." *The American Scholar*, 62, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 383, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/41212150> (accessed 1 April 2013). See also: Z. "Argentina in the Tunnel," *Foreign Affairs* 30, no. 3 (April 1952): 393, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/20030908> (accessed 1 April 2013).

Peronism evolved from pre-existing roots of Argentine nationalism and grew out of populism around the person of Perón.<sup>25</sup>

General Eduardo Avalos, president to Perón's vicepresidency, grew fearful of Perón's increasing popularity and political power. Fearing a coup, Avalos exiled his vice president to Martin Garcia, an island prison, Argentina's equivalent to France's Isle of Elba. During this exile, which spanned all of one week, Juan Perón's girlfriend and political ally, movie actress Eva Duarte, known colloquially as "Evita," utilized the technology of radio to deliver emotional, passionate speeches across the Argentine airwaves, rallying Peronists together in support of their wrongfully imprisoned leader. Workers and patriots organized at the behest of Evita's charming insistence and flooded the main square of Perón's prison, forcing the military government to release Juan Perón.<sup>26</sup>

In 1946, Perón who was newly married to Evita, ran for president and was democratically elected with fifty-four percent of the popular vote. The Peróns became Argentina's first major political power couple, Juan, a strong and commanding military leader, and Eva, an attractive and persuasive accoutrement to her husband's authoritarian regime. Upon his election, Perón immediately began to execute modernized economic policies. Rather than selling raw materials abroad, as favored by the land-owning elites,

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<sup>25</sup> Alberto Spektorowski, "Nationalism and Democratic Construction: The Origins of Argentina and Uruguay's Political Cultures in Comparative Perspective," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (January 2000): 83 <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3339706> (accessed April 4, 2013). See also: Jeremy Adelman, "Reflections on Argentine Labor and the Rise of Perón," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 11, no. 3 (September 1992): 243, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3338863> (accessed 1 April 2013).

<sup>26</sup> David Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War* (Charleston: Evening Post Publishing Company, 2008), Kindle edition.

Perón implemented a form of developmentalism known as Import Substitution Industrialization, or the ISI model of economics. Perón turned the Argentine economic focus inward, developing technology and production from the inside out. By 1950 when Raúl Prebisch, the Southern Cone's ISI champion, set up shop in the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America in Santiago de Chile, Juan Perón was ahead of the game in implementing ISI policies within Argentina. Prebisch and Perón's ISI developmentalism proved beneficial throughout the Southern Cone, and Perón made Argentina a glowing example of inward-focused economic policies in the region.<sup>27</sup>

With a frenzied enthusiasm, Perón invested public money into state highways and steel plants. Perón nationalized the country's railroad system that had been built largely by investments from Great Britain. He redistributed wealth to pacify the demands of the previously ignored proletariats, who had for years been treated by the ruling class as little more than peasant workers or land serfs. By heavily taxing foreign-built technologies, Perón ensured that Argentines ceased importing washing machines and automobiles from the US and Europe; instead Argentines made these technologies themselves. A boom in metalworking and textile production led Argentina's GDP to soar, with industry overtaking agriculture for the first time in history.

The increases in government spending and the redistribution of wealth meant high rates of inflation. As Perón sought to "harmonize" an "organized community," many workers applauded their new higher wages as a result of a growing GDP. Oligarchical

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<sup>27</sup> Matthias vom Hau, "State Infrastructural Power and Nationalism: Comparative Lessons from Mexico and Argentina," Brooks World Poverty Institute, (October 2007) <http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/Working-Papers/bwpi-wp-1107.pdf> (accessed 12 March 2013). See also: Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007), Kindle Edition, 66.

money-holding families frowned at Perón's economic reforms, which smacked of social upheaval and devalued their capital wealth. The ruling class stood to lose much, including cheap labor, and they mistrusted the populism that made Perón a friend to the average worker. Workers gladly took advantage of their improved statuses and enjoyed improved labor conditions. Between 1946 and 1949, real wages increased by thirty percent, with benefits adding an additional forty percent to workers' complete compensation packages.<sup>28</sup>

Not all workers were pleased with Perón's policies, however, including the higher-ups within labor organizations. Perón introduced both reforms and stipulations to laborers, modeled after Benito Mussolini's Labor Code. Workers' contracts had to be endorsed by the labor secretary, the government would collect and distribute all union funds, and strikes were expressly prohibited. Perón controlled the General Workers' Confederation, increasing state control over labor and subsequently over the economy.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to alienating the ruling class and the higher echelons of labor, Perón also earned many enemies among the academic elites. The Peronist General University Confederation tightened controls over the university systems. Liberal academic analysis

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<sup>28</sup> James P. Brennan, "Prolegomenon to Neoliberalism: The Political Economy of Populist Argentina, 1943-1976," *Latin American Perspectives* 34, no. 3 (May 2007): 50, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/27648022> (accessed April 1, 2013). See also: Isabel Sanz Villarroja, "Macroeconomic Outcomes and the Relative Position of Argentina's Economy, 1875-2000," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41, no. 2 (May 2009): 328; Paul H. Lewis, "Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism." *The Journal of Politics* 41, no. 1 (February 1980): 248, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130025> (accessed April 4, 2013). [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0022216X09005586](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022216X09005586) (accessed April 3, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Paul H. Lewis, "Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism." *The Journal of Politics* 41, no. 1 (February 1980): 247-248, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130025> (accessed April 4, 2013).

of Perón's policies led many university professors, writers, and journalists to label Perón's Confederation as pseudo-fascist and undemocratic. During the tenure of Perón's first presidency, the Argentine Society of Writers, SADE, which boasted an eclectic membership of liberals and nationalists, shifted from being an apolitical union of academics to being a starkly anti-Peronist, politically driven organization. SADE found itself, with many other members of the academic elites, in an anti-nationalist mood. To preserve its best interests, SADE did not publicize its views, but devised a strategy of quiet dissent, quietly protesting and writing about the injustices Perón continually wreaked upon academics. From 1943 to 1946, 423 teachers were expelled from universities; 823 more resigned in protest.<sup>30</sup>

Elementary and secondary teachers, too, disapproved of Perón for his infusion of school curricula with heavily nationalist political propaganda. Educators, already part of well-socialized and organized union groups, disagreed with Perón's methodologies of forced nationalization through education, if not his ideologies altogether. Teachers used Perón's propagandist textbooks minimally, preferring to teach students other theories besides the "mass politics and the theory of the dominant majority" that pushed students towards sentiments of "intolerance and coercion." Teachers played an important role

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<sup>30</sup> Flavia Fiorucci, "Between Institutional Survival and Intellectual Commitment: The Case Of The Argentine Society Of Writers During Perón's Rule (1945-1955)," *The Americas* 62.4 (2006): 591-592, 602-603. [http://0-muse.jhu.edu.wncln.wncln.org/journals/the\\_americas/v062/62.4fiorucci.html#REF3](http://0-muse.jhu.edu.wncln.wncln.org/journals/the_americas/v062/62.4fiorucci.html#REF3) (accessed April 3, 2013). See also: Paul H. Lewis, "Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism." *The Journal of Politics* 41, no. 1 (February 1980): 248, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130025> (accessed April 4, 2013).

during the age of Perón in working within the tenets of Peronism in order to disseminate anti-Peronist ideals.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to Perón's polarizing economic and political reforms, he implemented mass authoritarian social modifications, further undermining the power of the people and of the press. Perón reworked the judicial system and began to take over newspapers, filtering the public's free access to information. Knowing that his enemies were many, Perón set out on a mission to seek out and squelch opposition. In the models of Benito Mussolini and Adolph Hitler, Perón set up a secret police, which numbered about 30,000. Clad in brown shirts like their Gestapo predecessors, these secret police agents used force and violence to silence dissenters, including military officers, government agents, and citizens making peaceful protests against Perón's tactics of political, economic, and social "reforms." Perón installed concentration camps in Patagonia to silence labor dissenters and other political objectors; many were tortured with cattle prods to force compliance and submission.<sup>32</sup>

In 1949, Perón increased his demands upon his labor base. Absenteeism among workers had become normal under their new found unprecedented liberties. Increased wages combined with decreased production meant high inflation—a rate of fifty percent.

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<sup>31</sup> Matthias vom Hau. "State Infrastructural Power and Nationalism: Comparative Lessons from Mexico and Argentina," 12-13.  
<http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/Working-Papers/bwpi-wp-1107.pdf>  
(accessed 12 March 2013)

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, 96. See also: Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition; Paul H. Lewis, "Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism," *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (February 1980): 254-255, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130025>  
(accessed April 4, 2013).



Real wages decreased by twenty percent from 1949 through 1955. Perón blamed the unions. When workers struck, the state police responded with brutal force.<sup>33</sup>

By 1949, in the midst of Perón's erratic reforms, the balance within the political and economic spheres began to quake, and Perón turned to a group of unlikely allies: housewives. In an attempt to solidify his political power and cast his net of Peronism over a wider sector of society, Perón, with Eva on his arm, began utilizing women as political and economic allies. When Perón first took office, women counted for only twenty percent of the economically active contributors. By 1950 Perón had named product consumption as the Argentine housewife's most important job, under the umbrella of her natural state of wife-and-motherhood. Though some women under Peronism did receive a formal education and/or work outside the home, most considered an occupation "transitory," preferring to return to their primary domestic duties when the economy evened out. Hebe de Bonafini, an Argentine housewife, stated the consensus of the Argentine woman: "What did a woman want with an education? All she had to know was to wash iron and cook."<sup>34</sup>

Perón empowered women within their homes by granting them suffrage, workers' rights, and the ability to divorce their husbands. Women became increasingly active in politics; Eva Perón led the Feminine Branch of Perón's powerful political party. Women's activities in politics were politely considered personal; each woman made her

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<sup>33</sup> Paul H. Lewis, "Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism," *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (February 1980): 250, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130025> (accessed April 4, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Natalia Milanesio, "The Guardian Angels of the Domestic Economy: Housewives' Responsible Consumption in Peronist Argentina," *Journal of Women's History* 18 no. 3, (Fall 2006): 95, [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_womens\\_history/v018/18.3milanesio.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v018/18.3milanesio.html) (accessed 1 April 2013).

own political decisions based upon her personal preferences and her individual family. One woman, newly active in politics under Perón, commented that she was lucky to have a supportive husband, and that many women she knew were simply slaves to their domestic obligations. Though women had been granted many rights under Perón, tradition pervaded the average Argentine's home, preferring women to remain in their natural, rightful place.<sup>35</sup>

Perón appealed to the traditional housewife via a series of propaganda pamphlets published by the government. By glorifying the woman's role as full-time domestic keeper and "consummate economic decision-maker" of the Argentine family, these brochures instructed housewives on the correct way to run household accounts and gave advice on items for purchase at grocery stores. Perón understood that females—mothers and wives—were the deciding factors in household purchases; women dictated purchases from fruits and vegetables to textiles, books, and major appliances—all Argentine made, of course.<sup>36</sup>

When Eva Perón died of ovarian cancer in 1952, Juan Perón's authoritarianism only increased and his already-frequent usage of violence escalated. Perón went as far as to publically encourage citizens to utilize violence against other citizens who attempted to stand against Peronist reforms or his henchmen. Perón exercised his bulging political

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<sup>35</sup> Maria del Carmen Feijoo, Marcela M. A. Nari, and Luis A. Fierro. "Women in Argentina during the 1960s," *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 9, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/2633935> (accessed March 26, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Natalia Milanesio, "The Guardian Angels of the Domestic Economy: Housewives' Responsible Consumption in Peronist Argentina." *Journal of Women's History* 18 no. 3, (Fall 2006): 93-94, 97, [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_womens\\_history/v018/18.3\\_milanesio.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v018/18.3_milanesio.html) (accessed April 1, 2013). [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_womens\\_history/v018/18.3milanesio.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v018/18.3milanesio.html) (accessed 1 April 2013).

muscles by expelling two dissenting Catholic priests; Pope Pius XII responded by excommunicating Perón.<sup>37</sup>

Unfavorable responses to Peronism grew in the public sector and within Perón's own military. Journalists like Jacobo Timerman accused Peron of changing daily based upon what the people who he ruled wished—or did not wish—him to be. Timerman studied Perón's documents and political actions, finding each to contradict the other. Timerman and his colleagues disagreed with Peron's political reforms and found them, along with his cult of person based upon that of Benito Mussolini, to be anti-Semitic. Timerman believed that Perón's labor heads were too young and inexperienced, which made them easily manipulated by the strong leader. Robert Cox, Timerman's colleague and a quiet family man, associated Perón with violence. Neither journalist had much good to say about the populist president.<sup>38</sup>

Citizen guerrilla groups began forming in response to oppressive policies and increased state violence, utilizing violence to fight violence. Military leaders planned to overthrow Perón in 1955 in response to his cutting the military budget and his infusion of Peronist propaganda into the military academies of Argentina. After a two-week standoff, the military coup was complete. Perón was sent again into exile. General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, Argentina's new de facto president, declared Peronism illegal; he even outlawed the public usage of the words "Perón" or "Peronism." Citizens who publically stood for Perón were sent to prison and/or executed in favor of moving past Perón's still-

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<sup>37</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>38</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition. See also: Jacobo Timerman, "Perón, Dead, Seeks Office," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1983 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/122308760?accountid=8337> (accessed April 2, 20130).

strong political hold. However, even in exile, Perón remained popular with many working-class Argentines; the seeds of Peronism had been planted and continued to flourish, even in the great man's absence.<sup>39</sup>

The “loyalties...illusions...and habits” of Peronism had indeed infiltrated society. In the absence of their revered leader, Peronists continued crediting their exiled hero with Argentina's ability to weather economic hardships, keep a lid on inflation, and carry out the demands and needs of the proletariat. Though the new post- Perón military junta hated the ideals Perón left behind and attempted to remove all Peronists from the ranks of the military, public office, and union leadership, the cult of Peron could not be that easily erased from Argentina's national identity. In the 1957 election, Peronists left their ballots blank as a form of nonviolent protest. Perón, a candidate who was not even on the ballot, captured two million blank ballots—one-quarter of the total ballots cast. The memory of Perón contributed to the power of identity. Even in Perón's political absence, Peronism and anti-Peronism as national political identities remained strong.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>40</sup> “Argentina Two Years after Perón: Problems Facing General Aramburu,” *The World Today* 14, no. 1 (January 1958): 19-21, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/40393005> (accessed April 1, 2013).

## The Development of Shock Torture in the 1950s as a Precursor to Changes in Identity

Gail Kastner suffered from a faulty memory. As an adult, she was plagued with extreme physical pain, an inexplicable fear of electricity, and severe anxiety and depression. Kastner overate and smoked continually. She spent most of her time in a convalescent home, adjusting her recliner and making notes on scraps of paper and in empty cigarette boxes.<sup>41</sup>

While Juan Perón ruled Argentina during the 1950s, Kastner, a teenager in Canada, lived with her identical twin sister in a home with a psychologically abusive father. Late in her teenage years she sought psychiatric therapy to deal with anxiety from her troubled home life. Kastner, an eighteen-year-old nursing student at McGill University in Montreal, visited Dr. Ewen Cameron, a well-known psychiatrist out of the Allan Memorial Institute of her university.<sup>42</sup>

When Gail checked in for her in-patient therapy, Dr. Cameron recorded that she seemed to be a “reasonably well-balanced individual.” After months of experimental treatments for depression and anxiety, Dr. Cameron’s diagnosis was drastically different; he labeled Kastner as “schizophrenic.” Dr. Cameron’s staff nurses charted that Kastner, who had entered treatment as a cheerful and social girl, entered a phase of manipulation and aggression before finally ending her treatments under the labels “passive and despondent.” When Kastner was released she could count only as high as six and could not recognize photographs of her immediate family. She sucked her thumb and demonstrated other infantile tendencies. She was no longer the upbeat, intelligent nursing

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<sup>41</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 30-31.

<sup>42</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 30-31.

student who simply needed to work through daddy issues. She was emotionally, psychologically, and physically broken.<sup>43</sup>

Kastner was not Dr. Ewen Cameron's only patient, and Dr. Cameron was an innocuous psychiatrist. Dr. Cameron, who had served as the head of the psychiatric boards of Canada, the United States, and the world, used his patients as guinea pigs for experimental trauma-inducing therapy. Patients who needed basic psychiatric assistance for issues like marital problems and post-partum depression visited Dr. Cameron's facility where he oversaw their "therapy," which consisted of long-term isolation, high-voltage electroshock treatments, long periods of forcibly induced sleep, and the administration of drug cocktails, which included PCP and LSD. Patients who refused these bizarre treatments were injected with sedatives and forced to comply. Cameron's goal was to violently and traumatically destroy his patients' mental facilities in attempts to rebuild them into healthy, productive citizens.<sup>44</sup>

All these excessive, experimental treatments were designed to create in patients' brains a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, upon which reprogramming and personality reconstruction could be possible. "Psychic driving," or the "reprogramming" of a personality following "deprogramming," followed the brainwashing; patients listened to taped messages on repeat for hours a day, day after day, telling them they were good parents, good people, and productive citizens. Though Dr. Cameron's attempts to erase memories and regress patients to a docile, malleable state proved somewhat successful, the rebuilding of new personalities and the forced implementation of modified behavior patterns was unequivocally *not*. Once patients had been severely traumatized, Dr. Cameron was unable

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<sup>43</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 34-35.

<sup>44</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 32-33, 42.

to repattern them. Psychic driving was not successful as a therapeutic treatment, but that did not deter the good doctor from continuing experiments and taking the “therapy” in another direction.<sup>45</sup>

With the Cold War waging, the United States sought ways to deter communist brainwashing in soldiers in Korea, as well as formulate techniques to interrogate Russian spies and cross agents. Under the code name MKUltra, Dr. Cameron and his professional colleagues at forty-four universities and twelve hospitals across the United States and Canada were granted \$25 million by the United States C.I.A. to research “special interrogation techniques,” i.e., to administer violent physically and psychologically damaging shocks upon unwitting victims in hopes they would release sensitive information.<sup>46</sup>

While Cameron’s early patients like Kastner had received multiple electroshock treatments and had been subjected to extreme sensory deprivation and extensive psychoactive drug cocktails, Cameron’s new research executed 360 shocks per patient over time, and patients were kept asleep in horse stalls converted to isolation chambers for twenty-plus hours at a time for up to one month. Cameron’s goals were simple but terrifying—to erase sensory input and to erase memory—the two integral techniques in correctly applying torture to a victim. Cameron and his cohorts researched other varying techniques of physical and emotional torture no longer to rebuild personalities, but rather to ascertain the best ways to break down suspected spies and double agents and obtain information from them against their wills: torture.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 38-39.

<sup>46</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 38-39.

<sup>47</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 42-43, 47.

While Dr. Ewen Cameron spent the 1950s experimenting with the administration of physical and psychic shocks to individuals, Professor Milton Friedman of the Chicago School of Economics passed the decade philosophizing upon the value of broad-scale economic shocks to permit a *tabula rasa* in society at large to foster the implementation of unfettered capitalism. Both the doctor and the professor shared similar ideologies and methodologies: depatterning individuals/societies and wiping the individual/collective memory in favor of repatterning. For Cameron, repatterning meant personalities; for Friedman, repatterning meant replacing encumbered economic systems with unregulated, unfettered capitalism.<sup>48</sup>

Both men proposed that the only way to reprogram individuals and society was by repeatedly shocking them. However, Friedman's "bitter medicine" could not be administered as freely as Dr. Cameron's. In fact, he realized that he would either have to wait for a traumatic event such as a war or a flood—or he would have to create one in order to test his theories. While Cameron had a C.I.A.-funded laboratory, Friedman waited anxiously until he, too, could have his own laboratory setting to test his theories of disaster capitalism, that is, the forced implementation of laissez-faire capitalism following a traumatic event.<sup>49</sup>

Friedman spent the next twenty years hypothesizing and settling to study complicated mathematical equations and to present persuasively capitalist lectures. He waited until the 1970s to finally get the chance to instigate his own series of societal shocks and implement neoliberal capitalism. Biding time by fighting the tenets of Keynesian economics, which balanced capitalism with governmental interventions and

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<sup>48</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 42-43, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 60.



social programs, Friedman and his “Chicago Boys” carried their ideologies through the Cold War, preserving and augmenting them until the time was right for their implementation.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 60.

## Argentine Identities Outside of and After (Anti-)Peronism

Citizens of Argentina identified themselves based on any number of criteria: political stances, religious affiliations, familial associations, and professional networks to name a few. This paper has explained the effects of Peronism and anti-Peronism on the political and economic landscape of post-World War II Argentina, but many Argentines during the time of Peronism would have described themselves as apolitical, wanting nothing to do with the political binaries that were violently dividing their country.

Though there are many identities that Argentines aligned themselves with, this portion of the paper will focus on the identity factors of Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox that affected their political actions and directly influenced their need to transmit memory: their identity as journalist, and their identity surrounding activism, spurred by duty and faith.<sup>51</sup> By examining the two journalists' personal lives, this section will create the backdrop for the political identities of two men who reported and editorialized upon the Argentine identity at large as a way to underscore the overlapping factors that contributed to identity formations prior to the Dirty War.

Jacobo Timerman in his memoir *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* identifies himself first and foremost as a Jew. Beyond his Judaism, his identity was closely tied to being both a family man and a career journalist. Timerman's adulthood profession, family, and faith were offshoots of a traumatic childhood influenced by chaotic European interwar politics, immigration into poverty,

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<sup>51</sup> Chapter Four of this paper will examine the evolving roles of women in Argentine society, specifically the creation of the "childless mother" by state-sponsored terrorism, which served as a political impetus for action among previously apolitical female citizens.

indoctrination into religious zealotry, and the demand for truth in memory, influenced by his mother, the matriarch of the Timerman family.

An instrumental event in the formation of Timerman's identity occurred in his childhood. In 1933, five years after his family's arrival to Argentina, a ten-year-old Jacobo Timerman wished to dress up as a clown as part of the country's popular Carnival festivities. Children and adults would wear costumes to participate in parades to celebrate the season before Lent—a Christian tradition. Energy was high as citizens looked to the celebration to distract them from the worsening conditions of the political economy.

But the Timermans were not Christian, and Yankle, the Yiddish for Jacobo, was disappointed in his mother's refusal to allow him to participate in an "anti-Semitic" celebration, which she claimed served only to further ostracize the non-Christian members of Argentine society. Costumes as such represented the facelessness of Jews, dispersed across the world with no home country of their own. Mrs. Timerman instilled in her son the identity of an outsider, of the other. Timerman felt the pangs of perceived persecution as his mother suggested her young son wait for Purim, an acceptable time for honorable people dress up as influential historical figures such as Tolstoy or Herzl.

"You'll wear a beautiful beard...And you'll recite words from some of the books they've written," said his mother to encourage her disappointed son.

"But everyone will laugh at me," Jacobo said, disappointed, thinking of the exciting, funny, and colorful costumes his friends would be wearing. His mother responded that only goyim will laugh, for Jews have greater respect for intelligent people than Christians.

Jacobo vocalized his frustrations: "Mother, why do they hate us?"

“Because they don’t understand,” his mother replied.<sup>52</sup>

At this moment in his youth, Jacobo felt his first (recurring) pang of confusion, ostracism, isolation, and judgment of being different, marginalized, and misunderstood. The early sentiments of Jacobo’s mother echoed throughout his later writing, creating in the small boy the identity of God’s chosen outsider. Over the course of his life, the word “Jew” would serve as his scarlet letter, his yellow star, the almost-tangible moniker of his ever-evolving identity--bequeathed proudly to him by his mother, the woman who made sure Yankle understood who he really was. Timerman’s Jewish identity had been in the making since before his birth, handed to him via the matrilineal line of Judaism by the parent whose voice echoed in his head for the rest of his life, resounding and reaffirming his religious, social, and political identity: his mother explained that Jacobo was different; Jacobo was a Jew.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout Jacobo Timerman’s formative teenage years, his mother reinforced his Judaism by enrolling him in a Zionist sports club called Macabi. In 1935, Mr. Timerman passed away. Mrs. Timerman kept her children busy attending Hebrew school and working odd jobs to support their family. The following year, Jews like the Timermans in Argentina and around the world glued their attentions to the news of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Adolph Hitler claimed his Aryan army of German athletes would crucify Jews and persons of color in the athletic arenas. The world watched Hitler’s Aryan army fall short of Herr Führer’s lofty expectations. Jews scattered around the world thought perhaps, as a group, they could finally be understood, contextualized, and

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<sup>52</sup> Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 62.

<sup>53</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 61-62.

proved worthy. Timerman himself thought perhaps, with enough empirical evidence of validity, Jews would be accepted by “Christians” and amalgamated seamlessly into society. This amalgamation did not occur as the Timermans had hoped.<sup>54</sup>

Jacobo’s mother was very pleased when, at age fourteen, Jacobo joined Avuca (Hebrew for “torch”), a highly political Zionist club for Jewish youths. Each Shabbat after Temple, Jacobo would scrub the floors or the family’s apartment buildings and, following a quick trip to the public bath, attend Avuca with his older brother Joseph. The youths acclimated to their new group of friends by playing chess and Ping-Pong, novelties to the poor, sheltered Timermans. They discussed with their wealthy, educated new friends the long and tempestuous history of their people, and the potential for a positive future for Jews in Argentina and around the world. Jacobo picked up scouting and the art of debate, under the tutelage of guest lecturers from the University Zionist Atheneum. His newly acquired identity of Zionist set the teenage Jacobo on a trajectory. He began learning the depths and breadth of Judaism, and the depths and breadth of his own political identity, connecting the microcosm to the macrocosm, and putting his own Jewish faith into the context of Catholic Argentina.<sup>55</sup>

Avuca meetings provided Timerman with the proverbial lens to examine himself and his people. In fact, Mr. Jacobo Timerman retrospectively credited the Avuca club as being the catalyst for his entire world changing. Suddenly a poor, confused, socially marginalized Jew was able to place himself into the global perspective. Jacobo learned to be “different,” but not alone. Avuca taught Jacobo that being “different” could work as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Jacobo learned to take back a name with a negative

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<sup>54</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 112-114.

connotation based upon a binary label like “other” or “Jew,” and to embrace it, accept it, and create a new identity around it. His mother was no doubt proud of his burgeoning Judaism. Timerman’s faith, ignited out of the flames of anti-Semitism by his mother’s match, led him on a life-long conquest of identity and purpose.<sup>56</sup>

Timerman and his young Zionist comrades marched, picketed, and fist-fought fascists and anti-Semites in the Buenos Aires streets. Rather than kowtowing to the social stigma of the label “Jew,” he focused his Judaism into activism. This transition of energy, sparked by Mrs. Timerman, gave Jacobo Timerman, even in his youth, a strong voice against the growing sanctions of fascism that threatened Europe, Latin America, and the globe. The undercurrents of preserving memory and traditions permeated into Timerman’s education and professional life. When he entered school and graduated as a journalist, his primary focus for reporting the news was to ensure that the underdog was given a voice. Timerman focused his career on truth in memory; his entire identity was molded around the preservation of the uniqueness of identity.<sup>57</sup>

The lifetime formulation of such a Jewish identity clashed over time with the “virulently intolerant version of Catholicism” that Argentina developed under long periods of Spanish and Italian influence. This forceful type of Christianity was introduced to Argentine politics in the 1930s, but would not come to fruition until the 1960s and 1970s. These religious overtones were, however, more deeply rooted in the authoritarian regime’s desire to implement neoliberal economic policies—policies that true liberals of politics and economics would have little respect for. Therefore Jews were thrown with

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<sup>56</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 112-114.

<sup>57</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 112-114.

young professionals and university students into the ever-widening net of dissenters and subversives to be targeted and *disappeared*.<sup>58</sup>

Robert Cox arrived in Argentina in 1955, just in time to catch the early waves of post- Perón Peronism. Cox was born in England, and made no claims to be deeply religious in any faith. Cox's religion seemed rather his sense of duty, which he carried with him throughout his life as a simple motto: do your job; report the truth. This sentiment arose during Cox's formative years in Great Britain. Cox worked in the news business since age fourteen when he signed up for a paper route to augment his family's income upon his father's untimely death. In addition to delivering news, the young boy showed a knack for reporting writing and was soon put on the payroll of the *East Essex Gazette* composing obituaries.<sup>59</sup>

Before his journalistic career could take off, Cox was drafted into the Korean War, served two years in the Navy, and earned two medals before returning to Great Britain. Upon his return to his homeland of England, Cox took up a post at the *Anglican Daily Times* and the *Hull Daily Mail*. Cox had a penchant for covering dangerous stories, and, as a reporter, made the news himself when he ran into a building engulfed in flames to rescue those left trapped in a fire.<sup>60</sup>

Cox's sense of duty sprang from his upbringing. His father had served in World War I and was greatly disappointed when old age prohibited him from serving again in World War II. Influenced by his father's loyalty to service and country, Bob Cox put his

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<sup>58</sup> Mark J. Osiel, "Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War," *Representations* 75, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2001.75.1.119> (accessed April 1, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle Edition.

<sup>60</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle Edition.

heart into his own military service, and subsequently to his quest to bring truth to the readers of the news journals for which he wrote. “Do your job; report the truth,” repeated Cox. Unlike Jacobo Timerman, who was a motivated activist prodded by religious faith and a sense of inequality, Cox’s sense of duty was more even-keeled and analytical. Though he covered the strongly Catholic Argentine politics and expressed his views on the anti-Semitic climate of Argentina following World War II and into the Dirty War, Cox’s activism was thoroughly applied across the delineating lines of race, religion, and creed.

While Timerman both embraced and undermined the political climate of his adopted homeland of Argentina, Cox gave his own opinions as sojourner, an English-speaker in a sea of Spanish-language commentary. Timerman, who wrote highly emotional appeals, was greatly a product of growing up feeling like an outsider in his adopted homeland; Robert Cox, the eternal English gentleman, printed news with the unique point of view of an insider-observer rather than a participant. While both journalists described themselves as more centric than right or left, Timerman admitted his newspaper, *La Opinión*, was understood to be liberal, and Cox, who identified as conservative, found himself defending the *Herald’s* editors from being labeled as “bleeding heart liberals.” Neither man approved of or related well to Perón and the negative, polarizing effects of Peronism upon Argentina. Both men resented his political reforms and the subsequent hyper-Catholic reforms of the Proceso junta.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Cox, “They Cried for Him in Argentina: PERÓN AND THE ENIGMAS OF ARGENTINA By Robert D. Crassweller Norton. 432 pp. \$22.95,” *The Washington Post*, January 18, 1987, <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/139207415?accountid=8337> (accessed April 1, 2013). See also: Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 23.



Both journalists lost their fathers as boys, and found themselves hard at work at young ages to support their mothers and remaining family members. Timerman's father passed when he was twelve years old, Cox's when he was fourteen. Both young men developed close ties with their young families, which carried over into their positions in their homes as loyal husbands and fathers to the families they created as grown men. Both men worked hard as business professionals to fulfill their personal obligations and their roles within their families. Both men cared deeply for their wives and children, and made many of their political and professional decisions based upon the image of their wives' eyes or simply to protect their children's safety. Both men received hundreds of other people's mothers into their offices from the time (anti-)Peronist violence began well into the days of the Dirty War's disappearance of thousands of citizens.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 35. See also: Cox, *Dirty Secret, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

## Perón's Absent but Violent Effects over Argentina

Following the ousting of Perón in 1955, weak military and civilian rule became a ten-year plague in Argentina. As Peronism had been made illegal, Peronists found themselves working outside of the regular constitutional means in order to make their political and economic demands heard. Direct action and labor militancy became the modus operandi of the Peronists, who utilized violence as a means of communication.<sup>63</sup>

A(nother) coup d'état of 1966 replaced a tenuous radical government with the most authoritarian military junta known to Argentina up to that time. The new Argentine president, General Juan Carlos Onganía, implemented his own personal reforms to Argentine society. Onganía was a professing member of the Opus Dei, a devout sect of Catholicism. Onganía stocked his cabinet with Opus Dei brothers. Stark, militantly traditional Catholicism permeated the government, even after Onganía was deposed. These Catholic patriarchs found universities and trade unions to be rife with liberals, specifically Jews, which was a problem for the tenets of tradition and faith the authoritarian government wished to propagate throughout society. These Catholic rulers viewed liberals, universities, and Jews as part of a larger "Zionist Conspiracy."<sup>64</sup>

Beyond religious reform, Onganía made it his primary purpose to modernize the economic system. Onganía set about this goal by eradicating citizens from active participation in government and further weakening the power of labor. Onganía

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<sup>63</sup> James P. Brennan and Mónica B. Gordillo, "Working Class Protest, Popular Revolt, and Urban Insurrection in Argentina: The 1969 'Cordobazo,'" *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 478, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3788983> (accessed April 1, 2013).

<sup>64</sup> Mark J. Osiel, "Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War," *Representations* 75, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2001.75.1.119> (accessed April 1, 2013).

disbanded Congress, dismantled the political party system, and met all forms of opposition with intimidation and violence. The workers' right to strike was again withdrawn as Onganía froze wages and eliminated thousands of public railroad and airport jobs.<sup>65</sup>

Union workers like Augusto Vandor of the *Unión Obrera Metalúrgica*, or Metallurgical Workers Union, were quite disgruntled by Onganía's oppressive social, economic, and political policies. In hopes of recreating the alliance that had existed between labor and the military under Perón, on March 1, 1967, Vandor and his followers, dubbed *vandoristas*, went on an illegal strike to leverage their demands. General Onganía responded by criminalizing six of Argentina's leading trade unions and suspending all collective bargaining.<sup>66</sup>

Six thousand workers and students in Cordoba, Tucuman City, and Buenos Aires, appalled at Onganía's tactics, broke out into riots. In a vein reminiscent of Peronist-approved violence, demonstrators overturned police cars and set almost 200 shops on fire. Onganía responded forcefully, sending airborne troops to Cordoba and imposing martial law. By the time the demonstrations died down, at least ten Argentines were killed, including one in a bomb, which exploded at police headquarters in Buenos Aires. Four hundred Argentines were reported as injured, and five hundred were arrested. This event, which became known as "Cordobazo," radicalized and mobilized right-wing Peronists as well as leftist workers, university students, and young professionals in a

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<sup>65</sup> James P. Brennan and Mónica B. Gordillo, "Working Class Protest, Popular Revolt, and Urban Insurrection in Argentina: The 1969 'Cordobazo,'" 478.

<sup>66</sup> Nes Dispatches, "6 Are Killed As Riots Erupt In Argentina," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 30, 1969, <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/147672030?accountid=8337> (accessed April 1, 2013).

manner popularized under Peronism but with a renewed vengeance against the oppressive and authoritarian military rule.<sup>67</sup>

The “Cordobazo” set a precedent for the Argentine populace responding to government oppression. Many Argentines, whether political or not, whether Peronist or not, took to Perón’s sentiment of violence as an appropriate response to violence, and Argentines began responding in kind to their increasingly violent government and to one another. Out of such labor disputes like the Codobazo, a guerrilla group called the “Montoneros” arose from a much larger Peronist labor base. Though Peronist leaders outside of the leftist Montoneros disputed the terrorist tactics of the guerrilla group and publically denounced the wayward faction, the Montoneros exercised their underground political strength to combat the oppression of their government in any way they saw fit—mostly by utilizing violence.<sup>68</sup>

Other leftist guerrilla groups opposed to the oppressive military regimes formed, as well such as the Revolutionary Army of the People, ERP, a group created in homage to revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and the Revolutionary Party of the Workers, PRT. A “class-conscious” unionism formed out of university students, young professionals, and liberal Catholic clergy, not associated with Peronism but made possible by the veins of Peronism that already existed in Argentina. A shift in Argentine identities occurred as

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<sup>67</sup> Nes Dispatches, “6 Are Killed As Riots Erupt In Argentina,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 30, 1969, <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/147672030?accountid=8337> (accessed April 1, 2013). See also: James P. Brennan and Mónica B. Gordillo, “Working Class Protest, Popular Revolt, and Urban Insurrection in Argentina: The 1969 ‘Cordobazo,’” 478-479.

<sup>68</sup> Mark J. Osiel, “Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War,” *Representations* 75, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 122, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2001.75.1.119> (accessed April 1, 2013).

citizens began organizing around political identities that no longer solely focused on the polarizing effects of Perón, but rather upon an increasing need for justice under increasingly oppressive, authoritarian government controls.<sup>69</sup>

In 1971 Jacobo Timerman, aware of the growing political oppression around him, formed *La Opinión*, Argentina's only completely reader-supported, advertisement-free newspaper. A political journalist with twenty-four years of experience in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, Timerman set up his moderate- to left-leaning newspaper as a means to deliver truth when the military regimes of his country began buying and controlling news. *La Opinión* was censured on several occasions by the political powers of the time, including by Isabel Perón, the new wife of Juan Perón, who returned with him to the Argentine presidency.<sup>70</sup>

When Perón returned to the seat of Argentine power in 1973, the use of state-sponsored terrorism in response to citizen-initiated violence (which was a response to governmental authoritarianism) had become shockingly "normal." At this time Perón formed the Triple A, the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, a guerrilla group, which consisted of military and police officials, formed to combat other existing guerrilla factions. Many members of the Triple A were ex-police and ex-military with besmirched records of conduct; many had committed crimes while in service. The Triple A used disappearances as a means to identify and forcefully squelch alleged terrorists and subversives. Much to the dismay of Jacobo Timerman, the Triple A obtained funds from powerful Jewish community leaders, as well as by extortion, blackmailing five hundred

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<sup>69</sup> Marina Franco and Carlos Pérez, "Between Urgency and Strategy: Argentine Exiles in Paris, 1976-1983," *Latin American Perspectives* 34, no. 4 (July 2007): 52, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/27648033> (accessed April 1, 2013).

<sup>70</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 22.

Argentine companies in exchange for *not* disappearing their employees. The Anticomunist Alliance was as successful as the Montoneros in such extortion; the Montoneros blackmailed the same five hundred Argentinean companies for identical reasons.<sup>71</sup>

Bob Cox wrote articles and editorials foreshadowing and forewarning the escalation of violence from both above and below. Perón's words "Violence from above engenders violence below" echoed throughout government halls, business offices, private homes, secret hideouts, and in Cox's head. Cox and Timerman printed their condemnation for the use of violence from the government and the guerrilla groups. In a 1974 editorial covering the murder of the three police officers by "terrorists," Cox begged his readers to consider the growing numbers widow(er)s and orphans left behind as violence incited more violence. Cox argued and pleaded:

Criminal action is not a legitimate form of political protest any more than brutal repression of dissident opinion is acceptable as a means of maintaining public order. If only the quiet voice of the civilized conscience of the ordinary person could make itself heard, we might see an end to the violence.<sup>72</sup>

A near end to violence was not in sight for Argentina. A year after he formed the Triple A, Juan Perón died, leaving his wife Isabel to rule his now-chaotic homeland of Argentina. During Isabel's tenuous reign, Argentina's military forces joined with Chile's DINA, the National Intelligence Directorate, which operated under the auspices of Operation Condor, an organization of military governments that violently utilized a highly classified information network to squelch the ever-growing, ever-strengthening

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<sup>71</sup> Marina Franco and Carlos Pérez, "Between Urgency and Strategy: Argentine Exiles in Paris, 1976-1983," 52. See also: Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 22-23, 44-46.

<sup>72</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

guerilla groups of the Southern Cone. By joining ranks with Operation Condor, the military of Argentina exponentially increased its resources, manpower, and knowledge base.<sup>73</sup>

The United States CIA, fully practiced on shocking interrogation techniques from its years of Cold War experiments under Dr. Ewan Cameron, sent both funds and agents to train Southern Cone Operation Condor officials on proper methods of detention and torture. With such limitless access to information, the Argentine junta justified grouping all “subversives” into the category of violent guerillas. Anyone who opposed the military was considered a dangerous terrorist and was hunted down, captured, and handled as such. By 1975 the Argentine death count was at 475 bodies: guerrillas, police officers, government officials, leftist citizens, and even innocent children and bystanders had lost their lives to political terrorism. Along with an increased body count, inflation in the Argentine economy exploded under Perón’s expansionary monetary policy. By the coup d’état of 1976, which ousted Isabel Perón, the economy of Argentina was in decline, and a pattern of citizen and state-sponsored violence had been fully established. “The Dirty War” was in full swing.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 135-136. See also: Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>74</sup> Marina Franco and Carlos Pérez, “Between Urgency and Strategy: Argentine Exiles in Paris, 1976-1983,” 52. See also: John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 135-136. See also: Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition; Isabel Sanz Villarroya, “Macroeconomic Outcomes and the Relative Position of Argentina’s Economy, 1875–2000,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41, no. 2 (May 2009): 328 [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0022216X09005586](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022216X09005586) (accessed April 3, 2012).

## Chapter 3

The Implementation of Neoliberalism and the Dirty War: The Beginning of Shifts

Upon the Identity of the *Disappeared*



## The Dirty War Through the Perspective of Two Political Journalists

Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox were somewhat confused following the coup d'état of 1976. The bloody battles surrounding Peronism, including the guerrilla facets of right and left and the state's response to terrorism, had truly gone out of control in Argentina. Both journalists realized something drastic had to occur to stop the violence. They observed the surprisingly bloodless coup of 1976 as it installed a combined junta of the army, navy, and air force under the rule of Army Commander General Jorge Videla: the National Reorganization Process, or Proceso regime. The coup had been efficient and free of casualties.<sup>75</sup>

Argentine citizens, who had grown tired of the political and economic unrest of the past decade(s), were pleasantly relieved when de facto President Videla assumed Isabel Perón's presidency seat. Unlike the horrendously violent military overthrow in Chile that ejected democratically elected Salvador Allende and placed dictator Augusto Pinochet in office in 1973, the Argentine coup of 1976 that installed the Proceso seemed to promise a return to order from the chaos of Peronism-gone-wild. Citizens all over Argentina were hopeful that Videla would end the political chaos and polarization that had ignited around the cult of Perón.<sup>76</sup>

Bob Cox had covered many coups d'état during his tenure as an Argentine reporter in the 1960s and 1970s. Directly following the junta's military takeover, Cox praised General Videla, calling him a dove among hawks. *The Herald* announced Videla was just the man to end terrorism, stop corruption, and reinstate democracy in Argentina.

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<sup>75</sup> Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*, 137. See also: Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>76</sup> Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*, 137.

As an economic conservative, Cox was also excited by the installation of the free market economy Videla put in place. “Once we get the economy right, the rest will follow,” Cox was known to repeat.<sup>77</sup>

A week later, Cox came home very late. Waking his wife, Maud, he voiced his burgeoning concerns: “I’m very worried. Things are not going as we hoped. It looks as if our worst fears are coming true...the killing hasn’t stopped. People are still disappearing.”<sup>78</sup>

Jacobo Timerman came to this realization simultaneously but independently. Days after the fall of Isabel Perón, Timerman had lunch at his favorite swanky club in the basement of the Plaza Hotel of downtown Buenos Aires. His luncheon guest was a naval officer of the Argentine military forces. Timerman never named the man—perhaps the man never gave his name—but the officer put the “civil war against subversives” into grave perspective for the seasoned journalist.

The unnamed officer confided to Timerman that two days earlier, directly following the coup, someone had poisoned the lunches of several high-ranking military officers. The officers had not eaten the food, but the attempt on their lives was to be taken seriously, nonetheless. Timerman remarked, “It was obviously the guerrillas. I’d submit them to military law and aim for a public trial, inviting journalists and foreign jurists to attend.”

The unnamed officer asked Timerman what the point of that would be. Timerman explained that a trial would uncover the motives and methodology of the guerrillas, exposing their secrets to the country, and putting an end to the romanticized version of

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<sup>77</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>78</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

revolution that enshrined the rebels. The officer informed Timerman that no trial had taken place, but the would-be poisoners had already been executed.

“Without trial, defense, or anyone’s knowledge?” Timerman asked, appalled.

“Had we followed the method you advise, we would have had to delay their execution after they’d been sentenced to death.”

“Why?”

“Because the Pope would have intervened,” responded the officer, nonchalantly.

Timerman asked if it would not be preferable to simply reject the Pope’s petition rather than undermine the entire system of political process. “All that you’d be accomplishing, once this phase is over, is a resurgence of vengeance and violence. The seeds of future violence are being planted,” Timerman argued.

“You’re a Jew and don’t understand that we can’t deny a petition from the Holy Father...that’s why a political defeat is necessary,” the officer retorted. “...[I]f we exterminate them all, there’ll be fear for several generations.”

Timerman asked carefully, “What do you mean by all?”

The officer responded, “All...about twenty thousand people. And their relatives, too—they must be eradicated—and also those who remember their names...not a trace or witness will remain.”

Timerman said to the nameless officer, “That’s what Hitler attempted in his Night and Fog policy. Sending to their death, reducing to ashes and smoke, those he’d already stripped of any human trace or identity. Germany paid for each and every one of them. And is still paying, with a nation that has remained divided.”

The officer's response was simple: "Hilter lost the war. We will win."<sup>79</sup>

Timerman was stunned. His identity hung in a balance—he wanted to believe that peace had been returned to his adopted homeland, but this military official informed him not only that the violence was just beginning, but that Timerman, a Jew, would never understand the reasoning and depths behind the Catholic influenced military's decision to identify and eradicate all perceived subversives, their families, and anyone who would even remember their names. Indeed most Argentines had no idea what was bubbling below the surface of the National Reorganization Process.<sup>80</sup>

Days later, Videla and his Proceso regime censured the press, issuing a "list of principles and procedures" for editors to enforce. Cox scoffed off the list; the Argentine constitution forbade such a censorship of the press. Cox gravely printed that in less than a week following the coup, twenty-six bodies had been recovered, burned, blown up, and covered in bullet holes. Cox continued to print the names of the *disappeared* and the body count.<sup>81</sup>

On April 22, 1976, the junta issued a statement reiterating and strengthening the censorship of the press:

As from today it is forbidden to report, comment on or make reference to subversive incidents, the appearance of bodies and the deaths of subversive elements and/or members of the security forces unless they are first announced by a responsible official source. This includes kidnappings and disappearances.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 46-50.

<sup>80</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 46-50.

<sup>81</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>82</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

Along with the censorship of the press came the junta's campaign to return Argentina to traditional Catholic values. Pre-existing Catholic factions, leftover from years of Italian and Spanish influence, placed into prominence during the tenure of Juan Carlos Onganía, gripped tightly on the highest echelons of the Argentine political spheres. Networks of Catholic friends and family members formed informal links between members of government and Catholic universities. Those running the campaigns of terror associated the threat to Argentina's future with universities, the media, and with liberal politics—all fields allegedly dominated by Jews.<sup>83</sup>

Loyal nationalist clergymen preached publically and in their own private circles of the need to return to traditional Christian values, and how the laws of God took precedence over the laws of state. If God were displeased with the subversives, they must be eradicated, in the manner of the crusades or the Inquisition. Catholic priests often visited torture cells and administered last rights to dying prisoners; they pardoned torturers and assured the perpetrators of violence that God's will was done in their shocking actions. Many torturers cited the calming words of their priests as they prepared to exact physical and psychological torture on alleged subversives.<sup>84</sup>

Infamous priest Father von Wenich assured a troubled guard that God knew that the purging actions of torture were good for the country. Von Wernich was later indicted for seven murders, forty-two abductions, and thirty-one instances of torture. Father Sosa, a detention camp priest, insisted that prison guards should think of themselves as surgeons eradicating an evil disease. Bishop Medina preached to military troops and

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<sup>83</sup> Mark J. Osiel, "Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War," 130.

<sup>84</sup> Mark J. Osiel, "Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War," 130. See also: Marguerite Guxman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc, 1994), 53.

torturers, advising them to point their swords in the right direction—towards the impure subversives. The National Commission on the *Disappeared*, CONADEP, corroborates the testimonies of numerous released *disappeared* persons who witnessed active and passive abuses by Catholic clergymen.<sup>85</sup>

With the resurgence of militant Catholicism came a return to patriarchy. Any political strides that women had made under decades past seemed to fade quickly as women were encouraged to return to their homes and abandon all political aspirations. The misogynist junta insisted women had no place outside the home. Many women with *disappeared* husbands and children had no political allies to turn to, so they turned to their priests. Although some priests were liberally minded and desired to help the women, others like Fathers von Wernich and Sosa remained in the pocket of the government. Hebe de Bonafini, an uneducated housewife and the mother of a *disappeared* son, went to see Monsignor Antonio Plaza, who had assured her he could provide information about her son. When she arrived at his office, hopeful to obtain the cleric's help, she instead found the Monsignor with a state police officer. The men commenced grilling Hebe de Bonafini about the whereabouts of her son rather than assisting her in her quest of information. Appalled, she left promptly.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Mark J. Osiel. "Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War," 130. See also: Marguerite Guxman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc: 1994), 53; Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>86</sup> Jennifer G. Schirmer, "'Those Who Die for Life Cannot Be Called Dead:' Women and Human Rights Protest in Latin America," *Feminist Review* 32 (Summer 1989): 26 <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/1395361> (accessed April 3, 2013). See also: Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc, 1994), 51-53.

Many other mothers like Hebe de Bonafini found themselves without recourse. Robert Cox learned from a friend that people could go to the Government House in the plaza of Buenos Aires to meet with officials about the *disappeared*. Cox waited in line for hours with parents like Hebe de Bonafini. Officials opened the doors at 8:00 a.m., but people began to queue up as early as 1:00 a.m. in order to ensure a meeting. Cox both eavesdropped on and chatted with those in line. Mothers and fathers asked one another where else they could go for information and determined from one another which factions of the military had *disappeared* each other's relatives. News of Cox's interest in the *disappeared* spread amongst the waiters-in-line; Cox's news office was full of mothers of the *disappeared* from that day forward.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

### The Economic Angle and Backstory of the Coup According to Naomi Klein

Indeed the coup had disoriented and confused journalists Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox, and they were not alone in their disorientation. What Timerman, Cox, and Dinges viewed as political intrigue, Klein argued was much more. According to the theories of Naomi Klein, Dr. Ewen Cameron, and Milton Friedman, disorientation was exactly the point of the eerily calm coup. Most Argentines, even the most well-traveled, well-educated members of the middle and upper classes, saw the military coup of 1976 as just another military overthrow, and just another set of bizarre political, economic, and social reforms. It was perhaps a class war, with the wealthy returning to their rightful place over the proletariats of Perón's age. However, behind the scenes something much more sinister was occurring.

The U.S. C.I.A. had successfully orchestrated the Chilean coup of 1973, which installed Augusto Pinochet as dictator-president. A primary purpose of this putsch was to finally give Milton Friedman his laboratory setting to implement his coveted brand of completely unfettered neoliberal economic policies. Friedman hoped for little to no government regulations in the free flow of capital through Chile.<sup>88</sup>

Milton Friedman corresponded with Pinochet and even traveled to Chile to teach the dictator the best way to apply the shock doctrine to economics. Pinochet seemed well adept in administering physical and social shocks, so in the fashion of Dr. Ewen Cameron and Milton Friedman, Pinochet inflicted upon Chilean society a series of economically, politically, and socially traumatic shocks. Shock: democratically elected president Salvador Allende was violently deposed with the support of the United States. Shock:

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<sup>88</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 98, 100.



fighter jets and death squads attacked random Chilean citizens into a fearful state of docility and compliance. Shock: state police rounded up suspected dissenters, threw them into football stadiums, and massacred them. Shock: Pinochet deliberately depleted Chile's economy in hopes that the trauma would act as a proverbial defibrillator and jolt the country into a state of wealth. The ferocious shock treatments resounded throughout Chile, making it the first violently oppressed "laboratory" in the Southern Cone.<sup>89</sup>

This system of shocks resulted in the evolution of corporatism. What Benito Mussolini had originally termed "corporatism" included the powerful trifecta of the government, business, and trade unions, all kept in running order by an authoritarian police state. In the name of nationalism, these corporations would function in harmony, contributing to a country's economic, political, and social success. In the model adapted to the Southern Cone, corporatism resulted in the joining of the government with business, under the control of the police state. Workers were squeezed out of the trifecta, allowing for the pool of wealth to grow among some factions of society, but certainly not among all.<sup>90</sup>

The U.S. C.I.A. and the Chicago Boys, not content to test only Chile's participation in the shock laboratory, moved around the Southern Cone, and instigated shocks in Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. Countries that had flourished under developmentalism now were cursed by their involvement in Operation Condor. The United States backed the military governments of these Southern Cone countries and tirelessly attempted to implement foreign, and indeed bizarre, economic policies to their highly socialized, publically funded economies. The publicized violence that shocked the

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<sup>89</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 98, 100.

<sup>90</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 104.

world from Chile's coup was to be avoided at all costs in Argentina; the goal of the Argentine coup was to spread terror, but to do so in a more covert, less sensational way than Pinochet's revolt in Chile. Violence certainly existed in Argentina, but the government kept it quiet at all costs, explaining it away or denying it.<sup>91</sup>

Following the bloodless coup, the Proceso junta placed Chicago Boys into Argentina's economic realm of government: a new secretary of finance, a new president of the Banco Central, and a new research director for the department of treasury. Neoliberalist economists also filled various lower-level positions of government offices. Martínez de Hoz took over the top economic position of the country, minister of the economy. From a wealthy land-owning family, de Hoz, like his father and grandfather, had grown tired of the Peronists and the workers receiving the benefits of what he perceived to be his own private wealth. His post with the junta government spoke volumes to working-class Argentines: the junta was involving itself and its people in a violent class war of the rich upon the workers. The rich were ready to reclaim their previously redistributed wealth. Proletariats and young professionals were dubbed terrorists for their dissent. Like the unnamed officer had told Timerman, the memory of any subversives must be wiped clean in order for a new, repatterned society to break forth.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 106-107, 109. See also: Leon Watson, "Former dictator, 86, finally admits his regime 'disappeared' 7,000 or 8,000 left-wing opponents in Argentina," *Mail Online*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2130651/Jorge-Rafael-Videla-86-admits-regime-disappeared-8-000-left-wing-opponents-Argentina.html> (accessed April 2, 2013).

<sup>92</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 107.

Indeed, it was the clear-cut goal of the Proceso junta to eliminate alleged subversives. The disappearances, which had begun under the auspices of Perón, multiplied dramatically following the installation of the Proceso regime as a way, in the order of Dr. Ewen Cameron and Milton Friedman, to utilize trauma to wipe the memories of Argentines clean and create a new social, political, and economic order. The Proceso eliminated the Montoneros within six months of gaining power. When the junta had eliminated those with direct ties to terrorist groups, they cast their web wider.<sup>93</sup>

To silence dissenters, the government *disappeared* individuals, as well as entire families. After the government eradicated guerrillas and known violent dissenters, those with no obvious political power at all were *disappeared* for previous associations or known political acquaintances. This increase of violence came in conjunction with the shocks to the Argentine social structure and economy. The country found itself in economic crises as the Junta shut down Congress, suspended the constitution, banned unions, and removed any potential subversives from the court systems, universities, and high schools.<sup>94</sup>

The junta deemed the violence necessary to save Argentina from its sickness; extermination replaced the court system to ensure that future revolutionaries did not arise out of Argentine prisons. This portion of the paper will examine the meaning of being “*disappeared*” and discuss the factors that contributed to the purposes of the government

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<sup>93</sup> Mark J. Osiel, “Constructing Subversion in Argentina's Dirty War,” 130. See also: Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 119.

<sup>94</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 50. See also: Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, 100, 103.

for disappearing its own citizens, including political affiliation, the perceived subversive threat, and antinational religious affiliations.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 50. See also: Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, 100, 103.

### What It Meant to Be *Disappeared*

“All...about twenty thousand people. And their relatives, too—they must be eradicated—and also those who remember their names....Not a trace or witness will remain,” the unnamed officer had told Timerman.

Disappearance by the state implies more than simply “going away” or being “lost.” The terms “disappearance” and “to be *disappeared*” are semantic codes adopted to describe a person’s state of limbo. The *disappeared* were unaccounted for, neither here nor there, neither dead nor alive. Disappearance connoted a transition from personhood to nonpersonhood. *Disappeared* victims were stripped of their identities, e.g., hooded and kept in isolation. Guards in prisons referred to themselves as gods and to their prisoners as “no ones.” Military and police interrogators tortured and abused the *disappeared* with alleviated consciences; one cannot actually harm another being who is not really a person.

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The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights defines disappearance as “a true form of torture for the victim’s family and friends, because of the uncertainty they experience as to the fate of the victim and because they feel powerless to provide legal, moral, and material assistance.” Prisoners could be taken from their homes and families, or from their places of employment. Many had little idea why they were *disappeared*, and in this way, their confusion and disorientation furthered their susceptibility to the torture

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<sup>96</sup> Marguerite Feitlowitz, “Night and Fog in Argentina,” *Salmagundi* 94/95 (Spring-Summer 1992): 41.

they received. When people were *disappeared*, they were assumed to be neither dead nor alive; their personal history and identity were wiped clean.<sup>97</sup>

Though identities of the *disappeared* were influenced by pre-existing conditions that each brought with them such as emotional state, profession, and physical and mental strength, once brought to a prison cell, the outside world meant almost nothing to a *disappeared* person. The Argentine military arranged their holding cells in the fashion of Dr. Cameron's sensory deprivation chambers. Prisoners were kept in isolation. Loud music was blasted over speaker systems to drown out screams. Guards mercilessly assured the *disappeared* that they no longer existed as no one would ever be able to locate them or save them. *Disappeared* persons were kept hooded or blindfolded at all times to perpetuate the psychological trauma of being nameless, faceless, and personless. Guards and military officials stole the identities of their prisoners, reducing them to nonhumans. Swastikas and other Nazi paraphernalia were commonly displayed while Hitler's speeches were played over loudspeaker systems to invoke the terrifying air of concentration camps. Heavily Catholic, often anti-Semitic torture guards terrorized Jews. In prisons Jewish girls were sexually violated at twice the rate of Christian girls.<sup>98</sup>

The psychological aspect of their torture played directly into the actual physical acts that befell them. Many prisoners were severely beaten. Women were often molested

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<sup>97</sup> Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, 108-109. See also: Marguerite Feitlowitz, "Night and Fog in Argentina," *Salmagundi* 94/95 (Spring-Summer 1992): 41, 57.

<sup>98</sup> Marguerite Feitlowitz, "Night and Fog in Argentina," *Salmagundi* 94/95 (Spring-Summer 1992): 42. See also: Uki Goni, "Jews targeted by Argentina's dictatorship: International groups sought US aid for mass evacuation in the 70s," *The Guardian*, March 17, 1999, <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/188463069?accountid=8337> (accessed April 3, 2013). See also: Timmerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 70.

and raped by guards. Pregnant women were either forced into having miscarriages or their babies were taken from them at birth and donated to childless military couples. Men and women were subjected to the electric torture of their primary sex organs. Men were often feminized as a form of physical and psychological torture. Jews were mocked for their circumcisions. Pre-existing human factors such as sex and religious affiliation were amplified or distorted by the torturers to further disorientation and trauma in victims.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Mary Jane Treacy, "Double Binds: Latin American Women's Prison Memories," *Hypatia* 11, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 131, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/3810397> (accessed April 2, 2013). See also: Leon Watson, "Former dictator, 86, finally admits his regime 'disappeared' 7,000 or 8,000 left-wing opponents in Argentina," *Mail Online*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2130651/Jorge-Rafael-Videla-86-admits-regime-disappeared-8-000-left-wing-opponents-Argentina.html> (accessed April 2, 2013).

## The Disappearance of Jacobo Timerman and the Arrest of Robert Cox

In April of 1977 Jacobo Timerman called his friend Robert Cox, fearing for his own safety. “Cox, where are they going to throw my body?” Timerman half-joked. Cox urged his friend not to worry; Timerman was a local celebrity. Surely the junta could not touch him without fear of backlash. In spite of Cox’s hopeful sentiments, he learned that Timerman was *disappeared* only weeks later.<sup>100</sup>

Jacobo Timerman wrote of his own disappearance:

I was kidnapped by the extremist sector of the army. From the outset, President Rafael Videla and General Roberto Viola tried to convert my disappearance into an arrest in order to save my life. They did not succeed. My life was spared because this extremist sector was also the heart of Nazi operations in Argentina. From the very first interrogation, they figured they had found what they’d been looking for so long: one of the sages of Zion, a central axis of the Jewish anti-Argentine conspiracy.<sup>101</sup>

Timerman seemed very certain he was detained for being Jewish; other times, he admitted that no one ever actually gave him a reason for his disappearance. Regardless of the reasons behind his disappearance, Timerman’s Judaism was certainly exploited by his captors to evoke self-consciousness and psychological torture. In Mr. Timerman’s first days, perhaps weeks, in captivity, he experienced at the hands of his military captors alternative shocks and reliefs of the brain and body, which led to a state of perpetual disorientation. Guards yelled repeatedly, “Jew! Jew! Jew!” both reinforcing and mocking his identity.<sup>102</sup>

He remained on high alert, constantly fearful, never sure when his next torture session would be. Interrogation sessions lasted at least twelve hours. Sometimes

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<sup>100</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>101</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 29-30

<sup>102</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 132.



interrogation meant physical torture, sometimes it meant only emotional abuse. All sessions were completely unannounced and could occur any time of day or night. Usually a military-affiliated doctor examined Mr. Timerman during and following each visit with Susan to ensure that no permanent physical damage—evidence—could be detected. Priests visited prisoners between torture sessions, praying for their subversive souls, “encouraging” them at the behest of the junta.<sup>103</sup>

Interrogation sessions invoked frustration via *déjà vu* in Timerman; military inquisitors executed a similar sequence of questions and demands, which, over time, became increasingly absurd: Are you Jewish? Are you Zionist? Is *La Opinión* Zionist? Do you travel to Israel? Provide details of the Andinia Plan in which you Jews plan to overthrow Argentina.<sup>104</sup>

The lifelong identity that Jacobo Timerman had cultivated—that of a Jew, a Zionist, a journalist, and a political activist—was being called into question and put under the scrutiny of his government and his own introspection. Timerman, in constant physical and mental anguish, had extensive time to himself, to meditate and evaluate his circumstances and the potential outcomes of his responses to his environment.<sup>105</sup>

In order to preserve his identity as a journalist, as a family man, and as a Jew, Jacobo Timerman observed his own thought patterns. When Timerman first arrived to his torture cell, he found his brain disoriented and overstimulated, constantly on alert. He

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<sup>103</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 74. See also: Wright, 117-118.

<sup>104</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 30, 74.

<sup>105</sup> “Argentina Called Especially Cruel to Arrested Jews: Support for Timerman Trip to Washington,” *New York Times*, Jun 27, 1981 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/121693102?accountid=8337> (accessed April 2, 2013).

constantly thought of his wife, Risha, and her beautiful eyes. He composed soliloquies called “Risha’s Eyes” in his mind to occupy himself and keep his thoughts focused away from disorientation and torture. Apart from Risha’s eyes, Timerman found comfort and solidarity in the eyes of his fellow captives. Inside the torture cells, prisoners, though separated, would catch one another’s glances, exchanging in looks what words could not express. Timerman was able to keep hope alive thanks to the smallest gestures shared by his comrade detainees. Timerman found however that the hope of escape and the memory of life outside the cell were too much for his shocked brain and body to handle. “And the chief enemy,” he noted, “is not the electric shocks, but penetration from the outside world, with all its memories.”<sup>106</sup>

Exhausted from sustained physical and mental abuse, Timerman realized that he was completely unable to mentally, physically, and emotionally last for very long under such extreme conditions of duress. He waited for insanity, prayed for it, to relax his mind and body, and completely disconnect him from his surroundings. When the insanity did not come, he decided he could no longer pretend to logically argue with his inquisitors; he could no longer even attempt to exert the most meager level of interest towards his authoritarian torturers. Timerman, brutalized and battered, consciously made a decision that completely shifted his identity and went contrary to every ideal he had ever believed and every action he had ever performed: he gave up.<sup>107</sup>

This change to Timerman’s identity was not permanent. It was merely a temporary shift to preserve what sanity he felt was left inside his traumatized brain and body. Timerman’s colleague Robert Cox was approaching insanity on the outside of the

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<sup>106</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 5, 85.

<sup>107</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 91-92.

cell. Worried sick for the lives of his captured comrade and for his family, Cox became increasingly nervous, but continued a vocal campaign against the violence of Argentina. Cox contacted President Videla on Timerman's behalf, urging him to legalize Timerman's arrest if not set him free. Cox continued meeting with those whose relatives had been *disappeared* and printed plea after plea, begging the regime to end its use of violence against the Marxist and Peronist guerrillas and against the innocent citizens caught in the wake of state-sponsored terrorism. Cox used *The Herald* as a mouthpiece of reason to speak to his fellow Argentines—to crack the illusion that many lived under: the expectation that the military junta would eventually restore order to violence and chaos. Cox could tell no end was in sight as long as violence was used to combat violence.<sup>108</sup>

One week later Betty Lombardo, a staffer at *The Herald*, phoned Maud, Robert Cox's wife. "I have good news and bad news to tell you," Betty said carefully. "They arrested Bob today, but they have not made him disappear."<sup>109</sup>

Federal police took Robert Cox to their headquarters in Buenos Aires under the pretext of violating press restrictions. Cox was made to strip and was thrown into the basement of federal police headquarters. The antechamber of his holding cell was decorated with a large swastika. Cox was released the following day at the behest of the enraged United States and British governments, as well as due to pressure from his colleagues of the international press. Cox was not officially *disappeared*, but the arrest was enough to shake him to his core. Outside the cell, Cox contacted as many diplomats and government officials in the United States and United Kingdom as he possibly could.

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<sup>108</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>109</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

Highly traumatized, he spoke out with a renewed fervor on behalf of those still locked away, those hooded and nameless victims in prison cells without number.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

## Chapter 4

### Human Rights Efforts on Behalf of the *Disappeared*: The Identity of Solidarity within the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

## Robert Cox and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Upon Robert Cox's release from prison, he began making as many beneficial friends as possible. Cox gained hope when United States President Jimmy Carter, newly elected, announced his mission to restore human rights to the Southern Cone. Cox hailed the work of Carter's assistant secretary for human rights, Patricia Derian, and formed close ties with F. Allen Harris, the United States ambassador to Buenos Aires. Ed Koch, a congressman from New York, had been actively watching the Southern Cone for years, and was instrumental in raising awareness of the United States' involvement in Operation Condor. Cox counted it a victory when the United States cut aid to Uruguay and then Argentina. Cox published editorials, articles, and columns, exercising what remaining press power he had to demand the release of his journalist colleagues, and of the thousands of other *disappeared* Argentines.<sup>111</sup>

With the changes on the front of the United States' involvement came changes from the ground up inside of Argentina. The mothers that had flooded the Buenos Aires streets and government offices in search of their missing children began recognizing one another, running into each other in various news offices and government buildings. Frustrated and at a loss, Azucena Villaflor de Devicenti, a housewife, exclaimed to those women around her, including the familiar face of Hebe de Bonafini, "We are wasting time. What we have to do is go to the Plaza de Mayo."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition. John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*, 218.

<sup>112</sup> Matilde Mellibovsky *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997), 15.

Hebe de Bonafini looked at Azucena and the other women around them, realizing that the brusque officers behind high desks could easily ignore their singular emotional cries. The key to their success would be solidarity, organizing together and finding strength in numbers. Though Azucena's idea was well received by the women around her, none had political experience; their entire lives consisted of being inside their homes, being mothers.

Hebe Bonafini forwent a formal education in lieu of getting married. She felt she was not a complete person until she became a mother; her children gave birth to her, teaching her to be politically conscious and socially minded. It was not until Jorge deBonafini, Hebe's son, was *disappeared* that she took on an active identity outside her home. "I kept thinking that I'd go crazy if I stood still," she stated. She ran around filling out forms and visiting government offices until she learned of Azucena's plan to meet at the Plaza de Mayo. "I wasn't sure how I felt about it, but I went."<sup>113</sup>

Matilde Mellibovsky, another familiar mother, decided to attend as well, in hopes of ending her phase of "madness." Following the disappearance of her daughter Graciela, Mellibovsky found herself feeling increasingly "demented." Her life had been dedicated to raising "Gra"; without Gra, Mellibovsky was empty and lonely. She began to lose her faculties. Her daughter's disappearance was a turning point from "normal life" into an evolving identity of childless motherhood. Until Mellibovsky ran into Azucena Villaflor

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<sup>113</sup> Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Zelia Brizeno and Hebe de Bonafini, "Interview with Hebe de Bonafini: President of Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo," *Feminist Teacher* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 16-18 <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/25700312> (accessed April 3, 2013).

de Devicenti and Hebe de Bonafini, she talked to street tiles and fortunetellers, grasping at even the most unorthodox manners of locating her beloved Gra.<sup>114</sup>

On April 30, 1977, days after the arrests of Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo began their march towards justice. Asucena Villaflor, Hebe de Bonafini, Matilde Mellibovsky, and eleven other mothers met for the first time in the Plaza de Mayo to publically march to demand justice on behalf of their children. Catholics and Jews, Peronists and anti-Peronists united under their shared identity: mom. They timidly shuffled around the plaza, silently but visibly extending their roles of “mother” outside their homes.<sup>115</sup>

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo wore matching white *pañuelos*. They tied these diapers on their heads as kerchiefs, symbols of the purity, of motherhood, and of the innocence of lost youth. Many individual mothers stitched the names of their beloved lost loved ones on their kerchiefs. Other mothers felt that each mother’s lost child was her own, and to stitch one child’s name in her *pañuelo* would be disrespectful to the thousands of other *disappeared* children. Over time the women agreed that solid white presented a more unified front, and the names of their children were left off the *pañuelos*. Most mothers carried worn, faded photographs of their children that they showed to anyone interested; others carried trinkets or toys that reminded them of their lost loved

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<sup>114</sup> Matilde Mellibovsky *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997), 55-56, 60. See also: Jennifer G. Schirmer. “‘Those Who Die for Life Cannot Be Called Dead:’ Women and Human Rights Protest in Latin America,” *Feminist Review* 32 (Summer 1989): 26 <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/1395361> (accessed April 3, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Zelia Brizeno and Hebe de Bonafini, “Interview with Hebe de Bonafini: President of Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo,” *Feminist Teacher* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 18, <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/25700312> (accessed April 3, 2013).



ones. The mothers, housewives unused to public spectacle, were unsure what to expect the first time they gathered in the plaza. They huddled together and ambled around the Plaza de Mayo, utilizing the civil disobedience tactics of Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>116</sup>

An angry police officer approached the women and immediately demanded they “circulate.” Though he hoped this would break up the small band of women, it actually gave them a brilliant but simple idea—to march together in circles. And so they did. Two by two, the mothers linked arms and walked around the plaza following one another in wide circles, a silent parade of *panuelos* in the sun. Their circle became a symbol in itself of solidarity, the never-ending love of a mother, and of their never-ending search for their children.<sup>117</sup>

Each week as the women met, their ranks grew. The once-timid mothers now marched with confidence. They demanded to be granted entrance to the Casa Rosada, the Buenos Aires White House to plead their case; they hand-delivered a letter to the Pope. Their increased numbers in the plaza and around Buenos Aires garnered the attention of the public and the press. Though they were initially dubbed “lunatics” by the military junta and their tainted state-controlled periodicals, the message of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the message of justice and humanity, resonated with the oppressed Argentineans.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Sternbach, et al., “Interview with Hebe de Bonafini: President of Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo,” 18.

<sup>117</sup> Matilde Mellibovsky *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997) 86.

<sup>118</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

Robert Cox re-appropriated the term “lunatics,” in relation to the mothers, writing privately and publicly about the “Mad Mothers,” amplifying their cry for human rights. Cox’s publication of the women’s growing ranks garnered them much support and solidarity within their country. Nearly every Argentine knew someone who had been *disappeared*; every Argentine had a mother. The *New York Times* and several European news sources began printing blurbs about the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. International support grew for the women’s group, casting the stay-at-home moms under a global spotlight.<sup>119</sup>

In December 1977 a small group of French nuns joined the mothers out of international solidarity. As the women marched, a young man who presented himself as Gustavo Niño joined them, stating that his brother was *disappeared* and his mother was too ill to join the ranks of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Sister Alice Domon, one of the visiting nuns, repeatedly warned the man that he was endangering himself by publicly marching with the women. The man paid no attention to her warning, and proceeded with a small group of the women to a mass at the Church of Santa Cruz.<sup>120</sup>

In the church, the young man kissed the faces of several of the mothers and nuns. Following what David Cox called “the kiss of Judas,” military officers swooped in and kidnapped Azucena Villaflor, Ponce de Bianco, Esther Ballestrina deCareaga, Angela Agud, and Sister Alice Domon. Two days later, Sister Léonie Duquet, the sixty-two-year-old companion of Sister Alice, was also *disappeared*. Gustavo Niño was, in

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<sup>119</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>120</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition. See also: Hugh O’Shaughnessy, “Astiz killed nun who tried to save him” *The Observer*, June 13, 1982 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/476769471?accountid=8337> (accessed April 3, 2013);

reality, Alfredo Astiz of the Argentine navy. Nicknamed “The Blond Angel,” Astiz ensured that all of the mothers present were tortured and dumped into a mass grave. Sister Alice Domon, following a brutal beating and rape, *disappeared* permanently; her body was never recovered.<sup>121</sup>

A Swedish judge called for the arrest of Astiz, as he was also wanted for the murder of a Swedish citizen who lived in Buenos Aires. The girl’s father wrote a book about the search for his daughter and repeatedly attempted to bring The Blond Angel to justice. French authorities, outraged at the disappearance of the nuns, declared him a murderer and tenaciously called for his arrest, voicing their solidarity with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo over their own personal losses. French President Valery Giscard d’Estaing demanded Argentine’s President Videla turn over Astiz to the French government. Argentine, American, and European news outlets publicized this shocking violation of international human rights law. The Argentine government immediately “closed ranks” to protect Astiz, and they released a phony letter and photograph, attempting to tie the nuns to the then-defunct Montoneros guerrilla group. Human rights groups world wide applied increasing pressure on the Argentine junta to cease its propagation of state-sponsored terrorism.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition. See also: Hugh O’Shaughnessy, “Astiz killed nun who tried to save him” *The Observer*, June 13, 1982 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/476769471?accountid=8337> (accessed April 3, 2013); William D. Montalbano, “Navy’s ‘Blond Angel’ an Enigma to Argentines: Accused of Murder and Infiltration, Astiz Strains Military Ties to Civil Regime,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1984 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/154056592?accountid=8337> (accessed April 3, 2013).

<sup>122</sup> Jackson Diehl, “British Hold Suspected Rights Violator,” *The Washington Post*, May 14, 1982, <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/147447928?accountid=8337>

Rather than change tactics, the Argentine junta opted for a facelift. With the 1978 World Cup finals close at hand, the junta needed a miracle to ensure the success of the Buenos Aires event. Hiring a public relations firm out of the United States, the military junta planted false stories in Argentine and international press sources. General Videla told *La Nación*, the nationally acquired newspaper, his most famous bold-faced lie: “There are no disappearances, they’re a nonentity, they don’t exist.” Henry Kissinger, an operative of the C.I.A. with direct ties to Operation Condor, attended the World Cup as President Videla’s guest. Mrs. Maud Cox eyed him uncomfortably at an embassy reception following a match, unable to enjoy herself due to the political intrigue around her.<sup>123</sup>

In 1978 the Proceso junta applied pressure to *The Buenos Aires Herald* to decrease its coverage and praise for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Rather than cease and desist, Cox encouraged his star journalist Uki Goñi to interview as many mothers as he could and obtain writs of habeas corpus for as many women’s children as possible. When Goñi was unable to go on assignment, Cox went in his stead.<sup>124</sup>

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo became international celebrities, not because they sought to change the political or economic structure of their country, but rather

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(accessed April 3, 2013). See also: William D. Montalbano, “Navy's 'Blond Angel' an Enigma to Argentines: Accused of Murder and Infiltration, Astiz Strains Military Ties to Civil Regime,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1984 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/154056592?accountid=8337> (accessed April 3, 2013); Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>123</sup> Leon Watson, “Former dictator, 86, finally admits his regime ‘disappeared’ 7,000 or 8,000 left-wing opponents in Argentina,” *Mail Online*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2130651/Jorge-Rafael-Videla-86-admits-regime-disappeared-8-000-left-wing-opponents-Argentina.html> (accessed April 2, 2013). See also: Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>124</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

because their country changed the definition of their roles as “mother” by *disappearing* their children. The Proceso junta under the political auspice of Operation Condor, in conjunction with economic policies of disaster capitalism, and with its strong ties to Catholic traditionalism regressed Argentine women politically, economically and socially. This attempt backfired. By shocking the Argentine family and *disappearing* thousands of children, the junta created a generation of “childless mothers.” In response to the threat against their families and to the desecration of their identities, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo rose up out of oppression and created for themselves a new identity. No longer the Peronist consumer-domestics of the faux-glamours days of Evita, these women flooded the Plaza de Mayo with new strongly politicized identities: the identities of mothers of the *disappeared*.

## Chapter 5

### Exiles and Conclusions

## Identities at the End of the Dirty War: Two Journalists in Exile

Jacobo Timerman was released into exile in 1979. After spending twenty-nine months in various military prisons and under house arrest, Timerman joined his family in Israel. Though his time as a member of the disappeared had been in no way restful, Timerman's period of passivity for the sake of his sanity had ended. Like Hebe de Bonafini, Timerman began frenetically working, keeping himself busy, and dedicating himself to the cause of the disappeared. Timerman picked up his writing almost immediately upon arriving at his son's home in the Ein Shemer kibbutz.<sup>125</sup>

Jacobo Timerman, a political activist since his youth, returned to his state of professional and political activity a changed man. Shocked by the trauma of his imprisonment and torture, Timerman, while under arrest, was unable to mentally deal with the pain of memory. Upon his release, he carried an evolved fear of memory with him.

He wondered, "Have any of you ever looked into the eyes of another person, on the floor of a cell, who knows that he's about to die though no one has told him?...Each time I write or utter words of hope...I'm fearful—fearful of losing sight of one of those gazes."<sup>126</sup>

Timerman's identity, that of a Jew and that of an activist, no longer centered around (anti-)Peronist politics. The physical and psychological shocks of the Proceso

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<sup>125</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 163. See also: "Timerman Sparks Debate," *The Boston Globe* June 26, 1981 <http://0-search.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/docview/1012009996?accountid=8337> (accessed April 3, 2013).

<sup>126</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 164.

junta did not repattern Jacobo Timerman, but rather further prodded him in his quest to provide a voice for the underdog, for the abused, for the disappeared.

He recalled in his memoir, “Those gazes...which I’ve retained one by one, were the culminating point, the purest moment of my tragedy.” *Disappearance* was Jacobo Timerman’s ticket to solidarity, his new identifier, and his purpose for continuing in journalism and practicing his Judaism.<sup>127</sup>

Timerman received word from the Argentine government that if he published his memoirs, he would be putting his Argentine family and friends in danger. “Robert John Cox, editor of the Buenos Aires Herald, has been marked for assassination by hard-liners in the Argentine government,” a certain Rabbi Marshall Meyer told Patricia Derian, who relayed the news to Bob Cox. Cox, used to threats, brushed it off. However, when he arrived home, he found his youngest son, Peter, upset by an official letter, which had been addressed to Ignacio Pedro Cox, Peter’s full name.<sup>128</sup>

The letter, a threat against the entire Cox family, was forged to appear as if it were from the Montoneros. Cox recognized it as from the Proceso junta. The letter detailed the Coxes’s daily schedules, the address of their summer home, and the names of the Cox’s close acquaintances. Further information in the letter led Cox to believe that their home had been bugged, and officials were listening to private family conversations. Cox demanded a meeting with President Videla.<sup>129</sup>

“I am very sad to hear you are leaving. Please stay with your family,” President Videla told him, knowledgeable of the intrigue surrounding the journalist. When Cox

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<sup>127</sup> Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, 164.

<sup>128</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>129</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.



indicated that his family's safety was his priority, Videla again urged him to stay, informing him that the junta almost collapsed following the release of Jacobo Timerman. Cox begged the president to end the disappearances in Argentina; Videla responded that he was not in control of his own government. Disheartened, Cox left, packed up his family, and left Argentina. What was meant to be a year-long furlough ended up being permanent exile for the Coxes. The political and economic conditions of the country continued to deteriorate and fall out of Videla's control. Cox and his family settled in the United States, where Cox was instrumental in convincing the United Nations to intervene on behalf of survivors of Argentina prison camps.<sup>130</sup>

The voices of the disappeared Argentines that Cox could not save haunted both his dreams and his waking hours. He continued his work as a journalist, but found it increasingly painful and difficult to write about the "monsters" of the Argentine military junta and the thousands of people who were killed at their hands. Cox, deeply shocked by the Dirty War, found a new identity in his American exile; though he remained true to his duties of job and family, he struggled to put behind him the memories that plagued his dreams and haunted his children. In the preface of *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Robert Cox repeatedly thanked his son David for providing an unbiased journalistic voice to the story of the Dirty War they lived through, for writing the story he himself could not bring himself to write.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>131</sup> Cox, *Dirty Secrets, Dirty War*, Kindle edition.

## The Fall of the Junta and the Continuation of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Following the United States' aid cuts to the Southern Cone during the Carter administration, Argentina found itself in another economic crisis. Combined with a losing war against Great Britain in the Malvinas/Falklands, Argentina's coffers, once overflowing during the Depression, were now dangerously empty. Even when the military junta was forced to concede to democratic elections in 1983, the tenets of neoliberal economics had become so deeply entrenched into the Argentine system that an economic recovery was impossible to procure.<sup>132</sup>

"It was as if that blood, the blood of the disappeared, covered up the cost of the economic program," Claudia Acuña, an Argentine journalist and teacher, shared in an interview with Naomi Klein. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo cared little about the economic or political side of the story; to them the blood of their children was all that mattered. The blood of their children at the hand of disaster capitalism and the Proceso junta served as catalysts for these docile, domestic ladies to evolve into strong political forces with whom to be reckoned.<sup>133</sup>

Like journalists Jacobo Timerman and Robert Cox, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo utilized the political, economic, and cultural torture shocks designed to repattern them into submission as impetuses for increased political action and the development of their own heightened identities dependent upon the quest for human rights in Argentina. From the days of (anti-)Peronism through the end of the Dirty War, the national

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<sup>132</sup> Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 154. See also: United States Institute of Peace, Truth Commission: Argentina, Truth Commissions Digital Collection, <http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-argentina> (accessed April 4, 2013).

<sup>133</sup> Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 154.

Argentine identity shifted out of oppression and violence, prodded by shocks to individuals and societies, to create an Argentina of survivors, an Argentina that moves towards economic and political stability, paving its way on the blood memory of the disappeared.

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## Vita

Sarah Cusick, historian and writer, grew up on Laura Ingalls Wilder books and sweet tea. Born in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, to Michael G. and Debra L. Cusick in 1983, Sarah transplanted to North Carolina at the ripe young age of three. Sarah attended Gospel Light Christian School, where she developed an interest in religious history, a solid foreign-language skillset, and an affinity for choral and classical music. After graduating high school, Sarah attended an arduous four years at Bob Jones University, concentrating in Elementary Education and minoring in Spanish. After completing her coursework in the Department of History at Appalachian State University in 2008, Sarah taught fourth grade, worked as an IT Technical Writer, and translated documents from English to Spanish and back again. In March 2013, Sarah accepted a position as a Spanish-language Content Writer for Market America of Greensboro, NC. To avoid complications, Sarah never keeps the same address.