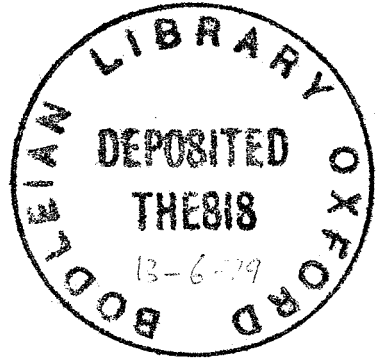


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THE EMERGENCE OF PERONISMO

BY

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Introduction

Interpretations of the coming of peronismo have been diverse and often irreconcilable. One reason for this is obvious; it reflects controversies over a movement which, while it was in power, deeply divided Argentinian society over central issues such as those of class, of fascism, and of the role of opposition to an exclusive government, and which continued to dominate political debate after 1955.¹ A further reason for the attention given to, and controversy over Perón's government derives from the common desire to ascribe blame for the contradiction between the expectations of the pre-1930 generation and subsequent performance. Analyses of the causes of the decline, which concentrate on the political as well as the economic sphere, are not only divergent but also tend to focus on Perón,² and indeed, controversies over the whole direction of 20th century Argentine history tend to centre on Perón's period of power.

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1. The depth and diversity of disagreements is shown by, for example, F.L. Hoffmann, 'Perón and after - a Review Article', Hispanic American Historical Review 1956 and 1959; or Carlos Fayt, 'La naturaleza del peronismo', Buenos Aires, 1967. Discussions such as those reprinted in Tres revoluciones (los últimos veintiocho años), B.A., 1959, demonstrate the extent^{to} which political differences then coloured views of the 1943-1946 period.
 2. Kenworthy, 'Argentina - the Politics of Late Industrialization', Foreign Affairs, 1967-1968.

Of course, it is difficult to make a clear assessment of the origins of Perón's movement before 1946 given the complex and rapidly changing series of events in which his rise to power must be traced.

A consideration of the period raises questions such as how much significance should be given to the years between the June 1943 military coup, and the electoral victory in 1946; and how much to causation over a longer term? Should Perón be seen as a personalistic, caudillo figure, and if so, what is the relationship between peronismo and social conflicts? Are these conflicts best described in social, or in purely political terms? What is the role of ideology?

Most interpretations of the origins of peronismo tend to ascribe an aberrant status to Perón's emergence which should be qualified by an overall view of his rise to power. Most authors see the movement as a phenomenon whose origins should primarily be sought in the special conditions of the late 1930's, and especially during the Second World War. The interpretation is usually personal and political. Though there is greater or lesser emphasis on social and economic change, this again is regarded as the consequence of a particular 'moment' in Argentine history; for example, of the period of maximum migration to the cities, of the beginnings of sustained industrialization and of the years when the electorate was expanding. Added to these changes were the growth of nationalism

and the influence of fascism; the economic upset and political crisis created by the war; and the reaction against a period of fraudulent democracy, particularly by the growing industrial working class.

The general orientation of this view of Perón coincides with the reaction of the political parties and most intelligensia to his rise to power. In assessing views of Perón, it is important to remember that he came to power against all the pre-1943 parties, and that his victory in the 1946 elections came as a surprise to the leaders of the parties in the Unión Democrática who had confidently expected his defeat. Moreover, his movement was in many respects an anti-intellectual one; although he came to be supported by many nationalist writers on left and right, these were few at first. This is explained by his lack of ideology, his attack on the universities - when one of the peronista slogans was 'Alpargatas sí, libros no' - the repression of the military government, and so on. More important, the anti-middle class nature of his movement after 1945, and the issue of fascism against democracy which was prominent in political debate during these years, help to explain the attitudes of liberal middle class intellectuals. Finally, of course, the nature of his later government was marked not only by intolerance and the periodic repression of the opposition, but also

by a style which many found repugnant.¹ It is not surprising, then, that the majority of works on Perón are opposed to him; and that it was felt necessary to 'explain away' his rise to power. This current has affected not only the official statements of political parties, but also the general orientation of academic analysis.

The initial reaction of many Radicals and Socialists, together with North American correspondents, was recourse to the 'fascist' formula; little effort was made to distinguish the components of the situation. Perón was regarded as indistinguishable from the rightist groups which clustered around the military government in 1943 and early 1944. So that, as the Socialist José Luis Romero writes:

The entire process was nothing less than the genesis of a fascist regime...Perón succeeded bit by bit in planting his fascist slogans in the minds of the politically inexperienced masses.²

The opposition, particularly the left, substantially based their attack on the government and on Perón, on an appeal to anti-fascism. One example is the Socialist Nicolás Repetto's campaign

1. Of which Jorge Luis Borges wrote: 'Durante años de oprobio y de bobería, los métodos de la propaganda comercial y de la "littérature pour concierges" fueron aplicados al gobierno de la república.' Quoted in Fayt, op. cit., p. 188.
2. A History of Argentine Political Thought, 1965, pp. 224, 225.

speech on the 2 February 1946, when he warned that a Peronist victory would mean the advent of fascism in Argentina. This, he thought, would have its basis in class antagonisms induced by Perón through the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión, and would be executed by an 'Order of the descamisados'.¹ The attitude of the left in 1943-46 is summed up by a Socialist critic of the party leadership of these years:

En nuestro mundo de ideas, la verdad resultaba evidente. Para nuestro platonismo político, el carácter del gobierno no iba a tener sus fuentes en las oscuras materialidades sociales sino en el nuevo ideario oficial. Y el ideario estaba a la vista. Era el hispanismo católico de Martínez Zuviría y de Olmedo, la devoción mussoliniana del padre Filippo, las pretensiones de Weltpolitik totalitaria del GOU, los planteos corporativos para los que el coronel Perón trataba de ganar adeptos en la Bolsa de Comercio. Vimos cómo los ministerios, las universidades, las intervenciones, iban albergando todo el elenco de personajes curialescos y mazorqueros que habíamos aprendido a conocer a través de su embanderamiento franquista durante la guerra² civil española e hitlerista durante la guerra mundial.

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1. Mis noventa años, B.A., 1962, p. 254.
 2. Pablo Guissani, in José Vazeilles, Los Socialistas, B.A. 1967, p. 302.

The 'fascist' label also had a strong impression on U.S. correspondents¹ and gained academic currency in Alexander's² and Blanksten's³ books. But of course, a mere label does not of itself have particular explanatory value. In the case of Alexander's work it adds little to the substance of his analysis. Kalman Silvert⁴ and Alberto Ciria,⁵ to take two examples, have shown convincingly that peronismo was significantly different from European fascism; the stumbling block lies principally in the nature of Perón's support rather than in the style and ideology of the movement. Lipset⁶ comes up against this in his attempt to account for the fact that Perón's support came primarily from the working class by the use of the concept of 'fascism of the left.'

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1. See Ray Josephs, Argentine Diary, London 1945. Or the reports of the New York Times correspondent, Arnaldo Cortesi for 1945. U.S. policy towards Perón at this time was based on this assessment, culminating in the publication of the 'Blue Book'; U.S., Department of State, Consultation among the American Republics with respect to the Argentine Situation, Washington 1946.
 2. R. J. Alexander, The Perón Era, 1951.
 3. G.I. Blanksten, Peron's Argentina, 1953.
 4. K.H. Silvert, The Conflict Society.
 5. Alberto Ciria, Partidos y poder en la Argentina moderna, B.A. 1964.
 6. S.M. Lipset, Political Man, p. 170.

Ciria asks, 'why not communism of the right?'¹ This is not to maintain that a consideration of fascism is not one important element of an account of peronismo. Events in, and ideas from Europe had significant effects on events in Argentina in 1943-46. Perón himself was quite obviously influenced by some of the ideas of fascism, and clearly the attitudes of the left must partly be explained by their response to this fact. Again, as Guissani suggested, the issue had the effect of diverting political debate from the real conflicts being fought out in, for example, the unions; though the extent to which this is true has been exaggerated, as we shall see. In the first place, however, fascist ideas had little effect on the basic nature of peronismo. Those U.S. correspondents who saw a fascist under every bed misjudged the nature of Argentine nationalism, and by 1945 most of the nationalist right had been alienated from the provisional government. Finally, the concept as Lipset uses it adds little to our understanding of Perón's rise to power.

Resort to the fascist hypothesis is one way of explaining why peronismo arose when and in the way it did; but the clear distinction between the nature of the regime which resulted from

1. Alberto Ciria, 'Peronismo - mythology or ideology?', Univ. of Florida, Latin American Research Programme, Research Seminar Series No. 2, April 1967, p. 4.

the 1943 coup, and that which was put into power by the 1946 elections, was not lost on most writers. Perón had managed to win the backing of the majority of the population and the permanent commitment of the working class.¹ Facts such as the demonstration on the 17 October 1945, the support given to Perón by the majority of Trade Unionists and the freedom of the 1946 elections, suggested that Perón could not have simply manufactured his support solely by means of the power of the government. It is true that governments in Latin America, as elsewhere, are generally more likely to win elections than the opposition parties. Moreover, the opposition in Argentina in 1945-46 suffered under great disadvantages, although the electoral campaign was relatively free, and the purity of the elections was not disputed to any extent by the Unión Democrática. Nevertheless, that there was another element in the situation was noted by Romero, writing about the 17 October 1945 :

1. P. G. Snow, Argentine Political Parties in the 1966 Revolution, 1966, shows the extent to which the peronista movement continued to be primarily a working class one. Gino Germani, Estructura social de la Argentina, pp. 247-260, found strong correlations for Buenos Aires between working class districts and votes for Perón in 1946; and negative correlations for empleado and above.

This moment had, on a grand scale, the same internal structure as others that had been organized previously by the police so as to give a little popular 'warmth' to the acts of the revolutionary government of 1943; but this time there could be no mistaking the spontaneity of the mass movement of people for whom the name of Perón had become a symbol of social reform.¹

The problem² then was to explain the nature of this 'spontaneity' which could not be wholly accounted for by the actions of the police or by the activities of Mercante and Eva Duarte. Basically, the view taken by the left was that Perón was a caudillo figure, a personalist leader whose support was in some sense 'irrational'. Ernesto Sanmartino, a Radical, wrote in 1950 about the 17 October :

Esa es la síntesis de la jornada del 17 de octubre de 1945 que la propaganda oficial y la idolatría de muchedumbres sin conciencia, intenta convertir en falsa histórica nacional. El 17 de octubre fué una explosión histórica de la sensiblería popular en defensa de un demagogo afortunado...

The Socialist Party also shared this attitude at first; among men such as Nicolás Repetto it was close to an élitism always present in the Socialists from Juan B. Justo onwards. They reacted as they had to Yrigoyen, regarding Perón as yet another unfortunate

1. Romero, op. cit. p. 247.
2. The dilemma was particularly acute for the left - the issue is reflected in the successive splits within the Socialists and Communists. But also for the Radicals, who until then had claimed to represent the majority of the nation.
3. Ernesto Sanmartino, La verdad sobre la situación argentina, Montevideo, 1950, p. 128.

practitioner of 'política criolla'.¹ However, the more general reaction was resort to the 'plate of lentils' thesis, which sees the working class as having sold their liberty for social legislation and temporary benefits.² We can note against this idea that the benefits that the working class received were substantial in this period. Social legislation was extensive and effective, and there was a clear redistribution of income, as the figures for real wage levels and wage and salary share of national income show.³ Again, Darío Cantón⁴ and José Luis de Imaz⁵ demonstrate that political leadership was socially very different as a consequence of the Peronist revolution. And finally, the extent to which the individual unions were controlled by the government in 1946-1955 can be questioned.

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1. See, for example, La Vanguardia, 23 October, 1945. Quoted in Jorge Abelardo Ramos, Revolución y contrarevolución en la Argentina, vol II, B.A., 1955, p. 599.
 2. This argument was used by Américo Ghioldi in Los trabajadores, el señor Perón, y el partido socialista, 1950.
 3. 'Wage share (of NDI) remained within the 43-47% range from 1935 through 1947, then rose sharply to 56.1%, a level around which it remained through 1955'. Zuvekas, 'Economic Growth and Income Distribution in Postwar Argentina', Inter-American Economic Affairs, Winter 1966, p. 26.
 4. Darío Cantón, El parlamento argentino en tres épocas de cambio. B.A., 1966.
 5. José Luis de Imaz, Los que mandan, B.A., 1964.

However, a more central contribution to the destruction of the 'plate of lentils' hypothesis, as well as the addition of a new dimension to the debate on the 'irrationality' of Perón's electorate comes from Germani,¹ where he specifically attacks the idea that:

El dictador 'dió' a los trabajadores unas pocas ventajas materiales a cambio de la libertad. El pueblo 'vendió' su libertad por un plato de lentejas. El dictador hizo demagogia es verdad. Mas la parte efectiva de esa demagogia no fueron las ventajas materiales, sino el haber dado al pueblo la experiencia (ficticia o real) de que había logrado ciertos derechos y que los estaba ejerciendo. Los trabajadores que apoyaban la dictadura, lejos de sentirse despojados de la libertad, estaban convencidos de que lo habían conquistado.

In considering the question of 'irrationality', Germani thinks, we must concentrate on what we regard to be the objective interests of the working class in a particular period, and the extent to which these were satisfied by a movement such as Perón's. In Argentina the working class had been outside the system, for various reasons: they were for the most part recently formed; union structures were disorganized through internal conflicts and because of government restriction and repression; and social legislation was inadequate for the stage of industrial development

1. Gino Germani, Política y Sociedad en una época de transición, B.A. 1962, p. 244.

reached. Against them were capitalists, also of recent origin and with the 'defectos del capitalismo de especulación y aventura y ninguna conciencia de los problemas sociales del trabajo.'

So that:

En tal situación las clases populares necesitaban, en primer lugar, adquirir conciencia de su poder, e incorporarse a la vida nacional como una categoría de fundamental significado en todos sus órdenes; en segundo lugar, estaba (y está) dentro del ámbito de sus intereses lograr cambios estructurales capaces de asegurar a la vez un desarrollo, más pleno y armónico de la economía del país, y una más adecuada participación de ellas mismas en los resultados de tal desarrollo; por último, era esencial para las clases populares lograr un reconocimiento claro de sus derechos individuales en el campo laboral...¹

Germani thinks that the first and third objectives were attained, though not the second; and that this achievement could not have taken place democratically: i.e. it needed a 'revolution' of Perón's type.

This fact, that the working class, if it did not effect a basic structural change, at least accomplished a great deal, is denied by the Communist Party's official interpretation of the period.² This is another variant of the 'plate of lentils' theory.

1. Op. cit., p. 248.

2. Their interpretation has remained unaltered from the Esbozo de historia del partido comunista de la Argentina, 1947, to Eugenio Moreno's El fenómeno social del peronismo, B.A. 1966. It corresponds to Victorio Codovilla's views.

1944 and 1945 are considered to be years of effective worker's action, which forced the government to resort to social legislation. The underlying thesis is that with economic crisis, bourgeois governments cannot maintain existing class relationships and tend to resort to 'social demogoguery'.¹ This is what happened with Perón; he used government propaganda to trick the working class into thinking that social legislation arose solely from his own intervention. The Communists, in addition, stress that the period was one of prosperity (though this is not compatible with their view that it was also one of economic crisis) which allowed the distribution of income without the alteration of the basic class structure; the divisions in the anti-Perón front, which, together with government repression and its monopoly of communications media, hindered the Communist Party from showing the unions that they were being bought off against their interests; and finally, the internal migration which brought a 'rebellious spirit' into the cities.²

This account has certain merits in so far as it points to the unions as an important autonomous force in the rise of Perón,

1. It will be noted that this was the same explanation used for the rise of fascism in Europe.

2. Moreno op. cit., p. 84.

and that in more instances than not he was responding to their pressure. We will see this process in the development of Perón's ideology as expressed in his speeches.¹ Again, it plays down the claims which have been made for the movement of 1944-45, both by peronistas and by nationalists on the left. The political power obtained by the labour movement through Perón proved illusory when fundamental decisions about economic and social policy were made after the prosperity of the 1940's came to an end. But nevertheless, within this period, the gains which the working class as a whole made were impressive.

Moreno uses the internal migrant hypothesis to help to explain why the working class acted against their objective interests. Focus on the effects of migration to the cities is common to virtually all accounts of peronismo; the connection was recognised by people at the time, giving rise to terms such as 'cabecitas negras' and 'descamisados'. However, one may question whether this connection is of the nature which is usually held to be the case, as, for example, by Di Tella.²

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1. When the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión was set up in 1943, Perón was putting forward an ideology which stressed class collaboration. See El pueblo quiere saber de qué se trata, 1944. But by 1945 he was making speeches which encouraged their antagonism. See Angel Perelman, Como hicimos el 17 de octubre, 1961, p. 77-78.
 2. Torcuato Di Tella, El sistema político argentino y la clase obrera, B.A. 1964.

Di Tella thinks that the rise of peronismo should be seen in terms of the contrast between a structured working class in a system of voluntary associations on the one hand, and the newly-arrived, disorganized migrants on the other. The latter can give rise to an authoritarian regime:

La difusión y aceptación de un régimen político de tipo autoritario se ve favorecida por el arraigo de formaciones psicológicas y características de personalidad de tipo autoritario en los individuos del estrato obrero más bajo. Este autoritarismo es una variable de personalidad, desarrollada en el ambiente familiar, que existe también, como dijimos, en el sector rural, y por lo tanto es traído consigo por el inmigrante rural a la ciudad.¹

Later in the work Di Tella expounds a theory of the forms in which a working class can act politically. Working class political action, he thinks, can be expressed in three main ways. It can be expressed in an autonomous and "rational" form through institutions; according to control by higher social strata, a situation where the worker is a consumer rather than part of an autonomous stratum; and lastly, in a temporary, spontaneous fashion.² Di Tella thinks the second and third forms characterized the situation under Perón.

However, Perón's support had a greater element of organization and autonomy than Di Tella allows. This emerges clearly in the role

1. Op. cit., p.36.

2. Op. cit., pp. 65-69.

of the old union structures in the formation of the Partido Laborista, as we shall see. Moreover, his account of the social effects of migration suffers from the traditional-modern dichotomy which pervades the book. It is not clear to what extent migrants to the cities bore the traditional characteristics which Di Tella ascribes to them. In the first place, as he shows in another work,¹ the areas outside the larger cities were socially diverse, and there was considerable regional variation in social structures, economic organization, per capita income levels, and so on. The existence of a large number of small towns and a substantial rural middle class in the littoral area was unlikely to have given rise to the 'traditional' attitudes which were - perhaps - characteristic of rural labourers on haciendas in the Northwestern provinces. The distribution of the population suggests that the majority of migrants to Buenos Aires came not from the Northern provinces, but from the Litoral.²

Even if the migrants retained their traditional attitudes, it is not clear how this would relate to their politics. Studies

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1. La teoría del primer impacto del desarrollo económico, Santa Fe, 1965.
 2. This was confirmed by a census of the City of Buenos Aires in 1936. Out of 360,000 people who had been born outside the City, about 70% came from the littoral provinces. Carl Taylor, Rural Life in Argentina, Baton Rouge, 1948, p. 118. While this census was carried out before the main wave of migration in the early 1940's, there is no evidence that the pattern changed greatly.

elsewhere in Latin America have shown that rural migrants are not necessarily responsive to radical movements. If in Argentina they were mostly peronistas, then so was most of the working class. This suggests that they were with Perón because they were working class and not because they had been recently mobilized from a traditional environment.

The case has been made out that migrants tend to respond to an authoritarian leader.¹ But the tendency to look directly to the head of the executive was a characteristic of all groups in the political system. This was particularly so in 1943-46 when major intermediate institutions had either been formally dissolved, as was the case with the congress and political parties, or were prevented from functioning effectively, as were many unions.

This is not to maintain that the newly urbanized elements in Buenos Aires and the larger cities did not have some effect on the rise of peronismo. As new voters they were obviously a factor which enabled Perón to win in spite of the efficient electoral machinery of the Radical Party. But they were not the decisive element in his rise; he could probably have won without them.

1. Gerardo Andújar, 'Migración urbano-rural y autoritarismo político', quoted in Margulis, 'Sociología de las migraciones', Aportes, no. 3, January 1967, p. 22.

Di Tella also subscribes to the 'industrialization' hypothesis in his account of peronismo. This thesis had been as common as the internal migrants idea in explaining why Perón came when he did; but again, there is no single or necessary link between the two phenomena. Industrial development clearly affected peronismo

by the contribution it made to the growth of an urban working class. However, peronismo has also been seen in terms of a conflict between two types of economic organization and the groups and policies associated with them; on the one hand a national policy, which meant primarily the promotion of national industry; and on the other, the old liberal or neo-liberal policy associated with the primary export sectors and foreign interests.

We will not dwell on the first point, which will be dealt with later. The second hides a wide variety of interpretations of which Di Tella's is only one. He argues that the growth of industry during the war gave rise to an élite of entrepreneurs, who faced ruin if, after the war, a return was to be made to the previous economy, which was 'most functional for cattle, export and English interests.'¹

1. Di Tella, Op. cit. p. 55.

Against Di Tella is the fact that industry was growing before the war and that the de facto commitment to industrialization had been made earlier, although the full implications of this had not yet reached the consciousness of many major groups.¹ Further, the majority of industrialists in the Unión Industrial opposed Perón, and committed themselves politically to the extent of providing financial support for the Unión Democrática, for which they were later dissolved.

Di Tella's view is a version of the 'national bourgeoisie' theory, but expressed in terms of élitist analysis. The theory holds that the national question in an underdeveloped country divides more fundamentally than the classical Marxian distinctions. This idea is subscribed to by Marxists such as Rodolfo Puiggrós² and Juan José Real³ and by writers in the intransigente tradition of the Radical Party.⁴ It is alleged that there are at least two sectors of the bourgeoisie: one is national, orientated towards the domestic market, and another is associated with the export

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1. As Alejandro Bunge complained in Una nueva Argentina, B.A., 1940.
 2. R. Puiggrós, Historia crítica de los partidos políticos argentinos, B.A., 1956.
 3. J. J. Real, 30 años de historia argentina, B.A., 1962.
 4. E.g., Arturo Frondizi, Petroleo y Política, 2nd. ed., B.A., 1955.

economy and with foreign capital. The Left should then support any bourgeois government which acts in the interests of the former sector; and both Puiggrós and Real criticise their ex-party for failure to see the progressive elements in Yrigoyen and Perón.

The idea of national capitalism as an autonomous force is, however, effectively disproved by Gustavo Polit.¹ He shows that the alliance of industrialists and landowners in opposition to Perón was not exceptional, but characteristic of the behaviour of these sectors throughout their history. There had been no inherent conflict between native industrialists, landowners and foreign capital invested in Argentina. Because of the interrelation of capital in land and industry, landowners could turn to protectionism and the domestic market whenever international prices were unfavourable. Equally, national industry had always collaborated with foreign capital, and indeed, substantial sectors were owned from abroad.

This is not to maintain that Perón did not express a nationalist position, and that this did not reflect economic conflicts. Perón stood in a current of nationalism which derived, in part, from economic interests which had been made to bear the main burden of

1. Gustavo Polit, 'The Industrialists of Argentina' in Petras and Zeitlin, Latin America, 1968.

sacrifices when the long period of prosperity ended after 1930. It is significant that before the 1920's, the attacks of most nationalists were aimed, not against Britain but against the United States. After, when there was not enough cake to go round, those groups who could not save themselves by arrangements such as that established under the 1933 Roca-Runciman agreement, tended to focus their grievances on the imperialist issue.

A wide variety of people shared the opinion that Argentina should be economically independent and politically sovereign. As Polit has shown, the encouragement of domestic industry was no revolutionary change. This further emphasised the fact that the revolutionary element in peronismo was the third - social justice - and that the first two meant little that was controversial. It was this which brought about the social conflicts of 1944 and 1945, which explains the opposition of the industrialists. Perón's nationalism was little more than a reaction against foreign pressures during the war, part of his attack on the old regime and its association with Britain, and an effective electoral appeal.

To sum up, we have had to qualify most of the hypotheses put forward to account for the rise of Peronism. An alternative approach could be put forward under the following propositions: first, that there were different groups involved in Perón's rise; second, that there were distinct stages in the 1943-46 period; third, that when the character of peronismo as a total phenomenon was established, these groups aligned themselves along class lines; and finally, that Perón's rise should be seen in an overall view which diminishes the

originality of his movement.

This approach provides a different emphasis from 'populist' interpretations, and from the 'caudillo' hypothesis. Rational calculations predominated among the groups in the coalition which voted for Perón in 1946. Again, this emphasis minimises the role of Perón personally. A distinction should be made between the ideology which he sought to give the movement, and that which he was forced to adopt by the pressure of events.

Distinct stages can be discerned in the 1943-46 period as the contrast between the picture in 1943 and 1945 suggests. The situation was in a constant state of flux, but three broad currents can be distinguished in the decline of the rightist government of 1943; the rise of the opposition, and the growth of Perón's support within, and then outside the military.

Peronismo owed its origins and characteristics to class conflict of a certain type. It is true that the movement was a coalition of social groups, and that outside the urban centres it was joined by middle class sectors which were of great electoral importance. But peronismo was principally an urban working class phenomenon. Equally, the contribution of the armed forces should not be over-emphasised. They were divided over Perón from the beginning. By 1945 they were, in the main, reluctant, and followed him only because of the fear of social unrest and of reprisals by the Unión Democrática. Their position was far from an alliance with either middle or working class; the social polarization of 1944-45 left them divided and in an ambiguous position.

Finally, the conditions that enabled Perón to rise were not

unique in Argentine history. We have had to modify those interpretations which trace the origins of Perón's movement exclusively to characteristics of the late 1930's and 1940's, to migration, industrialisation, and the influence^{of}/fascism.

A comparison with yrigoyenismo shows how similar the two movements were, and suggests that the possibilities for the emergence of this form of political configuration were a constant throughout the period, at least since the First World War and the extension of the suffrage.

There were, however, significant differences, partly owing to the changed conditions in the 1930's with the end of a period of almost uninterrupted expansion which had continued since the last quarter of the 19th century. The end of this era constituted one of the main breaks in Argentina's historical process, and peronismo should most accurately be seen as an episode in the process by which relations between social groups were affected by the decline of the period in which they were formed. The end of a long period of prosperity and the growth of pessimism about the future possibilities of the political, economic and social organization which grew up with the old liberal system brought about many tendencies which were to relate to peronismo. These can be traced in the inability of existing representative institutions to accommodate and satisfy new demands; the emergence of ideologies which challenged the old system; the growth of varieties of nationalism, and the beginning of direct military intervention in politics. These currents will be assessed and related to their influence in the 1943-46 years.

Chapter I

The significance of the 1930 crisis

It would be erroneous to focus exclusively on the economic and political crisis of 1930, partly because many tendencies which were later to be important for Perón were already in evidence and partly because the effects of the crisis on vital aspects of the socio-economic structure can be exaggerated. Nevertheless, the political revolution of 1930 acts as the most important prelude to Perón's reaction against the minorities which openly manipulated electoral procedures in order to maintain themselves in power.

This political change was also substantially a result of economic factors. It should be seen not so much as the restoration of pre-1916 governments as the shift to the control of the state by an 'oligarchy' or 'class alliance'.¹ By 1930, this formation was

1. These two concepts have different theoretical meanings. While 'oligarchy' is usually a political concept, it is often used in Argentina to refer to relatively small social circles who are members of the best clubs, live in the most exclusive districts in Buenos Aires, and so on. These are the people surveyed by Imaz, La clase alta de Buenos Aires, B.A., 1960. These criteria, however, are too narrow to identify the groups which controlled political power before 1916 and between 1930 and 1943. Neither can they take account of the fact that the composition of the economic and social élite changed considerably in the intervening period; important landowning sectors, for example, were not represented in the governing coalition of the 1930's, while they had been before 1916. Thus it is preferable to refer to the consolidation of a 'class alliance' after 1930 in order to identify the wider sectors in which the government found support, and to stress that these included commercial and industrial interests as well as landowners. The concept is used by Murmis and Portantiero, Crecimiento industrial y alianza de clases en la Argentina, 1930-1940, Documento de Trabajo, No. 49, CIS Di Tella, 1968.

threatened by Yrigoyen's apparently increased radicalism, and, more important, by the end of economic progress under the old terms. The process can be described as the increased awareness of the necessity to control the State. For the groups which by 1933 came to be represented in the government this meant institutional measures on the one hand to salvage the situation and effectively to make the consequences of the crisis fall most heavily on those outside the system, and on the other to guide the economy along the alternative path of industrialization. Thus it is in these terms that the political instability inaugurated by the 1930 coup should be seen; economic changes increased the stakes in a political struggle for a government whose functions in the economy were increasing in consequence.

This tendency affected a potentially unstable political system, which functioned as a dialogue between a majority and exclusive party, the Radical Party, opposed by a coalition of groups which looked for support to divisions in that majority and to the armed forces.

The economic changes.

The changes were fundamentally due to the end of the dynamic forces which had made possible the continued expansion of the primary export economy. The necessary conditions of the existence of under-exploited fertile land for incorporation, and of world demand for its produce, had enabled Argentina by the 1920's to become the producer of half the world's exports of meat, two thirds of its maize and flax, and twenty per cent of its wheat.¹ These conditions were coupled

1. Di Tella and Zymelman, Las etapas del desarrollo económico argentino, B.A., 1967, p. 84.

with the other major factors in what had been called 'one of the most spectacular developmental processes in world history',¹ since the 1860's, some of which were: the influx of foreign capital and the development of a transport system; the flow of immigrants which provided labour; and a structure of power where leading élites were capable of exploiting the opportunities by means of an institutional policy which would facilitate the process, and were able to adapt to differing conditions when these presented themselves.²

Moreover, the export sector before 1930 came to be part of a strong economy. This is seen in the efficient use of the land itself; in the assimilation of new techniques and up-to-date equipment, and their use in response to changing market stimuli. In the livestock sector sheep were displaced by cattle on the most fertile land, and cattle were bred to exploit the opportunities presented by the frigoríficos and the demand for chilled beef after the first decades of the 20th century. The same process was seen in the spectacular growth of agricultural production. Again, the export sector reacted favourably for the rest of the economy. There were few of the distortions which might be indicated by a classic model of an export economy. This, of course, is partly explained because the expansion of rural production was to a large extent

1. Beveraggi Allende, quoted in Sivert, Expectant Peoples, New York, 1963, p. 348.

2. This emphasis on the importance of attitudes is put by Cortés Conde and Gallo, La formación de la Argentina moderna, B.A., 1967.

dependent on an integral process involving the concomitant development of basic social capital such as railways, telegraphs and port facilities: the programme of the 'generation of 1880'¹ included measures which sought to encourage immigration, which partly explains why Argentina came to lead Latin America in indices of housing, health, public education and so on. These and other factors went to bring about the distribution of capital generated by the export sector, reflected also in the rapid diversification of the economy with the rise of industry and the tertiary sector. There were exceptions; one distortion was the increasing differential between parts of the interior and the littoral, where development was concentrated. Some areas of the interior did, however, share in the process, notably the sugar and wine industries of Tucumán and Mendoza, which benefited by tariff protection, the spread of railways and the growth of an internal market.

The change came with modification of the two necessary conditions outlined above. The second was probably of greater significance. Falls in export prices had occurred^r before the 1929 crisis; but as in the 1889-1890 crisis, these had been partly overcome by stepping up production. In the same way, the 1918-1929 period was marked generally by relatively lower prices compared with

1. Comblit, Gallo, O'Connell, 'La generación del 80 y su proyecto', in Di Tella et al, Argentina, sociedad de masas, B.A., 1965.

the years after 1895, and, as Di Tella and Zymelman point out, it was compensated for by a marked expansion in the quantum of exports.¹ This culminated in one of the most prosperous eras in Argentina's history when, in the late 1920's, prices rose again, there were good harvests and import prices were low.

Equally, while the dependence on primary production meant the economy was vulnerable to external fluctuations, nevertheless within these limits there was some flexibility; this is seen in the changes in methods of utilizing the land.

The 1929 crisis was of a totally different order, in that it saw a fall in prices for all exports, and also heralded a basic change in market conditions with the world growth of protectionism and bilateral agreements. Particularly significant for Argentina was Imperial preference and the threat of exclusion from the British meat market. Finally, the crisis saw an end to the flow of immigration and of foreign capital on the previous scale. With regard to exports, the value of meat (which was 15% of the total in 1932-34) fell from 144 to 87 million gold pesos, and in volume from 845 to 610 million tons. Cereals and flax (58% of the total) fell from 605 to 327 in value, and from 14,828 to 12,783 in volume.²

1. Di Tella and Zymelman, op. cit., p. 78.

2. Op. cit., table 3.4, p. 85.

The crisis was not allieviated by an expansion of production; this was no longer possible because the limits to available fertile land had been reached.¹

Indeed, Cortes Conde points out that depending on the crop, the best agricultural lands had become scarce much earlier - between the 1910's and the 1920's - and production on marginal lands had begun. This gave rise to a fall in productivity, although this varied for different crops. In the 1930's wheat land incorporated during the 1920's was abandoned to cattle, while the area under cultivation of maize was expanded until the Second World War.²

However, the effects of the crisis on Argentina should not be overstressed. It was not as sharp as in other countries, and

1. Utilization of land in the Pampa region, in millions of hectares.

	<u>Crops</u>	<u>Cattle</u>	<u>Total</u>	
1895	3	19	41	(includes sheep 14)
1922	11	28	50	
1930	16	21	47	
1934	17	20	48	
1937	17	22	48	

Source: Giberti, El desarrollo agrario argentino, B.A., 1964, p.40.

2. Cortés Conde, 'Cambios históricos en la estructura de la producción agropecuaria en la Argentina,' Desarrollo Económico, Vol. 5, No. 20, 1966.

recovery was fairly rapid. This was partly due to a rise in world prices for agricultural produce after 1934, though 1938 saw a further drop which, coupled with poor harvests, caused distress in grain-producing areas. This was aggravated by the war, which limited the availability of transport for bulk goods; and in 1947 Carl Taylor was writing of the persistent hardship felt in the grain areas,¹ particularly among small producers who were hit by inflation and rises in labour costs which were only partly allieviated by government measures such as the minimum price guarantees and rent controls for tenants. With regard to meat, the opposite tendency was the case; low prices throughout the 1930's and restricted quotas for the British market, and high prices during the war.

Again, the effects of the crisis were partly overcome by institutional measures which Díaz Alejandro argues contributed to what was in fact a 'remarkable recovery.'² These applied to rural production and exports, with the creation of institutions to regulate production and distribution such as the Junta Reguladora de Granos, and the negotiation of bilateral agreements such as the Roca-Runciman Pact which secured a quota for chilled meat on the

1. Carl Taylor, op. cit.

2. Carlos Díaz Alejandro, 'Interpretation of Argentine economic growth since 1930', Journal of Development Studies, October 1966.

English market against Imperial preference. Argentina was able to keep up her share in the world of most of her traditional exports. The share of wheat fell only from 21% to 19% between 1920-26 and 1934-38; and while Argentine meat imports into England dropped from 75% to 62% in favour of Australian produce, the share of maize rose.¹

The new policy of industrial promotion was more important for the recovery. This was due partly to more favourable internal terms of trade in comparison to external, but as important were government initiatives. Devaluation, a raising of import duties, and the introduction of multiple exchange rates were the main instruments in the early 1930's, and in the latter half of the decade the fiscal policy of public works, mainly road construction, was an additional factor. The most important impetus to the growth of manufacturing industry came in this period, and not during the war; then, while almost total protection was given, the cutting off of imports hindered growth. So that from 1933-39, manufacturing industry was up by 43%, compared with only 27% in the next six years from 1939-45. The figures for the rise in real G.D.P. were 27% and 16% for the two periods.

1. Op. cit., p. 40.

What then were the main effects of the 1930 crisis and the end of the previous forms of development for a consideration of the rise of Perón? It is clear that Perón's movement did not come as a simple response to the 1930 crisis, for the economy was recovering. However, the reaction to the crisis anticipated much of the economic policy which Perón was later to be associated with. This is seen particularly in the case of the encouragement of industry by means of transferring resources from the rural sector. There is some controversy over whether the departures after 1930 were part of a conscious and desired policy, or whether they were the unavoidable and basically unwelcomed consequence of the end of the possibilities of export-led expansion.¹ It seems that the former was the case, as Murmis and Portantiero have shown in their study of attitudes to industrialization among social groups in the 1930's.² Their work puts forward an important revision of previously accepted ideas of Perón's programme of industrialization as running contrary to the interests of the groups which controlled power in 1930-1943.³ The cattle producers

1. Aldo Ferrer, La economía argentina, B.A., 1963, subscribes to the latter view.

2. Murmis and Portantiero, op. cit.

3. A similar argument is used by Gustavo Polit, op. cit.

represented in the Sociedad Rural in fact favoured the measures taken by the Pinedo team in 1933; one of their foremost representatives, Luis Duhau, Minister of Agriculture under Justo and past president of the S.R.A. was explicit on the subject. The main opposition to industrialization came from those excluded from power; in the rural sector these were the traditional cattle breeders of Buenos Aires Province and other smaller farmers not favourably placed in relation to the cattle invernadores and foreign frigoríficos. The reason for their opposition was the association of industrialization with protectionism and the bilateral system; those not favoured by this framework wanted free trade and the search for new markets.

This is the antithesis of the view that Perón's basic economic policy was contrary to that of the most economically powerful groups. The difference lay more in the extent to which both were prepared to apply it. The S.R.A. would never have gone as far in transferring resources away from the rural sector as happened under the I.A.P.I.¹

Although the crisis was rapidly overcome, the dominant feeling was that there had been an end to the old system. Two factors

1. An editorial in the Anales of the Sociedad Rural opposed Perón's first five year plan for this reason. Anales de la Sociedad Rural, November 1946.

emphasised the change: first, the political revolution, and second, the contrast between the years after 1930 and the prosperity of the late 1920's. Admittedly, the period before the coup was exceptional; but Díaz Alejandro possibly overstates the recovery which did take place. The figures for world prices for Argentina's exports, for example, taken over the whole period 1900-1960 show that they never again approached the levels of 1900-1930.¹ People continued to look back to 1930 as an expulsion from Paradise, as Halperín suggests.² The effects of the crisis were unevenly distributed; within the urban sector, those groups associated with industrial expansion benefited. The working class was favoured by the rapid absorption of the unemployment caused by the crisis, although there was little increase in real wages in the 1930's, in contrast to the previous period. It was the rural sector which bore most of the effects with the fall in profits; apart from the criador group, those worst hit were the small farmer and rural worker. It was among the latter that most of the unemployment was concentrated, and this must partly explain the beginnings of the phase of migration to the cities which began in the mid-1930's.

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1. The graph of price movements in Cortes Conde, op. cit., p. 508, makes this clear.
 2. Tulio Halperín Donghi, Argentina en el callejón, Montevideo, 1964, p. 15.

Social and Political Change

What was to be the significance for Perón at the political and social level of this period of expansion and its cessation? The change occurred within a highly mobile and fluid society with comparatively limited social and economic conflict, which could give rise to a movement such as the Radical Party. Upon this the consequences of the economic changes we have outlined operated.

Yrigoyenismo and Peronismo

Yet the similarities between the two movements suggests that a great deal remained unaltered. Darío Cantón writes of the 1916-1930 party system:

In sum, what we have...is a vast array of political parties which nevertheless tend to align themselves in an opposition front. The party in government, the Radical Party, gets roughly 50% of the vote and is a national party in the sense that it is organized on a national scale and gets support everywhere. The remaining parties are not national, neither in organization (the Socialist Party is the one that comes closest), nor in backing. We can speak only of a national opposition, including in it the most diverse political parties.¹

This could equally be said of the 1946-1955 period, with the qualification that there was now a national opposition party in the Radicals, though it is true that their vote came to be inflated by the other parties.

1. Darío Cantón, Party Alignments in Argentina between 1912 and 1955, Documento de Trabajo No. 31, CIS Di Tella, 1967, p. 10.

Cantón also finds similarities in the process by which the majority party wins and is consolidated. The initial impulse in both cases came from the most urban and populated provinces of the Federal Capital, Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Tucumán. The subsequent extension of the parties' votes then comes not from these, but from other provinces.

There are, in addition, other common features besides their size, their national organization, their provincial distribution and growth and the behaviour of the opposition. Another related factor was their composition. They were both coalitions of diverse social groups, though this statement must be qualified at least by a distinction between support at elections and at other times. While Perón obtained the votes of many middle class elements in 1946, as did Yrigoyen among the working class in 1928, nevertheless the basis of both movements was a class one. They were both, however, conditioned by the social relationships characteristic of the periods in which they emerged. As we shall see, the UCR was the product of individual and group social mobility. It was a means of access to political power for regional and other middle class groups which were formed during the years of expansion. In contrast, Perón's movement, at least up to 1946, represented the desire of a whole class to figure prominently in a political and economic system within which they were previously subordinate.

Again, there were similarities in their organizational framework. Galletti¹ attempts to apply a Duvergean pattern of development to the UCR, fitting it into the model of a middle class party. But while it was true that this party was organizationally weak and decentralized, when compared with the Socialist and Communist parties, the Radicals achieved substantial unity and cohesion. This was partly related to their birth and development in a revolutionary context,² reinforced in power by strong opposition and reflected after 1930 in their remarkable persistence, as we shall see. But it is broadly true that both were more coalitions of strong local and sectional organizations rather than centralized structures.

There were also similarities in ideology and style. Neither were programmatic,³ both were very personalistic, and were exclusive in their claims to represent the interests of the whole nation rather than part of it, and this was coupled in both cases with a

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1. Galletti, La política y los partidos, B.A., 1961.
 2. Yrigoyen's organization of the party in Buenos Aires Province in the 1890's is very impressive, as related in Manuel Gálvez, Vida de Hipólito Yrigoyen, B.A., 1945.
 3. This must be qualified in Perón's case. He had a clear programme at most times in 1943-1955; he certainly put one forward for the 1946 elections through his speeches. The Partido Laborista also had a written programme for the campaign. The point is rather that Perón changed his so often. The statements of the UCR went little further than demands for provincial autonomy, administrative honesty and so on, until 1932 when their first programme was written.

denial of the class struggle and of the liberal conception of the relative truth of political ideologies. This latter is seen clearly in Yrigoyen's fourth memoria to the Supreme Court in 1932, when he put forward his view of the significance of the UCR :

The most absolute national solidarity...conceivable arose in the country with the UCR...the Radical Party is the best interpreter of reason and superior consciousness... nations which can show this by their development and activities... have come to the highest culmination of life...¹

These claims are reminiscent of Perón's for justicialismo.

There is a danger of placing all non-liberal, non-socialist ideology into one category. There were important differences between yrigoyenismo and peronismo in theory as well as in practice. Indeed, both were contradictory; one example common to both was their respective attitudes to the institutions of democracy, to which both were committed despite the anti-democratic elements in their theories, although their interpretation of legal norms were at variance with, for example, those of the Conservatives and Socialists. Generally, as with Perón, Yrigoyen's theory and practice have been given widely different interpretations. Programmes of economic nationalism and even socialism have been read into Yrigoyen's actions, mainly after the growth of the Intransigente radicalism after 1945.

1. Quoted in Gabriel Del Mazo, El Radicalismo, Vol. II, B.A. 1959, p.307. Del Mazo sees the UCR as a 'civil union of Argentinians to defend the Nation above political interests...political parties are factions or modernizations of the "Regime".'
Op. cit., p. 227.

It is then safer to say that both were clear on what they were a reaction against; a 'Regime' with Yrigoyen and an 'Oligarchy' with Perón. There is a difference in that with the former the reaction was mainly political, while in Perón's case there was a strong social element as well. It is true that particularly in his second term, conflicts under Yrigoyen were beginning to take a class form in the urban environment. This is indicated by the fear of the opposition about the 'chusma radical'.¹ This was not sought by Yrigoyen, who still retained his paternalistic attitudes to labour demands; and with regard to the rural sphere, there is a clear difference between him and Perón, who from the beginning was in conflict with most large landowners.

Some of these ideological affinities can be explained directly. Perón at times attempted to capture the yrigoyenista tradition; this was so in his bid for the support of Radicals such as Amadeo Sabattini. But common features of the society from which both movements emerged were more important in accounting for the similarities between the two movements.

This society was characterized throughout by the absence of a dominant class which could be compared with the 19th century

1. This is reminiscent of the 'descamisados' and 'cabecitas negras' reaction to the crowds which turned out for Perón.

closed landed elites of (say) Brazil. Basically this is explained by its reaction to, and renewal in, the period of expansion of 1860-1930. With regard to composition, Imaz has shown¹ that a large proportion of landowners represented in the leadership of the Sociedad Rural at this time were of recent origin, which reflects the acceptability of new wealth and men of immigrant origin to the landowning élite. This relative receptiveness can be explained by the considerable changes which took place within the rural sector. It has been pointed out that the landowning structure was established before the expansion took place, and that in Buenos Aires Province at least, it was maintained by the letting and sharecropping system, which exploited the available immigrant labour and the market opportunities for cattle and agricultural production without altering the distribution of landownership. There were, however, changes in ownership² which varied for different areas of the littoral, particularly before the main development of tenant farming after the 1890's. Finally, other factors which explain the heterogeneity of the élite were the close integration of the economy into the international market, which gave rise to a close interrelation of men and capital in landowning,

1. José Luis de Imaz, op. cit., Chapter V.

2. 'Pero si hubo pocos colonos, hubo en cambio muchos europeos con visión y posibilidades financieras, que adquirieron de sus nominales propietarios las tierras que su incuria obligaba a vender. De ahí que, sin parcelamiento, hubo traslación de dominio.' Op. cit., p. 92.

commercial, and industrial sectors. This tendency was reinforced by the increasing diversification of the economy.

The changing composition of the Argentinian upper class is not unique; the same process has been observed in Chile and Peru. More significant for their political influence were their attitudes and relative 'modernity'; as Cortés Conde and Gallo conclude, the modernizing programme of the 'generation of 1880' did not meet resistance from larger landed interests:

El grupo que dirigió el proceso en el peculiar momento de expansión que describimos...no fue un grupo retrógrado, cerrado y con una larga tradición terrateniente...fue probablemente un sector con mucho dinamismo, abierto a las influencias nuevas y a todo lo que llegara de Europa, que se consideraba más moderno y civilizado...¹

These pragmatic attitudes were later to be seen in the 1930's, when basically the same groups concurred in the new economic policy put forward by the Pinedo team. Again, their position was affected by their relationships to other social groups and the possible challenges to their domination. One sector from which a challenge might have been expected to come was a large middle class, both urban and rural. Germani gives the changes in occupational structure according to the following figures:

1. Cortés Conde and Gallo, op. cit., p. 100.

<u>Socio-occupational strata</u>	<u>1869</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1914</u>	<u>1947</u>
Proprietors (land, commerce, industry, landlords)	6	18	17	20
White-collar workers and professional	5	8	15	20
<u>Artisans and other workers por cuenta propia</u>	15	24	18	
Urban workers, rural peones, and domestic service	74	50	50	60
	—	—	—	—
	100	100	100	100

Source: Germani, Política y sociedad en una época de transición, B.A., 1962, p. 196.

The growth of middle groups can be traced to the diversification of the economy, to urbanization - half the population lived in towns of 2,000 and upwards in 1914 - and to immigration. And, while immigrants came to the cities primarily because of the lack of opportunities in land, nevertheless the period also saw the establishment before 1900 of a substantial group of middle-class landowners, and subsequently of lease-holders whose proportion in the total continued to increase until the Second World War.

It has been pointed out that before 1930 these groups were substantially identified with the forms of economic organization which implied the economic domination of the 'oligarchy'. This at first sight conflicts with the view of the Radicals as the party of a rising middle class. But while it did pose a considerable

political challenge, various studies have qualified the extent of the alternatives which the UCR did in fact offer. The social composition of its leadership did not differ greatly from that of the Conservative groups, and while its supporters were generally distinct, they also included many landowners, who, if they were not members of the elite, at least aspired to be. More significant were the policies which it offered; Smith finds in the case of cattle policy that the UCR leadership closely followed the line advocated by the Sociedad Rural.¹

How can this behaviour be explained? Smith points to the diversity of the UCR's composition; this is an aspect of the absence of a cohesive middle class generally. Puiggrós - who subscribes to the thesis that the middle class should have an independent role to play - distinguishes at least three main sectors; capitalist landowners, those associated with import-export activities, and industrialists.² We can also point to the division between immigrant and native, between urban and rural, as well as between the various occupational strata. More important, however, were the general characteristics of social conflicts. Cortés Conde and Gallo show how inappropriate a model of a rising middle class is for the Argentina of this time, when:

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1. P. H. Smith, 'Los radicales argentinos y la defensa de los intereses ganaderos, 1916-1930.' Desarrollo Económico, Vol.7.25, 1967.
 2. Rodolfo Puiggrós, Las izquierdas y el problema nacional, B.A., 1967, p. 149.

...los acontecimientos político-institucionales acaecidos en este periodo estuvieron profundamente condicionados por las variaciones de una coyuntura económica en ascenso y por los cambios ocurridos en la estructura social del país. En este sentido, no parece difícil imaginar que dicho proceso socio-institucional estuviera caracterizado fundamentalmente por la preeminencia de las situaciones de equilibrio sobre las de ruptura, y que se haya visto enmarcado por el consenso activo o pasivo de la mayoría de la población nacional.¹

Comparing this picture of consensus with the political and social situation prior to the 1943 coup shows that much had changed. There were important changes in the social structure. Germani's figures show the increasing number of white-collar sectors in the middle class. In the secondary sector, the period saw concentration of industry and the rise of the numbers of an industrial working class. Generally a doubling of population between 1914 and 1947, which combined with the fall in the proportion of immigrants in the population, meant that the electorate of 1946 was several times that of 1916. Politically, also, there were new factors, which can be analysed in the tendencies which were to relate to the rise of peronismo.

1. Cortés Conde and Gallo, op. cit., p.86.

Chapter II

The antecedents of Perón's movement

The major political event which marked the breakdown of this consensus was the September 1930 military coup. The subsequent control of power by the antipersonalista, Independent Socialist, and Conservative alliance in the Concordancia, basing their rule on the Armed Forces, constituted one of the main influences on the developing situation which was later to be exploited by Perón. The emergence of this formation was one expression of the political realignment and broadening of the ideological spectrum which took place as a reaction to the old system. It can be seen partly as a rightward tendency and the growth of nationalism, currents which have been underlined in some accounts of the origins of peronismo.

The growth of rightwing Nationalism

These tendencies merged in the growth of rightwing Nationalist groups, originating in the 1920's. Before 1930 these were little more than groups of intellectuals with their personal followers, who were as ideologically disparate as Leopoldo Lugones on the one hand, and the Nueva República group, founded in 1927, on the other. Those associated with the latter - the Irazusta brothers, Ernesto Palacio, Juan E. Carulla were among the most prominent - were (unlike Lugones) at this time pro-catholic and anti-fascist. The

subsequent development of the extreme Right continued to show this heterogeneity, as Maryssa Gerassi's inclusive definition indicates:

Anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-Communist and anti-Semitic, Catholic and authoritarian, inspired and influenced by Europe's nationalisms (including Action Française, Fascism and, later, Falangism). This movement sought to establish in Argentina a corporative state which would embody 'hierarchy and order'.¹

The movement was to be of political importance initially under Uriburu in 1930-31; later in the decade it was to gain in popular support on ground prepared by the atmosphere of fraud and corruption, by the growth of anti-British sentiment expressed by the opposition to the transport monopoly, the Roca-Runciman pact, and so on; and by influences from abroad.

Particularly significant was the polarization of opinion which took place over the Spanish Civil War, and then over the Second World War, when the Nationalists gained adherents for their claim to represent a popular desire for neutrality. Finally, the movement reached its apogee under the military government in 1943.

The influence of the Nationalists can, however, be exaggerated. At exceptional times they were able to gain significance disproportionate to their numerical strength, but in general they were more important for the effect they had on other groups - notably the military, though also indirectly the Left - than for the support

1. Maryssa Gerassi, Argentine Nationalism of the Right, Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1964, introduction.

they could command. Their numbers were never very great; in 1944 the membership of all the Nationalist groups was estimated at 40,000, and the circulation of their newspapers was never impressive.¹ Equally, their history was marked by ideological differences and organizational fragmentation. While they could agree on their common rejection of liberal democracy and its replacement by some form of corporatist alternative, their prescriptions varied widely. Some remained within other institutions. This was the case with Julio Meinville and Gustavo J. Franceschi (the editor of Criterio) in the Church.² Within cultural institutions the Revisionist historical school was developed through the works of Palacio and the Irazustas, to find expression in the Instituto Juan Manuel de Rosas.³ More significant at the political level were those organisations which aimed at

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1. El Pampero had a circulation of 75,000. The figures for the others were much less: Crisol 4,000; Cabildo 4,000; Choque 5,000 and so on. Gerassi, op. cit. p. 152. The circulation of the major newspapers was: La Prensa 360,000; La Nación 400,000; Crítica 420,000. Foreign Office, Review of Foreign Press, Series C, 1940-45.
 2. Of course, falangism was not uncommon among Church leaders, particularly during the Spanish Civil War.
 3. This is not to maintain that the revisionist school was entirely a rightwing phenomenon, but simply that its nationalism was also shared by the Right, many of whom took part in the movement. The work by the Irazusta brothers, La Argentina y el imperialismo británico, 1934, is regarded as one of the first in this stream.

direct action. Small Fascist groups existed in the early 1930's, as well as the larger Legión Cívica Argentina founded by Uriburu, which received official recognition and facilities for military training.¹ Immediately prior to the 1943 coup the largest of such groups was the Unión Nacional Argentina 'Patria' founded in 1941 by Manuel Fresco, and to the left of this the Alianza de la Juventud Nacionalista led by Ramón Doll and Enrique Osés, editor of Pampero. Ray Josephs estimated the strength of the latter in 1943 as 50-60,000 members,² but this seems greatly exaggerated as in 1942 the organization claimed only 11,000 due-paying affiliates.³ In the 1946 elections the Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista polled only 28,000 votes, or 1% of the total: although this is not a true reflection of their support since many would have voted for the other Peronist parties. Again, it does not indicate that they were important locally in the federal capital, from where they obtained 20,000 of their votes.

The relative numerical unimportance of these groups does seem striking given the impression of an extensive rightist and nationalist tendency in the late 1930's and early 1940's. That

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1. Carlos Ibarguren, La historia que he vivido, B.A., 1955, p. 431.
 2. Ray Josephs, Argentine Diary, 1945, section on 7 December 1943.
 3. Gerassi, op. cit., p. 168.

the Nationalists did not gain greater support suggests a modification to the view that the old party system was breaking down. They were effectively excluded from the major groupings. Corporatist ideas did gain some influence among Conservatives such as Matías Sánchez Sorondo and Manuel Fresco. But the dividing line as drawn in the conflict between Justo, supported by the Conservatives, and Uriburu, with the Nationalists, remained after 1930-1932. While both groups condemned elements of Yrigoyenismo such as its personalism and neglect of legal institutions, the extreme right sought to abolish the system of universal suffrage and representative democracy which they regarded as the root cause of the evil. To this dividing line was added the nationalist element and a different economic policy between the Conservatives who supported the British connection, and men such as Sánchez Sorondo who spoke for those landowners who opposed it.

Equally, the Nationalist Right was excluded from urban middle class support by the Radical Party, which maintained its hostility to those who had been active in the coup against Yrigoyen. As Germani points out, this is one of the reasons why the historical process which is regarded as characteristic of the rise of Fascism in Europe was not repeated in Argentina.¹

1. Gino Germani, Política y sociedad en una época de transición, B.A., 1962, p. 241-2.

This picture should be qualified for times of crisis when individuals could gain a great deal of influence. In 1943, as in 1930, a number of them found their way into the government. It was the culmination of the rightist movement begun in 1930 when men such as Ibarguren, Martínez Zuviría, David Uriburu and Mario Amadeo were civil members of a military regime in which many were at least sympathetic to Fascism, if not Nazism. Their influence was reflected in decrees in 1943 such as those establishing religious education in State schools and dissolving the political parties. Many foreign correspondents, as well as the Left in Argentina, saw these as marking the beginnings of Fascism within the country. Yet they did not fully grasp the significance of the fact that within 11 days of the issue of these decrees, Ramírez had dissolved all the Nationalist organizations (on 11 January 1944). Subsequently the resignations of Ibarguren and the rest of the civilian right were accepted.

Thus while there were rightist elements within the Armed Forces, this course of events suggests that the Nationalist groups were being used by the government only as far as it suited them. Their initial appearance within the provisional government can be explained partly because the military were unclear about the objectives of their coup and were prepared to listen to groups which were not of the Left and not associated with the old regime:

possibly also because of a depreciation which both shared for the politicians of the other political parties; and probably because the Nationalists provided a counterbalance against the pressure for participation in the war. When a plan was developed, the government did not hesitate in jettisoning the Right, whose presence was incompatible with the support of the unions. They were abandoned together with their main policy, which was non-alignment in the war;¹ and subsequently only the Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista continued to support the Farrell government and Perón, who found the organization a useful weapon to use against the Communists in Buenos Aires. But when Perón had built up his own organizations at the end of 1945, with which he wished to be seen to win a democratic election, the ALN became more a hindrance than a help. The ALN was, of course, more radical than the old Right of the 1930 coup, who were alienated from Perón once he had turned to the left. This is shown by the handful who remained with him in 1946. Men such as Palacio and Manuel Gálvez were the exceptions rather than the rule.²

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1. Argentina broke diplomatic relations with the Axis on 26 January 1944.
 2. Manuel Gálvez wrote an eulogistic introduction to a collection of Perón's speeches in which he saw him as a second Yrigoyen. El pueblo quiere saber de qué se trata, B.A., 1944, p. 8. Ernest Palacio became a peronist deputy in 1946. More characteristic was the opposition of Julio Irazusta; Perón y la crisis argentina, B.A., 2nd ed. 1966.

There remains the alleged influence of the Right on Perón's ideology. Romero, for example, sees a connection between some of Ibarguren's ideas and peronismo.¹ But even leaving aside the fact that the variation between some of Perón's ideas was almost as great as the distance between his theory and practice, such a direct association cannot be established. The ideological influences on Perón, even in his most 'Fascist' period in 1943, - mainly nationalism, and a semi-corporatist view of the relations between State, capital and labour - were as likely to have come from elsewhere. Corporativism was at the forefront of general discussion at the time, and nationalism was part of a wider current in Argentina in which the Right also stood. There is no evidence that Perón was directly influenced by individuals on the Right as Uriburu had been; and his contact with Mussolini's Italy possibly affected him far more than his reading of Gálvez or of Ibarguren.

The rightward tendency among major groups.

The emergence of the extreme right was an aspect of a generalized shift in the political spectrum initiated in the 1920's by opposition to Yrigoyen. A sign of this tendency was the emergence of the Concordancia from divisions within the Radicals and Socialists, in alliance with the Conservatives. Its rightist

1. José Luis Romero, A History of Argentine Political Thought, B.A., 1965, p. 193.

characteristics, which were initially marked by the acceptance of unconstitutional methods - first of the Armed Forces, and then the manipulation of the electoral procedures - to maintain the status quo against the personalistas within the UCR, was hardening into an economic and social conservatism. Given the contrast with the party programmes in the 1946 election, all of them substantially to the left of their previous position on land reform, economic nationalism, social legislation, and so on, leads to the conclusion that the removal of Yrigoyen created a vacuum on the left which was to be filled by Perón on the one hand, and by nationalist tendency, principally within the Radical party, on the other.

The Radical party had a tradition of fragmentation before the 1920's, given its structure as a coalition of provincial groups and personalist leaders. Divisions could be characterised as local and national. Under the latter heading comes the azules/rojos distinction dating at least from 1916, and owing its existence primarily to disaffection over Yrigoyen's leadership; under the former, the multitude of provincial groupings. Snow, taking a typical year, lists six different Radical parties in 1920.¹ Equally, the Socialists were prone to splits in spite of their unitary structure and ideological homogeneity. But as with the UCR, the

1. P.G. Snow, The Radical Parties of Chile and Argentina, Ph.D. thesis, Virginia, 1963, p. 160.

realignment which gave rise to the Concordancia was deeper, and more lasting.

The tendency which was to emerge in 1927 as the Independent Socialist Party under Antonio di Tomasso and Frederico Pinedo can be traced back to the years after 1916. It arose initially in debate over whether the Party should co-operate with the other parties against the UCR, notably with the Conservatives of Buenos Aires, to whom it was proposed to give Socialist votes in exchange for Conservative support in the capital.¹ This tactical dispute extended to the question of co-operation with the opposition in Congress; and developed into an ideological issue as the cost of accommodation with the opposition was the modification of provisions in the party's programme which called for the suppression of the Armed Forces, the separation of Church and State, and for a strongly centralised party structure. The division, as Joaquin Coca maintains, was also to some extent a social one, the di Tomasso group being more the bourgeois wing of the party.²

In the same way, the Radical split was originally personal and political. Del Mazo claims that the two currents were more deeply divided, and he speaks of:

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1. Joaquin Coca, El contubernio, B.A., n.d., p. 7.
 2. Op. cit., p. 10. Coca did not point out that di Tomasso's plan to alter the programme on these clauses was probably also based on a calculation that these had been among the reasons why the Socialists had remained a very minor party.

...dos tendencias, que con los más cambiantes titulares han proseguido hasta hoy. Una es la tendencia socialmente conservadora que no siente o rechaza el hacerse cargo de los cambios del país y del mundo. Mentalidades a veces de cepa oligarquica, consideraban que la acción debía subordinarse sólo a las formas de la democracia, sin tocar nada de raíz;...¹

But Del Mazo's application of such a distinction between Yrigoyen's government and that of Alvear could not be deduced from the policies that both followed. It is true that Alvear had a different conception of the role of the party and of its position in the government, and that on his assumption of office in 1922 he appointed ministers who corresponded to his own predilections; he himself was a son of the oligarchy.² Nevertheless, the charge of social conservatism cannot be supported by the extent of social legislation passed by Alvear when compared with Yrigoyen, or by the line he took with reference to cattle interests. Indeed, he made some attempt to introduce State controls of the meat-packing industry, while Yrigoyen did not.³ There were, however, groups within his government which were later to emerge as the

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1. Del Mazo, El radicalismo: notas sobre su historia y doctrina (1922-1952), B.A. 1955, p. 33.
 2. 'Probablemente era la de Alvear una de las pocas familias argentinas que podía jactarse de una real aristocracia.' Félix Luna, Alvear, B.A. 1958, p. 15.
 3. P. Smith, 'Los radicales argentinos y la defensa de los intereses ganaderos', Desarrollo Económico, Ab-Junio, 1967, 7.25.

antipersonalista party of the 1930's under men such as Leopoldo Melo and Roberto M. Ortiz.

These sectors were clearly governing in the 1930's on behalf of the 'class alliance' we have referred to. Their social composition was reflected in the conservatism of the defence of the British connection and of the economic interests associated with it; in attitudes to labour, whose demands were ignored by a government secure from electoral defeat; and in the maintenance of the status quo with regard to social and economic problems to do with the land. The influence which organizations such as the Sociedad Rural wielded in the government became increasingly apparent as rival pressure groups emerged. There are, of course, exceptions to a picture of monolithic 'oligarchic' rule for the whole 1932-1943 period. The opposition was able to gain some influence within certain provinces, and to some extent to affect policy by means of their representatives in Congress. There was also some conflict between the components of the Concordancia; for example, between liberal elements who supported Ortiz, and the Conservatives under Castillo. There was in addition some concern for social problems, though this was mainly left to Socialist congressmen, and some attempt to alleviate problems in the rural environment by measures such as colonization schemes. But the

striking contrast between the programmes and policies of all parties in this period and in 1945-46 suggests that the overall effect of events in the 1930's was to give rise to the vacuum we have indicated.

The growth of nationalism

The vacuum was also to be filled by nationalist sentiment growing in the 1930's, which was to receive political expression under Perón. The extent and depth of the current is shown by the influence it had on the Radical Party and on the Left as well as on the peronistas. The Socialists and Communists were to be split during the 1950's by groups attempting to orientate their parties towards ideas which had apparently worked so successfully for Perón. What was the origin and precise nature of the current, and what was its significance for Perón?

The accounts offered in general works do not throw a great deal of light on the subject. Silvert's book, for example, suffers from too great a concern with 'nation-building'. His premises lead him to the remarkable conclusion that Argentina is one of the least nationalistic of countries.¹ Whitaker and Jordan improve on Silvert in returning to the concept as it is generally used and in stressing its variety - it is always found in association with another ideology. But in doing this they reduce the concept to an

1. K.H. Silvert, 'The costs of Anti-nationalism: Argentina', in Expectant Peoples, ed. Silvert, N.Y., 1963.

almost meaningless level. They find, in their section on Argentina, that, not surprisingly, most groups have 'put the interests of the nation above those of sectional or personal advantage'. In fact, it was simply that groups differed about what the national interest was. They conclude that:

Most Argentines are nationalists of one kind or another, but the kinds lie over the whole spectrum of nationalisms, from left to right, from traditional to revolutionary, from benign to terroristic.¹

This statement begs the question: who are the non-nationalists? The only sectors not listed in their categories are parts of the Marxist left, and the oligarchy. But even this last group is partly subsumed within their bracket of 'liberal nationalism'. They state, for example, that during the 1930's 'the government promoted nationalism on the home front, but sacrificed it in foreign relations'.² The first part of this statement would be taken by most Argentine nationalists to be the reverse of the truth.

Some of this confusion can be overcome by concentrating on a more limited period, rather than attempting (as do Whitaker and Jordan) to equate phenomena as different as the 'modernizing nationalism' of Rivadavia with the 'populistic nationalism' of Perón. Further, the significance of nationalism can be more readily revealed by an examination of the function it performs for groups

1. Whitaker and Jordan, Nationalism in Contemporary Latin America, N.Y., 1966, p. 6.

2. Op. cit., p. 68.

associated with it, rather than by a search for a set of criteria which might describe the nature of the phenomenon in all its manifestations. Adopting this approach, a new phase of nationalism growing in the 1930's can be isolated. Its significance was twofold.

It represented the search for a new political position. Although it was primarily directed against the oligarchy and its connections with foreign interests, the movement put forward a critique of all major political parties and ideologies in Argentina.

Further, the new nationalism sought to express a popular sentiment which echoed the interests of those who suffered from this connection, and was magnified by the general current of opposition to the regime and by the atmosphere of crisis, scandal and fraud which surrounded it.

The current, however, would probably not have become as widespread as it did but for the war and the articulation given it by Perón himself, so that the growth of this nationalism should not be overemphasised as a long term factor in Perón's rise to power. Many have seen nationalism as the primary constituent of peronismo. This is Lux-Wurm's opinion, although he does not attempt to give it precise definition. He simply maintains that most nationalists of all varieties could see their nationalism reflected in Perón.¹

1. P. Lux-Wurm, Le Péronisme, Paris, 1965, p. 49.

Magnet, on the other hand, saw Perón as expressing Argentina's frustrated manifest destiny to hegemony in Latin America,¹ while Whitaker and Jordan regard it as intimately associated with his programme for social justice. We can agree that the social programme was the main element in Perón's rise to power, but this was not necessarily connected with nationalism.

Some elements can be identified. One is the economic nationalism of sectors which sought 'economic independence' and the search for new markets. These were principally smaller, rural producers, whose demands were also to some extent taken up by the UCR. There was also more generalised feeling that Argentina should adopt policies which might remove her vulnerability to fluctuations of prices for primary products on the international market.² The influence which these sectors had on Perón's victory in 1946 were not, however, as important as the support he obtained because of his social programme. The nationalist sentiment which won him most votes was rather a simple patriotism which developed as a reaction against the United States for the economic and political sanctions which had been applied to Argentina during the war.

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1. Alejandro Magnet, Nuestros vecinos justicialistas, 7th ed., Santiago, 1954, p. 22.
 2. This had been urged by people like Alejandro Bunge since the 1920's. Una nueva Argentina, B.A., 1940.

The significance for Perón of the tendency which found institutional expression in 1935 with the FORJA group within the Radical party was more in the similarities of their approaches. FORJA, in its search for a new political alternative by criticising the alvearista leadership of the UCR as well as the Left, was anticipating the method which Perón was to adopt. There was also some continuity, in that many within FORJA, under Arturo Jauretche, joined Perón in 1945, while others - such as Gabriel Del Mazo and Dellepiane - were later associated with the intransigentes. Further, the formation of this group marked the beginning of a wave of writings by men such as Scalabrini Ortiz,¹ which sought to reinterpret Argentine history in the light of the influence of Imperialism.

The ideology of FORJA was, of course, different in many respects from peronismo. Hernández Arregui² listed some of the main characteristics of this movement as:

1. The resurrection of the nationalist elements of yrigoyenismo, which are regarded as related to the 'antiguas tradiciones federalistas del país, anteriores a 1852'.
2. A return to the ideology of the University Reform movement of 1918.

1. Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, Política británica en el Río de la Plata, 3rd ed., 1957.

2. In Arturo Jauretche, FORJA y la década infame, B.A., 1962, p. 6.

3. Rejection of 'European influences'; the ideological debt to aprismo and Manuel Ugarte.
4. Its objective was a popular revolution based on the masses.
5. It was initially a middle-class movement from within the universities.
6. The Imperialism of both Britain and the U.S.A. was rejected.

Peronismo did not share FORJA's emphasis on the universities, on Yrigoyen, or on the Radical party. The similarities came from a body of ideas which can be regarded as characteristic of the wave of nationalism we have been describing, which derive from two main propositions: one, that the division between 'national' and 'non-national' is more fundamental than those arising from social class or other factors. What is regarded as anti-national is generally 'imported ideology'. This is identified principally as liberalism, which is considered to be that which maintains the international division of labour and hence the country's economic dependence. But the 'European mentality' is alleged to have affected not only the oligarchy, but most of society prior to 1916 as well: the nationalist critique is a condemnation of a whole era. Jorge Abelardo Ramos asks:

Si el imperialismo europeo había importado al campesinado capitalista del litoral, a la burguesía industrial y al proletariado urbano, ¿donde estaban los argentinos en 1916...?

They were certainly not represented by the traditional Socialist and Communist parties, argue the nationalist Left. These are condemned for having shown excessive concern for the immigrant sector of the working class, and for following models and tactics developed or distated from abroad. It is argued² that the orthodox left has failed because it has not been able to see that the main social division is a nationalist one which should be expressed - as they consider to have been the case with Yrigoyen's and Perón's movements - as an alliance between national bourgeoisie and national working class.

The second main proposition is that the economic, cultural and other penetrations of Imperialism has given rise to a distortion which has been the major obstacle to Argentina's development. Here again differences arise over what this development has been and what forms it should take in the future. In negating the social and economic organization which was the basis of economic expansion before 1930, they seek to find forces within that society which might

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1. Jorge Abelardo Ramos, El partido comunista en la política argentina, B.A., 1962, p. 15.
 2. By Ramos, op. cit. and by Puiggrós, Las izquierdas y el problema nacional, B.A., 1967.

have given rise to an alternative. This is usually found to be the development of industry which, it has been argued, was impeded by the export economy.

Thus a fairly coherent body of ideas emerged out of the nationalist current which grew up after the 1930's. Different ideological opinions were expressed about the form which the nationalist revolution should take, as well as on the nature of the society which should emerge from it. Perón had his own answers to these problems, but he used the approach outlined above in his attack on a 'European-minded' oligarchy; on the 'imported ideologies' of the working class parties; and in his programme of 'economic independence' through industrialization.

The distortion of the political and institutional system

Perón's emergence as the leader of a new formation within the political system suggests that representative institutions prior to 1943 did not effectively articulate the demands of significant sectors of the population. The danger of adopting this approach lies in too great an emphasis on the existence of an alternative which was available for Perón to exploit. Given the resources which he could dispose of in 1943-46, and the restrictions put in the way of the opposition, he was able to win support simply by giving existing groups what they wanted. Nevertheless, one important source of peronismo arose from dissatisfaction with the

institutional system, particularly with the Parties and Unions, as it had previously operated.

(a) The Radical Party

The main reason why the UCR was unable to function with the effectiveness that it had been able to do before 1930 was because it was not permitted to, rather than because of any intrinsic 'failure'. On the one hand, the Party leadership was prevented from adopting a popular yrigoyenista position; on the other, it was forced to participate in elections under conditions.

The other alternative had proved futile. Once the elections in Buenos Aires Province in April 1931 made it clear that the UCR would remain invincible at freely held elections, its leaders were restricted or exiled. The Party's immediate recourse was to abstention, which in Radical mythology signified a return to the intransigence of the fight for the suffrage under Yrigoyen. They found, however, that conditions had changed considerably from those of three decades earlier. The government now identified the UCR as its principal enemy. It could dispose of a powerful Army which, in spite of the existence within it of a number of Radical sympathizers, was well able to deal with eight uprisings which took place between 1930 and 1933.¹ The struggle was also more bitter.

1. Del Mazo, El radicalismo, (1922-1945), B.A., 1955, p. 248.

Alvear, who earlier had been forgiven for his Radicalism by his friends in the highest social circles, now found himself faced with imprisonment or exile together with other leaders of the UCR.

Further, some of the confidence and moral fervour had gone out of the Radical cause. They had been proved fallible with the deposition of Yrigoyen, whose departure left them without an undisputed leader. While Alvear was able to reunite the Party, he had neither the personal ascendancy nor the popularity which Yrigoyen had been able to command.

Given these obstacles, the most striking feature of the history of the Radicals in the 1930's was their survival. They clearly remained the majority party. They also maintained substantial unity, in spite of the conflict between alvearistas and yrigoyenistas which took place throughout the decade. Of course, unity had been forced upon them. Repression had provided the impetus for the reorganization which took place between 1931 and 1932. New statutes and the Party's first programme were issued, and the UCR became a more structured and centralized party. Local and provincial leaders, as might be expected, could generally work efficient party machines. But the Comité Nacional was able to exercise considerable authority over the party as a whole. This emerges, for example, in Alvear's successful use of the weapon of intervention in 1931 in Santa Fe, or in the Radical convention in

the Capital in 1935 where the legalistas were disputing the decision to return to the polls.¹ This decision was opposed by large sectors of the Party's left. But once taken, most of the UCR seem to have followed it.

By the 1943 coup, however, the UCR was at its lowest ebb since 1930. Participation in elections had brought some gains with victory in Córdoba and in the Federal Capital, and with a large bloc of deputies in parliament. More important, after 1938 it had brought the prospect of an end to electoral fraud. But the replacement of Ortiz by Castillo in July 1940 made it clear that the moderate policy no longer had any prospect of success. It was generally expected that the Consordancia would have little difficulty in imposing a successor to Castillo in the September 1943 elections. A certain defeatism entered the Party. Félix Luna writes of the UCR in this period:

...la UCR había llegado al nadir de su vigencia en la opinión. Dominada por círculos cada vez más cerrados cuya sensibilidad se reducía a protestar ante cada estafa electoral, el radicalismo estaba frente a una total desorientación en la que sólo había un punto cierto - el principio de que seguiría siendo mayoría...el partido era una máquina electoral sin aportes de juventud, sin más objetivo que la llegada al poder a cualquier precio.²

1. Op. cit., p. 179 and p. 237.

2. Félix Luna, Alvear, B.A., 1958, p. 284.

This situation was reflected in the 1942 parliamentary elections, when the UCR suffered from the abstention of many of its supporters. It was reinforced by Alvear's death in that year, and by the growing internal challenge posed by the left wing. Nevertheless, the Party remained intact. 'Bureaucratization' and the loss of contact with the rank and file has been pointed to as a characteristic of the opposition parties and as one cause of Perón's emergence.¹ In the case of the UCR, however, it was the price of survival; and it was later to provide the basis for the resurgence of the UCR in 1943-46. Given the advantages which Perón held over them, the vote for the UCR in 1946 is surprisingly high. The party remained united in spite of Perón's attempt to win it over; even Amadeo Sabattini opposed Perón. Only a few second rank politicians such as Quijano and Cooke responded to his overtures.

There were, then, no direct connections between developments within the UCR and Perón's emergence. Perón certainly profited by the support which would have been given to the Party had the restrictions of the 1930's not forced it to the right of the position it would normally have taken. This contributed to confining the UCR

1. Ciria quotes Whitaker: 'Los jefes del principal de los partidos de oposición, el Radical, se burocratizaron produciendo algo así como una oligarquía propia, y perdieron contacto con las filas de afiliados y más todavía con el pueblo en general.' Alberto Ciria, Partidos y poder en la Argentina moderna. B.A., 1964, p. 158.

solely to the middle class, which Germani has brought out in his correlations between social class and electoral vote in Buenos Aires for the 1942 election.¹ This also emerged in a census conducted in 1943 by the Comité Nacional interventor of 20,000 UCR affiliates in the city who were predominantly middle class.² The vacuum which Perón was to fill lay more in the representation of the popular class. Is it therefore possible to talk of a 'failure of the Left'?

(b) The Left

The question is rather unreal, since the orthodox Left had never been strong in Argentina. The Socialists and Communists were minor and localized parties. The Socialist Party remained strong only in the Federal Capital; its share of the votes in National elections rarely rose above 10% of the total. The exception was in the early 1930's when the non-participation of the UCR inflated their representation. From 1932-1935 they were the second largest party in the Chamber of Deputies, and this period is regarded as that when Socialist influence was at its height.

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1. Germani, Estructura social de la Argentina, B.A., 1955, p. 247-263.
 2. La Nación, 24 May 1943. This can only be a rough guide. There was no indication of how these 20,000 were chosen out of the total of 61,000 Radical party affiliates, or whether some of the obrero category were included in the other occupations.

With the return of the UCR to the polls, their representation fell, a tendency which continued to the 1946 elections, when many of their working class supporters turned to Perón. This left them primarily a middle-class party, led by a group of men prominent in the intellectual establishment, but without popular backing.

One of the main reasons for the failure of the Left is suggested by the fact that the Socialists gained influence only at the expense of the UCR. The support which they might have been expected to win was absorbed within popular, mass parties. The Radicals, as Perón was later to do, could put forward a formula which the Socialists and Communists could not emulate. This was partly due to characteristics of their leadership, ideology and organization.

These characteristics were in turn a reflection of the conditions imposed on an emergent political party of the left by the political and social structure at the beginning of the century. The Socialists' appeal was confined to groups uncommitted to Anarchism or Syndicalism on the one hand, or to the UCR on the other. The one barred them from many of the artisans who predominated in the industrial sector, and from much of organized labour until the 1920's; the other, from non-immigrant middle and popular classes, particularly outside the littoral cities. Their composition came to include a large proportion of immigrants and, furthermore, a working class which had established its position

through a process of social ascent. As Vazeilles says, the Party came to be one of a University middle class and a Labour aristocracy.¹

The ideology developed by the Socialists confirmed that they were not destined to win the mass support which the Radicals obtained. Elements within Juan. B. Justo's thinking superimposed a certain élitism on the socialist ideas adopted from European sources. At times, this emerged as a depreciation for the civilization which could give rise to the 'política criolla' which was seen as characteristic of the Radical party.² Generally the Socialist emphasis was on education, which the Party itself sought to provide. Activity at the local level emphasised the formulation of, for example, libraries. A result was that the party acquired a certain schoolmasterish image which, as Di Tella points out, put them apart from real mass support.³

This was reinforced by provisions in the Party's programme such as those seeking to reduce the size of the military establishment and to separate Church and State. Antimilitarism

1. J. Vazeilles, Los socialistas, B.A., 1967, p. 28.

2. Puiggrós, Las izquierdas y el problema nacional, p. 56.

3. Di Tella, El sistema político argentino y la clase obrera B.A., 1964, p. 100.

was unlikely to win many adherents given the popularity of the Armed Forces, at least prior to 1930. It was also unwise to alienate a group which was to weigh decisively in later developments. Again, the Socialists' emphasis on free trade, immigration, and the encouragement of foreign capital was to hinder them when industry and nationalism were growing during the 1930's.

Finally, the organizational homogeneity demanded by the Party was one cause of a series of splits which marked its history. This contrasts with the federated structure of the UCR, within which diverse groups could co-exist.

Many of these factors contributed also to the weakness of the Communist Party. This was banned for the 1930-1945 period, although the extent to which it was restricted varied. They suffered severe repression at the hands of both State and private organizations during the Communists' revolutionary period in the early 1930's.¹ Subsequently, however, they had greater success than the Socialists in taking advantage of the accelerated growth and concentration of the industrial working class towards the end of the decade. The additions to the working class came mainly from outside Gran Buenos Aires - mostly from Buenos Aires Province and the littoral - and

1. Iscaro, Origen y desarrollo del movimiento sindical argentino, B.A., 1958, p.33.

these were alien to the Socialist Party with its established local party structure and Union support which had come from groups which were generally outside the industrial sector. Coupled with this, the Communists profited by the Socialists' move to the right which had been the price of their alliance with the Partido Demócrata Progresista. The consequence was that by 1940 the Communists were in a position to challenge the Socialist leadership of the CGT.

(c) The Union Movement

The conflict between Socialists and Communists was one source of the divisions which had characterized the development of organized labour up to Perón. The culmination of this fragmentation came in March 1943 when the CGT split in half to form the CGT.1. and CGT.2. The CGT had represented approximately three quarters of organized labour, the rest being grouped into the small Syndicalist USA and into autonomous unions. The disunity of the movement was one factor which helped Perón, although it is difficult to conceive how even a monolithic CGT could have resisted. For the CGT, an alliance with Perón offered the prospect of a central role in the achievement and defence of a new social, economic and political status for the working class. This was particularly attractive to leaders of organizations which up to that time had in most cases not been able to act as fully effective representative institutions.

It has often been pointed out that the movement incorporated a minority of an urban labour force which was growing because of urbanization and industrial expansion. In 1936, 370,000 obreros and empleados were organized; in 1940, 473,000.¹ This compares with an industrial working class of 396,000 in 1935, 734,000 in 1941 and 889,000 in 1946,² so that less than half of obreros and empleados in industry were organized.³ Of course, the industrial sector included only a percentage of those who might normally be represented by trade union organizations. The tertiary sector provided a large proportion of organized labour in the 1930's; the Transport Unions alone had in 1935 about 100,000 affiliates, or one third of the total.⁴ There was, however, some response to

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1. From Roberto Carri, Sindicatos y poder en la Argentina, B.A., 1967, p. 32.

These figures exclude artisans and workers in very small establishments. If these are included, the numbers are approximately double. For example, the census of population of 1947 recorded 1,800,000 in the industrial sector; 53.8% of these were workers in small scale enterprises of under 10 employees, artisans or por cuenta propia.

2. Fayt, op. cit., p. 79, Table 3.
3. These compare with the 2 millions which the CGT claimed in 1948. This increase, however, came after 1946; in 1945 only 528,000 were organized into the CGT, although this figure does not include large Unions such as the Construction and Textile workers, which were not recognized at that time. Fayt, op. cit., p. 89.
4. The main Transport Unions were La Fraternidad, Unión Ferroviaria, and the Unión Tranviaria.

industrial development. This was reflected in the growth of the largest industrial union, the Construction workers, which obtained 50,000 new members from 1935 to 1940. During this time the Transport Unions grew only to 115,000.¹

This level of organization, however, was to be expected given the structure of industry. It was low only in relation to the level achieved after 1946, when the government was encouraging workers in small enterprises to affiliate. In 1947, the average establishment employed 14.7 workers. This measured the concentration which had taken place since 1914, when the corresponding figure was 8.4. Again, the industries with the largest labour force were grouped in the Buenos Aires area, and for this reason were easier to unionize. There were, however, still a considerable number of smaller enterprises, so that the figure of almost half the labour force being organized is a relatively high percentage.

The size of the movement before Perón is striking, given the fact that, with some exceptions,² membership brought few advantages. There were relatively few functions which weak organizations could perform against employers, given an indiffenent or hostile State

1. S.L. Baily, Labor, Nationalism and Politics in Argentina, Rutgers, The State University, 1967, pp. 62-63.

2. Notably for the Unión Ferroviaria and La Fraternidad, which had been able to obtain their own social security and pensions schemes.

which had not yet even given them legal recognition. Wages and conditions were determined at the level of the individual enterprise, in which sectoral collective bargaining played little part. Neither was organized labour able to exert effective pressure on the government. It is true that there was some social legislation passed during the 1930's, and that labour was able to obtain some representation through the Socialist party in parliament. But a number of legislative measures seem to have been evaded; there were no effective organizations for supervision and enforcement. A Departamento Nacional del Trabajo existed, but without significant powers.

It is difficult to estimate precise conditions among the urban working class immediately prior to Perón; Impressions possibly suffer from the contrast of the subsequent period. Global figures show that real wages remained approximately constant throughout the 1930's. Prices during the decade increased little more than world levels, so that the stimulus to organization which came with inflation in the later period was not present. There was little urban unemployment. The initial unemployment caused by the crisis, and the subsequent pressure on jobs by migration to the major cities, was absorbed by the demands of industry. Conditions and security of work were probably a more important source of dissatisfaction than wage levels. One example, often given, was the state

of the meatpacking industry under the 'standard' system of piece-work, and where the foreign companies systematically opposed Union formation.¹

Outside the cities of the littoral conditions were, of course, much worse. Discounting rural labourers outside the plantation zones, there were important sectors in 'industrial' forces of production - sugar, cotton, yerba mate - which were later to be organized under Perón's influence. In 1939 the CGT expressed concern over the state of workers in the sugar areas of Tucumán.²

What were the main reasons for the weakness of the Union movement? The relatively high indices of urbanization and industrialization at the beginning of the century, coupled with the contact with European labour movements, might seem to have been conducive to its early development. But these circumstances were among those which in effect contributed to its weakness. Some of the main reasons can be examined under the headings of the composition of the working class and the general characteristics of economic development; of the relationships with other groups and with the State; and the structural and ideological differences

1. Jorge Antonio, ¿Y ahora Qué? B.A., 1966, p. 40 ff., describes this system, under which he worked in the 1930's. As a peronista, his account is likely to be exaggerated, although the essentials in his description have been corroborated from other sources.

2. Iscaro, op. cit., p. 41.

within the movement itself.

Of these, the relationships with the groups which controlled the State were the most important. It has been observed for Latin America generally that the primary impulse towards an effective union organization has come from governments rather than from labour.¹ This usually - as in the case of the Chilean 1924 labour code - was manifested in a body of legislation which in itself provided a stimulus for union growth. Neither one of two necessary circumstances were present in Argentina, however. The labour sector on its own did not pose a consistent political or social threat to the system; and powerful élites did not find it necessary to seek its support in their own bid for power.

Part of the explanation for the absence of these conditions can be traced to the domination of the movement by immigrants in the first decades of the century. In 1914, 59% of organized labour was made up of immigrants, compared with 47% for the working class as a whole.² The lack of attraction which the movement held for Argentinians, as well as the artisan structure of industry, limited its size and effectiveness. These factors, however, did not prevent

1. Landsberger, 'The Labour Elite: Is it Revolutionary?' Lipset and Solari, eds., Elites in Latin America, 1967, p. 260.

2. Alberto Belloni, Del anarquismo al peronismo, B.A., 1960, p. 29.

the emergence of a strong Anarchist organization - the FORA - in the 1900-1910 period. The frequent violence, strikes, and legislative measures which the government took against them indicated that the Anarchists were regarded as a threat. But the effective challenge which they posed can be questioned; they did not obtain the support of the main opposition group, the UCR. No concessions were won from the government, and the ease with which they were suppressed after 1910 bears this out.

The fact that major groups did not find it necessary to seek the support of an organized labour movement was confirmed under the Radical governments. During this period the unions were encouraged to some extent. This was reflected in Yrigoyen's first presidency by the growth of the Syndicalist FORA IX, which with 70,000 affiliates came to dominate the movement between 1915 and 1922. Again, it emerges with the rise of the Transport Unions in the 1920's. The UCR, however, did not need to seek the support of a movement which was still predominantly composed of immigrants who did not vote. Yrigoyen himself was equivocal. On occasion his conception of social harmony came out in support of labour demands, though not on others; the UCR included many sectors he was anxious not to offend. Some Radicals still felt a certain xenophobia, a feeling which was reinforced by the events of the Semana Trágica and by the imagined influence of the Russian Revolution. These

attitudes were not dispelled until the 1920's; by this time, however, the influence of the Syndicalists - who had supported the government - was declining in favour of the Socialists.

Yrigoyen's reluctance is also explained by the existence of a powerful and well-organized opposition to any encouragement of a strong labour movement. The absence of significant conflict between the major economic interests, again, is relevant here. The interrelation of men and capital in land, industry and commerce meant that a united front could generally be presented against a significant threat from working class sources. This emerges in the facility with which organizations such as the Unión Industrial and the Sociedad Rural joined in alliances such as the Asociación del Trabajo, formed towards the end of the First World War. It is again clear in the effective opposition to Yrigoyen's proposals in 1928 for minimum wage and eight hour legislation.¹ Finally, this combination emerged in close association with the governments of 1930-1943, and culminated in the front which the 'fuerzas vivas' presented against Perón in 1944 and 1945. This time, however, it was to suffer its first major defeat.

1. Dardo Cúneo, Comportamiento y crisis de la clase empresaria, B.A., 1967, pp. 115-120.

One of the arguments used by employers' organizations such as the UIA was that wages in Argentina were higher than in most other countries. This was true for most of the period until 1930, and points to the absence of another incentive to organization.¹ Real wages had risen steadily since 1900, with the exception of the war and immediate post-war years. Standing at 68 in 1914, they reached their lowest level of 42 in 1918, but rose to 73 in 1921, and in 1929, to 100.² The relatively high wage levels in world terms, of course, is a reflection of the labour shortage which gave rise to immigration. Coupled with this high wage level was a high rate of upward social mobility, as Ferns says:

Economic opportunities, not real wages, seem to have been the predominant inducement to immigrants. Argentine wages in the long run seem to have been rather better than wages in Italy or Spain, from whence the majority of immigrants came, but much inferior to wage rates in the United States, Canada or Australia. But economic opportunities seem to have been roughly alike. Indeed, in Argentina the prizes open to people possessed of peasant shrewdness in buying and selling were, perhaps, greater than elsewhere.³

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1. This is not to suggest that there is a direct connection between rising real wages and a weak union movement, but simply that the prosperity of the 1920's was a factor which must be added to the other, more important variables. In addition, the return of prosperity was one of the reasons for the decline of FORA IX, which during the war had remained united and belligerent in defence of falling wage levels.
 2. Baily, op. cit., p. 31, Table I. Baily does not indicate what procedures were used to establish the figures he gives.
 3. H.S. Ferns, Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 1960, p. 490.

Such people were unlikely to be attracted to working class organizations. If they were, the Unions they joined were likely to become the expressions of an upper working class stratum. This clearly became the case with the Unión Ferroviaria in the 1930's.

This division between income levels within the Union movement partly explains the competition between the Transport Unions and the newly-established Industrial Unions for control of the CGT in the late 1930's. More important, this was also the expression of an ideological difference, which is a further factor accounting for the weakness of the movement before Perón. Competition between Anarchists, Socialists and Syndicalists before 1930, and subsequently between the latter two groups and the Communists, seems to bear out Imaz's contention that Union leaders regarded their primary responsibilities as being to their parties rather than to the organizations they led.¹

However, this was not the case when Union leaders from all ideological factions turned to Perón. The leaders who responded to him were generally not new men but those of the status of Luis Gay (leader of the USA,), Borlenghi (of the CGT. 2.) and Domenech (of the CGT. 1.), who had long been active in the movement. Their

1. José Luis de Imaz, Los que mandan, B.A., 1964, p. 213.

willingness to turn to Perón can be traced to a variety of factors among which the most important was the expectation that the Unions would be able to maintain their independence. But common to most was the frustration at the failure of all previous strategies against a hostile or indifferent government. There were signs of the willingness to adopt a new approach even before 1943. Both Domenech and Gay had expressed the desire to form an independent Trade Union party; and this was to bear fruit in the formation in 1945 of the Partido Laborista.

The Military and the 1943 Coup

The 1943 coup would have been inconceivable without the military's initial commitment in 1930. The Army was aware that they had maintained the minority governments of 1930-1943, so that the overthrow of Castillo was merely the withdrawal of their support. There was, in addition, some continuity provided by the officers who took part in both movements.¹ Thus the action of the Armed Forces in

1. 'Basta leer los jefes que compusieron la plana mayor revolucionaria organizada por el general Uriburu con la colaboración de la facción del general Justo en el movimiento revolucionario de 1930...para advertir que son los mismos nombres los que vienen figurando desde 1930, 1943 y 1955 en posiciones, a veces coincidentes, a veces antagónicas y opuestas, pero siempre los mismos...' Bonifacio del Carril, Crónica interna de la revolución libertadora, B.A., 1959, p. 34. Some examples of the officers of the 1930 coup who reappeared in 1943 were Bautista Molina, Pedro Pablo Ramírez, Humberto Sosa Molina, Alvaro Alzogaray, as well as Perón himself.

1943 should be traced back to the situation which led to the 1930 intervention, which we have seen were the main political effects of the end of the period of expansion which had continued since the last third of the nineteenth century. During the same period, however, there had been developments within the Armed Forces and in their relations to society which anticipated the role they were later to play.

The beginning of the century saw attempts to build a professional, non-political Army on the Prussian model. The first steps had been taken under Sarmiento, with the foundation of the Colegio Militar and the Escuela Naval. Officers were imported from Germany as instructors. The main impetus, however, came after 1900 with increased expenditure, re-organization and the introduction of military service. One of the primary objectives was to establish promotion by merit and to isolate Army Officers from political influences; in 1905 graduation from the Colegio was made obligatory for the attainment of the rank of sublieutenant. Radical officers who participated in the 1905 revolt were removed.

The debates over the military service law in 1901 showed that even at this stage a positive function was envisaged for the new Army. It was to be a force for integration in a society of diverse nationalities. Further, as Darío Cantón shows,¹ the debates bring

1. Darío Cantón, 'Notas sobre las fuerzas armadas argentinas', Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología, 65-3, November 1965.

out the optimism of the times, the confidence that Argentina was on the way to becoming a great nation. This partly explains the concern to found an Army whose size, status, and equipment far exceeded that necessary for normal defensive purposes. In addition, it suggests why many officers came to see the Army's rôle in terms of that destiny. The distinction 'la Patria es para el ejército: la política para los políticos' was thus easily made when earlier optimism about limitless progress began to prove unjustified. The significance of such a distinction, however, depended on the context in which it was made. In 1930 the economic crisis and the movement against Yrigoyen for the majority of officers meant that the interests of the nation coincided with those of the opposition to the UCR.

The close association between officers and the parties in the origins of the revolution indicated that professionalization, which the founders of the new army supposed would bring political isolation, in effect did not. The more powerful and effective the Army became, the more it attracted the politicians' attentions. Moreover, the rational structure which was laid out did not displace the traditional methods. As Liisa North points out, particularistic patterns continued to count in promotion procedures, and personal loyalty often overrode commitments to institutional norms.¹ Yrigoyen

1. Liisa North, Civil-Military relations in Argentina, Chile and Peru, 1966, p. 33.

tended to give preference in the promotions he made to officers of proven Radical affiliation, and the reaction against this practice was one of the causes for the formation of the Logia San Martín after 1921.

In contrast with the 1930 coup, however, that of 4 June 1943 originated and developed independently of the politicians of all the main political parties. The revolt caused widespread confusion over its objectives. In fact, the new government sought to avoid identification with the opposition to Castillo; it made no response to the statement welcoming the intervention issued by the Radical Party the following day.

The isolation of the officers in the coup from broader political currents was one of the reasons why the Army remained united in the way that it had not been over the 1930 intervention. This unity was also in part due to the momentum given by the earlier coup; the Armed Forces no longer doubted their right to remove a regime which they had created and maintained. Finally, the 1930's had seen efforts under General Rodríguez to professionalize the Army and to divert their attention from politics.

If these were among the factors which made the coup possible, the intervention itself took place as the culmination of military dissatisfaction which had received expression before 1943 in a

series of plots and in organizations such as the GOU.¹ Its sources seem to have been twofold. The revolutionary manifesto occupied itself with the 'venality, fraud, pedulation and corruption' of the regime, the government of which - it was becoming increasingly obvious - depended on the Army.² The charge of corruption was directed mainly against the Congress and the Consejo Deliberante of the Federal Capital. The first had been the focus of discontent over the Palomar affair, which involved the purchase of land for military purposes, and which had reached a climax with the suicide of a Radical Deputy.³ The second institution was accused of receipt of bribes from foreign companies over public utility contracts.

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1. The initials GOU referred to 'Grupo obra de unificación', or the original group of ten officers who were each to recruit a further four men, and so on until a cellular structure was established throughout the army. It was founded by two obscure Lieutenant Colonels in late 1942 or early 1943, and only afterwards came to be dominated by Colonels Perón, Eduardo Ávalos, Emilio Ramírez and Enrique P. González. Its primary objectives were to unite the army in the expectation of an imminent coup as pressure was being brought to bear on Castillo to maintain neutrality. Apart from the defense against politicians and communism, no specific ideology was written into its statutes. Gontran de Güemes, Así se gestó la dictadura, B.A., 1956.
 2. And which was foolishly neglecting the Army. Perón later said of the period:

'Las instituciones, como los estados, se descomponen, como el pescado, comenzando por la cabeza, y tanto había influido ello en nuestro Ejército, que, lamentable es confesarlo, teníamos un contingente de 30,000 hombres con cuarteles casi inhabitables, con buenos cuadros de oficiales, pero sin estructura eficiente. Era, asimismo, evidente la desorganización imperante en el orden material...El ejército ha sido llevado de 30,000 a 100,000 hombres y se halla armado y disciplinado....'

Speech 21 December 1945. Juan Perón, Tres revoluciones militares, B.A., 1963, p. 92, p. 100.
 3. Osvaldo Bayer, 'Palomar: el negociado que conmovió a un régimen', Todo es historia, Año 1, No. 1, 1968.

The internal situation, however, concerned the Army mainly insofar as it affected Argentina's foreign policy. The coup was effected on the day when the Concordancia parties were to choose Patron Costas as their presidential candidate, whose election would mean at least the rupture of diplomatic relations with the Axis and possibly the granting of military bases to the Allies. The Army intervened therefore against the Conservative Party; it was not due to the threat of a Popular Front. During the same period negotiations were under way for the formation of an Unión Democrática, to include the Communist Party as well as the Radicals, Socialists, and the Demócrata Progresistas. But these were unlikely to be successful given the strength of the opposition within the UCR to alliances with other parties. Finally, it had little hope of winning the September elections. The Conservatives at this time were more powerful than at any other since 1930. With Castillo's support they could be confident of a majority in the electoral college even without the antipersonalistas.¹

Apart from the simple wish not to fight, the Army's desire for neutrality had a number of origins. They regarded military association with the United States as a threat to their own independence. More important, it reflected a tradition of non-alignment in international conflicts which can be traced back to

1. La Nación, 4 May 1943.

Yrigoyen's refusal, against heavy pressure, to participate in the Great War. Neutrality was believed to have been beneficial to Argentina economically, as it was to be during the Second World War. It was British policy, moreover, to encourage neutrality; partly because of fears of increasing United States economic influence in Argentina and mainly because it depended on Argentine meat supplies.

In general, the Army wished to take command of the government in what was regarded as a critical situation. The war was seen as altering the balance of power in South America. The supply of arms and bases to Brazil was considered ominous by the calculations of most officers, particularly the bomber aircraft which were the ultimate weapons in current military thinking.

Many at the time saw the presence of officers in the revolution who were favourable to the Axis. However, Del Carril is probably right in playing down the influence of these sectors.¹ There was a document, which has often been quoted, circulated prior to the coup which looked forward to a German military victory in Europe as a prelude to Argentine hegemony in Latin America.² But this was isolated; it did not come from any recognizable source, and probably did not reflect a widespread military opinion. There were

1. Bonifacio del Carril, op. cit., p. 26.

2. This document first came to light when it was read out in the Chilean Congress in 1953. Since it has been reproduced in a number of books: e.g., Blanksten (1953), Silvano Santander (1955), Guémes (1956), and so on. Orona reprints it but can provide no evidence that it came from the GOU. Juan V. Orona, La logia militar que derrocó a Castillo, B.A., 1966, pp. 110-111.

a number of officers who were attracted to the ideas of fascism, as indeed Perón was, and some also who supported the Axis. Again, one could cite developments after the coup, particularly the government responsiveness to the proposals of the Nationalist Right. We have seen, however, that these sectors were used only insofar as it suited the government, which showed little reluctance in removing them. The military government's desire to bring Argentina closer to the Axis was one to take her further from the danger of involvement in the war. The Army was conscious of the danger of going too far to the other extreme; one of the reasons for the removal of General Rawson was that his cabinet included ministers of known Axis sympathies.

No policy had been envisaged by the coup apart from the purging of corruption, the maintenance of neutrality, and the vague promise of a future return to normality. This was partly the price of unity within the Armed Forces. The Navy might not support the Army on a particular initiative. It had opposed the coup, as it had been anticipating increased budgetary allocations with involvement in the conflict.¹ The consequence was an attempt to freeze political life, to rule by decree without consultation. The 'totalitarianism' which Ray Josephs recorded was due more to military blindness to

1. Alberto Ciria, op. cit., p. 251.

political reality and the sensitivity to criticism which inevitably increased with restrictions on the press, the universities and the parties. Decrees such as that establishing religious education were not welcomed by many in the Church, although they could not fail to defend it once effected.¹ The mounting unpopularity of the government and the realization that it was impossible simply to maintain the status quo in internal and foreign affairs, explains its response to groups such as the GOU; and to men such as Perón who had a plan.

1. J. J. Kennedy, Catholicism, Nationalism and Democracy in Argentina, 1958, p. 187.

Chapter III

The emergence of peronismo, 1943-1946

The coming of peronismo should be placed in the context of tendencies and characteristics of Argentinian society and political behaviour which had emerged earlier. Peronismo was not solely a personalist movement which arose because of exceptional conditions, such as those resulting from the international situation. The identity of many of the groups which supported him, and their behaviour, could be predicted before Perón became the vehicle for their demands. This is not to neglect the importance of these three years, however. They provided the framework of military rule within which he could emerge, and the processes taking place then governed the possibilities of his success. Four main episodes can be identified. These were: the decline of the original 1943 military government; Perón's rise, first within, and then outside, the Army; and the resurgence of a strong opposition coalition; and the electoral campaign.

The effects of the war

The importance of the international situation for Peron's rise was more in the effects it had of accentuating earlier tendencies.

It was, in the first place, the main justification given by the military for their control of the provisional government. Military rule provided the framework for Perón's emergence, and enabled him to have a virtual free hand once opposition within the Armed Forces had been overcome. There was no Congress nor, for most of the period, legalized political parties to oppose him. Nevertheless, the opposition was potentially strong. It included a combination which in the past had defeated all attempts to do what Perón was now able to do with the ability to issue decrees with little obligation to consult the interests affected by them. The opposition could do little but look to factions within the Armed Forces and to the moral pressures of internal and external opinion. Direct action proved counterproductive in the cases of employers' strikes and lockouts, and in the support for United States sanctions. Public demonstrations and the press were restricted or threatened for most of the period. The State of Siege, which had been imposed by Castillo in December 1941 was maintained except for a short period in 1945, uninterrupted until raised for the elections in 1946. This allocated special powers to the Federal Police, whose numbers were increased to 20,000 by 1945, and who were led by men personally committed to Perón.

The effects of the war on the economy were, at least outwardly, slight. Given the large balance of export earnings accumulating abroad, Government policy was to maintain a high level of economic

activity at the expense of, for example, the considerable budgetary deficits and inflation which marked the last years of the war. Generally, the economy was less vulnerable than it had been during the First World War. Then, debt service took 40% of export earnings, whereas now this was only 20%. The influx of foreign investment was no longer a vital factor in the balance of payments. Dependence on exports of a few products remained, but the position had altered in that, by 1939, industrial production was now 20.9% of G.D.P. compared with 13.1% for agriculture and 10.2% for livestock.¹

The effects of the war varied in different sectors. Agriculture was badly hit, because North America was more favourably placed geographically for war supplies of grain, and because of the shortage of shipping for bulk goods. The grain sector, however, was already in decline with the fall in prices which began in 1938. Its plight was alleviated by government purchase of crops, but the war years saw an extensive movement to cattle production, which was fetching high prices. Between 1937 and 1947, 7,000,000 hectares of the pampa region were devoted to cattle and sheep which formerly were under grain crops.² The consequent drop in productivity and

1. Di Tella and Zymelman, op. cit., p. 456.

2. H. Giberti, El desarrollo agrario argentino, B.A., 1964, p. 58.

labour requirements was probably the main cause of the migration to Gran Buenos Aires of 72,000 annually from 1936 to 1943, and 117,000 annually between 1943 and 1947.¹

The industrial sector continued to expand, but at a slower rate than during the 1930's, mainly because of the scarcity of raw materials and of new machinery.

The war years therefore gave the impression of prosperity. Foreigners were struck by the normality of life in Buenos Aires.² There was inflation, as the high level of economic activity was sustained without the imports necessary for corresponding industrial growth. But in the same period, real wages rose from 116 in 1939 to 121 in 1942, and to 161 in 1944, before they fell to 148 in 1945.³ To these figures must be added benefits which supplemented wage levels obtained through Perón's influence after 1943.

If Perón was helped by the comparatively favourable economic situation, he was also aided by the effects of United States policy. 'Braden o Perón' was to be an effective electoral slogan, and reflected the extent to which domestic issues were interwoven with those of the international debate. The alignment of the opposition

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1. Gino Germani, Política y sociedad en una época de transición, B.A., 1962, p. 228.
 2. Ray Josephs, Argentine Diary, London, 1945, report on 17 July 1943.
 3. Di Tella and Zymelman, op. cit., p. 478.

with the United Nations enabled Perón to portray them as identified with the sanctions applied by the United States. He could point to specific instances; as, for example, when La Prensa defended economic restrictions,¹ or when exiles in Montevideo were debating the possibility of military intervention by the American republics against Argentina.²

There were two main waves of pressure by the United States. The first culminated in the cessation of diplomatic relations with the Axis countries in January 1944; the second, which continued throughout 1944-45 was more significant in that it sought to alter internal arrangements in Argentina. The motives of the U.S. seem to have been threefold. Strategically, it was interested in the formation of the Latin American bloc which had been sought at the Rio conference of foreign ministers in 1942. Argentina's reluctance was met by pressure which extended from diplomatic to economic sanctions, with the objective not only of forcing Argentina to align itself internationally with the United Nations, but also of curtailing internal Axis activities, and, by 1945, of speeding the return to constitutional government. Other motives were, as Sir David Kelly

1. La Prensa, 13 September 1945.

2. New York Times, 24 August 1945.

wrote, the 'personal pique' of Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles at Argentina's intransigence, and the hope of displacing British economic influence as the war cut off imports from that country.¹

As Kelly saw, and as Sumner Welles came to see by January 1945,² by its actions the U.S. was only swelling the number of Perón's supporters. However, in assessing the extent to which this was true, it is necessary to look at events in greater detail. The first stage of pressure, in 1943, probably served only to divide an unpopular military government. The Storni-Cordell Hull notes of August 1943 revealed the position; Storni agreed to abandon neutrality in exchange for armaments and industrial materials, which Hull refused.³ By 1944, however, Argentina's isolation in Latin America, the threat by the United States of further economic sanctions and of disclosing information about the Military's connections with the Bolivian revolution made it politically sensible to break relations with the Axis. The step, once taken, brought little popular reaction outside the military and the Nationalist Right.

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1. David Kelly, The Ruling Few, London, 1952, p. 297.
 2. Hull had resigned from the State Department in October 1944. The hard line was softened with Stettinius and Rockefeller, but not enough for Sumner Welles who was attacking the Department throughout 1945.
 3. H. F. Peterson, The U.S. and Argentina, N.Y. 1964, p. 433.

The following stage was more important because it involved, in the eyes of Perón's supporters, intervention in Argentina's internal affairs. Hull wanted a complete ban on elements favourable to the Axis in the country. The U.S. refused to recognize the Farrell government; in July 1944 Armour was recalled; and at the end of the year, Argentina's gold reserves were frozen, U.S. ships were forbidden to call at Buenos Aires, and priority industrial materials were withheld.¹ The latter probably hurt Argentina most, because of the effects on industry. There were serious shortages of new machinery and rubber compounds, for example. This, and the threat of exclusion from postwar supplies, was one of the main reasons for the agreement with the U.S. in 1945 for admittance to the United Nations in exchange for the signature to the Act of Chapultepec. The declaration of war, however, was only the beginning of pressure on Argentina to comply with the provisions of the Mexico City conference on the liquidation of Axis firms, the prosecution of enemy espionage, and the return to democratic government. These were the main reasons for Braden's presence in Argentina.²

1. Peterson, op. cit., p. 444-5.

2. Kelly wrote that Braden 'came to Argentina with the fixed idea that he had been elected by Providence to overthrow the Farrell-Perón regime'. Op. cit., p. 307.

The debt which Perón owed to Braden has probably been exaggerated. He arrived in May 1945 at a point where the division of people for and against Perón was already established. The opposition coalition had already formed; they were, in fact, the groups which encouraged his attacks on the government. Moreover, his tenure of office marked the resurgence of the opposition to its highest point, which culminated in the March of the Constitution and Liberty in September, when, had the elections been held, Perón would almost certainly have lost.

After October, the issues which Braden's actions had raised receded to some extent. The opposition maintained their attacks on Perón in terms of the dangers of fascism, a formula which had worked successfully earlier in the year. But it had little effect on groups other than the liberal middle class, who were antiperonistas anyway. The appeal for the return to the constitution lost some of its force when it became clear that free elections were to be held, and that these were to be supervised by the Army and not by Colonel Velasco and the Federal Police. The publication of the Libro azul three weeks before the elections came too late to affect the issue, and merely provided an opportunity for Perón and the Unions to publish a convincing reply in the Libro azul y blanco. Thus the Braden affair was important in widening previously existing divisions. Although Braden and the United States probably caused a number of votes to be given to Perón in 1946 which he might not otherwise

have won, there do not seem to be instances of prominent politicians who changed sides because of it. The Radical nationalists, for example, were not won over.

Perón's rise within the military government

There was nothing inevitable about Perón's rise to power within the army. His methods provoked opposition throughout, and the fact that he prevailed is a testimony to his good fortune as well as to his political skill. Opposition reached a climax in October 1945, when he was saved by luck and by his closest supporters, as well as by the movement he had created outside the Army. He had started in June 1943 almost from scratch. He was a prominent member of the GOU, but this organization had yet to control the government. Within it, Perón was one of a number of equally ambitious officers. In the Officer Corps he was a colonel of relatively junior status, and outside the military he was unknown except for his academic activities. He played a minor role in the coup, and although he was appointed after the fall of Rawson to a key post at the head of the Secretariat of the Ministry of War, this was due to his personal friendship with Farrell rather than to his status with the Army leadership as a whole.

At the same time, however, Perón could count on a number of advantages. For one, he was acquainted with many of the most important figures in the Army. Immediately prior to the coup, he

had served under Generals Farrell and Sosa Molina in Mendoza.¹ Further, conspiracy brought a renewal of contacts which had been made during the 1930 coup. That Perón was conscious of having learnt from his experiences at that time, is proved by the document which he wrote in 1931 where he stressed the need for unity within the revolutionary movement.² This work also brings to light the astuteness and political acumen which brought the admiration of men such as Justo. He seems to have been regarded by many officers as their political expert, for he was chosen to draft the manifesto for the 1943 coup, although he himself took little part in the movement.

How did he acquire his political knowledge? Fayt suggests that Perón should be seen as a military figure:

Es... un militar de carrera formado en las filas del ejército, cuyas aptitudes intelectuales y morales fueron modeladas por el código de conducta y tradición castrenses...³

There is the danger of too sharp a distinction between the military and the political mind. The long period of socialization which Perón received (he entered the Colegio Militar in 1905, at the age of 15) was not incompatible with the acquisition of political talents.

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1. Enrique Pavón Pereyra, Vida de Perón. B.A., 1965, p. 221.
 2. 'Lo que yo vi de la preparación y realización de la revolución del 6 de septiembre de 1930'. Reprinted in Tres revoluciones militares, B.A., 1963, pp. 10-86.
 3. Fayt, op. cit., p. 20.

He does seem, nevertheless, to have stood out among the men who surrounded him in the military government **by** his ability to assess the possibilities of the situation. His difference can partly be traced to the fact that as a military teacher, he was not an active officer. This possibly gave him a wider outlook, and almost certainly meant that he had a wider range of contacts. Moreover, much of his period as a colonel was spent apart from his normal military duties; he spent two years in Chile and, immediately prior to the coup, two years in Europe.¹

Perón's political abilities, however, only went so far. He could commit blunders which almost ended in disaster. The El Mercurio interview was an example; Perón was saved from the repercussions of this only by the particular balance of forces which had emerged between the Presidency, the Ministry of War, and the Campo de Mayo.² He often seems to have been carried along with the tide. This is clear in his turn to the left in 1944, which came not from his own initiative, but from the

1. Where, according to his official biographer, he attended courses at Rome and became convinced that future governments must have a 'strong social content.'. He apparently learnt this lesson from his Chilean experiences as well. 'Nos llevan veinticinco o treinta años de ventaja en materia de organización del trabajo. Allí han encamado todas las cuestiones de asistencia social, de salario mínimo, salubridad, descanso, etc., mientras nosotros vacilamos todavía en reconocer la vigencia plena de un derecho de trabajo.' Pavón Pereyra, op. cit., p. 213.

2. Güemes, op. cit., pp. 70-74.

pressure of the Unions and the resistance of the employers. He was powerless, again, in October 1945 when saved by a combination of fortunate circumstances. The impression is that Perón emerged because groups needed him, rather than because of his overall control of events. This was so in the Army; the intramilitary opposition provoked by Perón would normally have eliminated him, but for the fact that the military needed a candidate favourable to them. There was also the likelihood of reprisals against them by the Unión Democrática; perhaps over the enormous military budget in 1945, which by itself exceeded the 1942 income from revenue.¹ Most officers would not accept him as a military candidate, and he was forced to campaign in civilian dress. This was partly due to the memory of the 1943 coup, which had been effected to prevent the government imposition of a candidate.

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1. Ordinary government expenditure on defense increased in the following manner:

	<u>Military</u>	<u>Total expenditure</u>
1940	273.2	1,316.6
1941	297.6	1,367.1
1942	424.3	1,526.1
1943	535.1	1,761.3
1944	972.8	2,411.2
1945	1,301.3	2,849.4

In millions of pesos. La Prensa, 19 February 1946.

Most officers viewed the crowds which came out for Perón on 17 October 1945 with distaste; but the alternatives were worse. Perón's political skill, then, lay most in his flexibility and powers of persuasion. There are reports of this in meetings of the GOU where he often took the initiative in planning for the future, while the others could look no further than the maintenance of the status quo.¹

His emergence can be traced, firstly, in the process by which the GOU came to control the government. This begins after the GOU meeting on 14 June and is complete by the time Perón gave the El Mercurio interview on 8 November, when he revealed that the Ministry of War held the undated signed resignations of most Army Officers. The GOU had formed itself into a parallel government; it came to criticise most important government decrees, and could force resignations from the Cabinet; this was the case with Admiral Sorni in August, and, later, General Ramírez himself.

In explaining why the GOU came to dominate, there is no need to look further than its constitution. It was a tight organization, modelled along cellular lines. Including many prominent Army figures, its programme - against the politicians and communism, for military unity and the restoration of Argentina's military leadership in Latin America - could not but be acceptable to most officers.

1. Güemes, op. cit., p. 51.

Güemes' account of the GOU, however, probably suffers from overemphasis on the impressive structure outlined in the statutes. In practice, it seems to have been united only after the coup, when this enabled it to obtain a number of powerful positions in the government. Subsequently, the GOU appears less of a monolithic organization and more as a framework within which different factions fought for domination. Conflicts were mainly personal and hierarchical; the main groups were led by General Ramírez and Colonel Enrique González in the president's office; Colonel Eduardo Avalos in the Campo del Mayo; and Farrell and Perón in the Ministry of War. Disputes were also to some extent ideological. There were officers who were more or less sympathetic to the nationalist Right, and who were less prepared to break relations with the Axis.

This last conflict was that which caused the dissolution of the GOU in February 1944. Perón's change of sides to those who favoured the rupture of diplomatic relations and the replacement of Ramírez by Farrell was one of the main turning points in his career. It marked the emergence of men under Farrell who were more prepared to seek contact with groups outside the military, and the decline of a government which had been nervous about Perón's social measures. Perón later referred to his relationship with the government in 1943:

Yo no estaba de acuerdo con el 95% de sus decisiones... ellos no sabían lo que yo iba a hacer allá. Por eso se rieron. Desde ese organismo, que yo transformé inmediatamente en Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión... empezamos a realizar la reforma social. Los primeros pasos fueron terriblemente difíciles, porque el Gobierno no quería firmar ninguno de los decretos que nosotros ¹ le mandabamos. Tenía miedo de hacer la reforma social.

It marks, in addition, Perón's rise within the government and his accumulation of offices; In May, he was confirmed as Minister of War; in June, as Vicepresident; and in August, President of the Consejo Nacional de Post-guerra. Again, his ascent was not unopposed. Many complained about the multiplication of offices by a relatively junior officer, and about his radio broadcasts and the publicity he was seeking. He was probably closest to rejection in the competition for the Ministry of War left vacant by Farrell's elevation. Perón won, apparently with Farrell's assistance, over General Juan Sanguinetti who had been supported by a powerful combination of General Perlinger and Colonel Arturo Saavedra.²

The growth of Perón's support outside the Military

The factor which increasingly weighed in Perón's favour within the government, and which became decisive after the events of October 1945, was, of course, the body of support which he had

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1. At a lecture given at the University of Chile in February 1943. Quoted in Magnet, op. cit., p. 38-39.
 2. Perón later said that this episode was one of his narrowest escapes. Del Carril, op. cit., p. 32.

obtained outside. A coalition of different groups voted for him in February 1946, and we shall see that the election was decided by the votes he obtained from the traditional parties outside the main urban centres. But in terms of numbers, in the organisation of the Partido Laborista - which received 85% of the peronista votes - and in the ideology and style given to the movement, the urban working class was the main constituent of peronismo. On 17 October 1945, Perón was in a strong position, but he lacked a political party and was confronted by a well-organized opposition. For this reason he depended on the unions which were able to organize the Partido Laborista on a national scale within a short space of time.

However, the support given to him during this period by most Union leaders was not unequivocal. There were, in the first place, a number of Unions which had only accepted him while the opposition had no prospect of success. With the resurgence of opposition in the months leading up to September 1945, the resumption of party activity, and the return of exiled Socialist and Communist leaders, the CGT split. La Fraternidad, the Shoemakers and Textile Workers, together with segments of the Empleados de Comercio and the Unión Tranviaria withdrew from the CGT to join the other opposition organizations in the Unión Obrera Local.¹ Moreover, even after

1. Baily, op. cit., p. 86, and La Prensa, 9 Sept., 1945. There was a general assembly of Socialist unions on the 8 September, which marked the beginning of their counterattack on Perón's labour policy.

their departure Perón did not control the CGT leadership. This emerges in Alberto Belloni's account of the debate in the Central Committee of the CGT on 16 October over whether to call a 48 hour general strike for the return of Perón.¹ The discussion lasted 10 hours before a decision was taken in favour by 21 votes to 19; the result would have been a tie if one Asociación Trabajadores del Estado delegate had not voted against his mandate. Against the motion, it had been argued that Avalos and the new incumbent of the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión, Juan Fentanes, had promised to defend labour's social gains, and that the movement should take any opportunity to dispense with the military government. In favour, Avalos' word was doubted in the light of the enthusiasm with which employers' organizations had welcomed the removal of Perón; and it was pointed out that Fentanes was not quite so enthusiastic about the continuation of the Secretaría's previous policy. On the 13th he had indicated that in the future the government would seek to hold a balance between capital and labour.² Finally, it was argued that the nature of the government did not matter provided it was favourable - an argument which reflects the strength of the Syndicalist tradition in the movement.

1. Alberto Belloni, Del anarquismo al peronismo, B.A., 1960, p. 52.

2. La Prensa, 14 October 1945.

Equally, the Partido Laborista was not controlled by Perón. Its foundation and organization shows clearly that if Perón was intended to be its candidate, he was not envisaged as its sole leader nor as the only source of its ideology.¹ Set up on the model of the British Labour Party, it was meant primarily as a social democratic organization with its basis in the Union movement. Its founders were men such as Luis Gay, who saw this course as an alternative to the failure of the various tactics which organized labour had adopted prior to 1943. Gay expressed his conception of the new party at its inaugural rally on 14 December 1945:

El laborismo quiere terminar con el viejo concepto capitalista de que las organizaciones obreras sólo tienen como fin la defensa de los intereses gremiales... la clase trabajadora solo podrá alcanzar la posición social que le corresponde en toda verdadera democracia cuando unida conquiste el poder público y político.²

Given the resources which Perón could dispose of, the fact that he was unable to win the unqualified commitment of the majority of the movement needs explanation. He was able to use the weapon of intervention, which was applied to the Railway Unions in 1943, and

1. As Fayt shows. Op. cit., p. 139-140.

2. La Prensa, 15 December 1945.

thus cut off the CGT's source of funds.¹ The CGT² was dissolved, which removed the challenge of a central organization of Communist Unions together with those Socialists who were most intransigent in their opposition to the government. Perón perceived, however, that the carrot was more effective than the stick, and the activity of the Secretaría in 1944 and 1945 was marked by giving Union leaders what they asked for in the way of social legislation, mechanisms for enforcement, and state intervention in, and encouragement of, collective bargaining.

This policy was an attempt to win existing organizations; the measures were accepted by the Unions, but most did so at arms length. The most potent weapon - the creation of rival organizations, and the grant of the status of personaria gremial - was not fully used until after Perón's election. The Ley de Asociaciones

1. The union with the most importance for Perón was probably the Unión Ferroviaria. According to Francisco Pérez Leirós, the most prominent Socialist union leader in opposition, Bramuglia had told Perón:

Para tener en sus manos al movimiento obrero bastaba con los ferroviarios y para tener a los ferroviarios bastaba que él hiciese concesiones al gremio, y que entre la Fraternidad y la U.F. sumaban más de 100,000 cotizantes y que los tranviarios y otros grupos serían fáciles de atraer hacia ese mismo círculo. De esa manera el movimiento obrera estaría en manos del gobierno. (Speech at the Assembly of Socialist Unions, 8 September 1945, reported in La Prensa).

Perón not only gave the U.F. concessions, but appointed Colonel Mercante as interventor. He was the son of a railway worker, and apparently earned the trust of the majority of that Union.

Profesionales was not passed until October 1945; the military government had attempted to enforce a similar decree in 1943, but had had to withdraw it. Perón could only pass the later decree by granting a number of concessions, and by the establishment of rigid criteria for the determination of legal recognition of a particular union.

Most of the movement, therefore, remained under the old leadership until 1946. These were not yet swept away by the flood of recently unionized, which is confirmed by the following figures for the branches of economic activity with the largest numbers of organized workers in 1941 and 1945:

	<u>July 1941</u>		<u>December 1945</u> ¹	
	<u>Entities</u>	<u>Affiliates</u>	<u>Entities</u>	<u>Affiliates</u>
Alimentación	39	29.171	205	97.426
Comercio, bancos, seguros	69	60,841	77	29.849
Confección	10	12.906	37	14.401
Construcción	39	74.283	79	14.346
Espectáculos publicos	14	8589	32	15.873
Textil	2	12.504	8	2613
Transportes aéreos, marítimos, fluviales y servicios portuarios	14	14.306	31	9611
Transportes terrestres	30	140.601	91	109.023
Actividades del Estado	15	31.480	42	41.471
Total		<u>384.681</u>		<u>334.622</u>
All organised labour		<u>441.412</u>		<u>528.513</u>

From Fayt, op. cit., p. 89.

1. These recorded only recognized unions; that is, not the opposition organizations.

These statistics show that the increase came in the number of organizations rather than in membership, which reflects the activity of the Secretaría in encouraging the formation of new Unions. The small increase in the number of affiliates puts paid to the idea of the influence of migrants from the countryside within the movement in this period. Again, they show that it was not primarily the most concentrated industrial working class which formed the peronista unions; the main industrial sectors - construction and textiles - show the largest fall in recorded organized workers between 1941 and 1945, which indicated that they remained loyal to the Communist organizations.

This is not, however, to underestimate the importance of the encouragement of rival unions for Perón even within this period. Most of the new Unions which were to replace the old were in existence by 1944 and 1945, and were in some sectors challenging the old leadership. There are documented accounts of this in the conflict between Cipriano Reyes and José Peter in the meatpackers, and between Angel Perelman and the Communists in the metallurgical industry.¹

The stages of the movement's approach to Perón are clearly reflected in the changes in Perón's ideology.

The Unions realized that Perón could be used as a means to

1. Angel Perelman, Como hicimos el 17 de octubre, B.A., 1961.

obtain social and economic gains; then as a defence against employers' counterattacks; and finally, that it was necessary to consolidate the new position of labour by means of their own political party.

In 1943 the Unions were apprehensive about another military government. If the CGT leadership welcomed the coup, this was because they thought that anything was preferable to Castillo and the Conservatives. Soon, however, the interventions, dissolutions, arrests and restrictive decrees alienated them, as they had already alienated the political parties. Perón came as a chink of light in unrelieved gloom. He had already shown points of difference from the extreme Right in his intervention in favour of the meatpackers in September; but it was obvious to all that the intentions behind the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión were also restrictive. It was, after all, organized by José Figuerola.¹ Perón's theme in his first speeches was 'social collaboration',² in which he received the encouragement of the Unión Industrial. Perón told that organization that its president, Luis Colombo, would be his right-hand man;

1. Fayt, op. cit., p. 96-7.

2. Perón's opening speech from the Secretaría de Trabajo established the pattern which he was later to follow:

los patrones, los obreros, y el estado constituyen las partes de todo problema social...todo conflicto que separe y suspenda la actividad industrial o comercial repercute hondamente en la economía pública y privada y destruye, además, el equilibrio de la armonía social...
La Nación, 2 December 1943.

the UIA shared his belief that the social disruption which might come after the war was best avoided by the establishment of a comprehensive Labour code.¹

Throughout the first half of 1944 both the UIA and the major unions - such as la Fraternidad - continued to endorse Perón's activities. But the schizophrenia which crept into his public utterances showed that this alliance was an uneasy one. He told the unions in July:

Nosotros dividimos al país en dos categorías: una, la de los hombres que trabajan, y la otra, la que vive de los hombres que trabajan. Ante esta situación, nos hemos colocado totalmente del lado de los hombres que trabajan.

But, on 25 August he was reassuring the Bolsa de Comercio:

Senores Capitalistas : no se asusten de mi sindicalismo, nunca mejor que ahora estará seguro el capitalismo, ya que yo también lo soy, porque tengo estancia y en ellos operarios. Lo que quiero es organizar estatalmente a los trabajadores para que el Estado los dirija y les marque rumbos, y de esta manera se neutralizarán en su seno las corrientes ideológicas y revoluciones que pueden poner en peligro nuestra sociedad capitalista en la postguerra. A los obreros hay que darles algunas mejoras y serán una fuerza fácilmente manejable.

The exaggerated reassurance of this speech, however, showed that relations were becoming strained. The break came towards the end

1. Dardo Cúneo, Comportamiento y crisis de la clase empresaria, B.A., 1967, p. 168. Colombo's speech on the Día de la Industria of 2 September 1945 recalled his visit to the Secretaría in December 1943, (he accompanied the president of the Brazilian Ministry of Labour, Rigo Montiero) and the agreement he came to with Perón. La Prensa, 3 September 1945.

of the year. The Bolsa de Comercio protested against the projected pensions scheme for employees in commerce, and the UIA, against the encouragement which the Secretaría was giving to labour demands.

The Revista of the UIA objected to:

la indisciplina que necesariamente engendra en los establecimientos, el uso siempre más generalizado de cierta terminología que hace presentar a los patronos en una posición de prepotencia, y cada arreglo, no como un acto de justicia, sino como una 'conquista', que, de ser necesario, los trabajadores sabían defender con la fuerza...¹

These were joined by the Sociedad Rural, who in opposing the Statute of the Peón, complained about members of the government who portrayed the estancieros as 'egoists who satisfy their inhuman sensuality at the expense of the misery and neglect of those who collaborate with them in their labour.'²

By the beginning of 1945, there was open conflict, reaching its first public expression in the manifesto of 319 commercial and industrial organizations on 16 June against Perón's socioeconomic policies. It marked the formation of a front which in the March of the Constitution in September was resorting to public demonstration, and by the end of the year, to direct action. In December, most of the main rural, commercial and industrial pressure groups met in

1. January 1945. Quoted in Cúneo, op. cit., p. 175.

2. Anales de la Sociedad Rural, December 1944.

the Bolsa de Comercio to form the Junta de la Industria, el Comercio y la Producción to resist the decrees on aguinaldos and those creating the Instituto Nacional de Remuneraciones.

The opposition of these sectors brought Perón's counterattack on the oligarchy and his realization that as he could not win the parties, he had to depend on the unions. It also brought the heightened prestige of Perón and the Secretaría de Trabajo in the eyes of the working class, and promoted the solidarity which emerged on 17 October. Perón was still talking of the need for social harmony over the wireless on the night before the March of the Constitution. But this, which the Secretaría de Trabajo had sought to create, had been destroyed by:

Una combinación oscura de elementos foráneos, espíritus reaccionarios y plutócratas egoístas que viven inquietados desde hace años en organismos representativos del comercio, la industria y la producción...

The workers must be prepared to fight a battle on two fronts:

es necesario que se mantengan vigilantes a la influencia de doctrinas extranjeras que buscan atomizar los movimientos obreros para después coparles y además, mostrarse unidos frente a ciertos sectores económicos regresivos que se resisten a ceder una parte ínfima de sus cuantiosas ganancias para que sus colaboradores obreros puedan sentir un poco más hondamente la alegría de vivir en esta tierra privilegiada.¹

1. La Prensa, 19 September, 1945.

The phenomenon of peronismo had clearly emerged by the March of the Constitution. The word itself had begun to be used. It was expressed through a channel of communication between Perón and the urban popular strata; these were the sectors to which most of his speeches were directed. The alliance was not yet, however, a guarantee of victory in national elections. The urban basis of the movement was a vital first step towards this end in a highly urbanized country, where one third of the population lived in Gran Buenos Aires, and half in towns of over 20,000 inhabitants. But here the fact that the movement emphasised its basis in one class limited its electoral possibilities, given the relative broadness of the urban social pyramid. Perón made some inroads into white collar groups, which received benefits such as the aguinaldo decrees. Some of their organizations - such as the Empleados de Comercio - were among the leading peronista unions. But the electorate in 1946 voted substantially along class lines. In the Federal Capital, the peronistas obtained 54% of total votes against 46% for the Unión Democrática. The correlation between occupational categories and Perón's electorate in 20 different districts was found by Germani to be +.974 for the obreros, and -.653 for empleados.¹

1. Gino Germani, Estructura social de la Argentina, B.A., 1955, p. 254.

Given the limits which this imposed on his urban support, and the narrowness of his margin on a national scale -1,488,000 against 1,207,000 - the decisive votes came from outside the main urban centres. His electorate was as well distributed throughout the country as that of the Unión Democrática. The opposition won only the very conservative provinces of San Luis, San Juan, and Corrientes, as well as Córdoba, which was a Radical stronghold without the urban concentrations of, say, Santa Fe. What were the main sources of Perón's support outside the urban centres? The answer reflects the extensive regional differences in the country.

Groups which stand out in their peronismo are middle class sectors in the North-West, outside the plantation zones, which explains the surprisingly large support there for a radical movement in a normally very conservative area. This was partly due to the fact that they could put their own construction on the movement; as Di Tella points out, in these areas peronismo had a catholic, hispanist flavour not characteristic of the littoral variety. He puts forward a convincing theory that the response to Perón there came from old commercial and artisan groups in relative decline; the increasing gap between their real incomes and the self-assigned status, he argues, made them more likely to turn to an anti-status quo political movement.¹ There is probably also a simpler explanation

1. Torcuato Di Tella, La teoría del primer impacto del desarrollo económico, B.A., 1965, p. 164.

in the influence which the Church had. The hierarchy had, of course, officially told the faithful not to support a coalition which included the Communists.¹

As these groups were small in numbers, they were not so important for Perón as those in the plantation zones, particularly in Tucumán and Salta. Tucumán was the most Peronist province of all in 1946; it was the only one where the majority in all electoral counties voted the same way.² This can be traced to the prevalence of a form of agriculture which gave rise to large and concentrated popular sectors with a history of conflict with the millowners. The Secretaría was beginning to organize the plantation and millworkers into the FOTIA unions, founded in 1944, which by 1947 were to have 100,000 affiliates.³

The most important provinces from an electoral viewpoint were, of course, those of the littoral. Buenos Aires, the Federal Capital,

1. It was probably only in these areas where the Church's attitude made a significant contribution to the result. On the whole, Ramos is right in suggesting that the Church's attitude made little difference. As he says, it was divided. Acción Católica had condemned all forms of totalitarianism which they regarded as embracing Perón; and while some bishops approved of Perón, the Archbishop had not actually instructed the faithful to vote for him. Jorge Abelardo Ramos, Revolución y contrarevolución en la Argentina, B.A., 1964, p. 605.
2. Darío Cantón, Party Alignments in Argentina between 1912 and 1955, Documento de Trabajo, No. 31, CIS Di Tella, 1967.
3. Workers in the other areas with this type of agriculture, such as those in the vinyards of Mendoza, also had their union founded in 1944. In 1947 they claimed a membership of 30,000. The Quebracho workers were organized in 1946. Luis Cerrutti Costa, quoted in Roberto Carri, op. cit., p. 28.

Santa Fe and Córdoba alone had 7/10ths of the total electorate, and it was in these provinces where Perón obtained significant rural support which the other parties might normally have expected to win. Two main government measures were responsible for this; the reduction of rents and the extension of contracts in November 1943, and the Statute of the Peón of October 1944.

The former affected the numerically large and economically important middle class of 142,500 tenants and sharecroppers in the Pampa region. Sixty-five per cent of farm units in Buenos Aires, and sixty-three per cent in Santa Fe were farmed under these forms of contracts in 1937. This group had a number of reasons to be dissatisfied with the status quo prior to 1943. One factor running through the period since the formation of the Federación Agraria after the Grito de Alcorta was the weakness of their bargaining position against landlords over the length and terms of contracts. Their position had improved since 1912, but the main sources of abuse can be seen in the provisions of the Second Tenant Reform Law of 1932. This established a five year minimum period for the lease; the landlord was obliged to register the contract officially. Leaseholders were given the right to construct houses and plant trees, for which they could claim compensation of up to 10% of the value of the land. The tenant was protected against restrictive contracts, such as those which obliged him to sell his produce or buy his equipment from a source specified by the landlord.

The law seems, nevertheless, to have been extensively violated. In addition, it did little to satisfy the demand for longer contracts. The 1937 census showed that one tenant out of two did not yet have a written contract. The survey showed also that 52% had been on the land they were working for less than five years; short term contracts were still the rule.¹

Tenants were also economically vulnerable, particularly since they depended on international rather than local markets. After the fall of cereal prices in the late 1930's, considerable hardship was caused by rent levels which had been established when prices were high. Coupled with this was the rise in costs as inflation began during the war. Their plight had been recognized before the 1943 coup, but the government, supported by the Sociedad Rural, had been reluctant to interfere. In 1942, a law set up a cumbersome framework of arbitration. The 1943 decree, however, went much further. Rents in cereal producing areas were reduced by 20% below their 1940 levels, and all contracts were to continue for a further two years. There were provisions for enforcement and a drive for registration, and some restrictions - such as that limiting the number of cattle which the tenant could farm - were liberalized.

1. Censo Agropecuario 1937, vol IV.

The measures were probably one reason why Perón's vote was relatively high in grain-producing areas, where these tenants were concentrated. The Federación Agraria, their main representative, did not align itself with the other rural pressure groups on political manifestos against Perón. In the light of the opposition of the Sociedad Rural, Perón's election seemed to be a guarantee that rents would be kept low and leases further extended, as indeed they were. He also appeared to hold out the possibility of giving them title to the land; his promise of land for those who worked it seemed to be addressed to them as well as to large numbers of those who aspired to lease land which was increasingly difficult to obtain because of the reversion to extensive cattle farming.¹ Carl Taylor noted that the possibility of obtaining title was the first aspiration of the tenants he interviewed.²

Leaseholders as a whole, however, were not unanimously for Perón. They were, after all, no longer the marginal group they had been at the turn of the century, but integrated into the rural social structure at a position considerably above the wage workers

1. The programme of the Partido Laborista said :
 Planificación racional de nuestra economía agraria con la división de la tierra y la consiguiente eliminación del latifundio. Adopción de medidas que tiendan a favorecer a los pequeños agricultores como medio de crear una clase media rural.

However, as we shall see, the Unión Democrática programme was more radical than this.

2. Carl Taylor, Rural Life in Argentina, Baton Rouge, 1948, p. 11.

whom they employed. They had reason to be opposed to Perón's other measures, such as the Statute of the Peón. The encouragement of rural unions during the 1945-46 harvest gave rise to conflicts which brought protests from the Federación Agraria.¹

The Statute of the Peón was probably the most important single source of Perón's rural support, as well as the most radical measure issued by him in this period. It applied not only to the littoral, but to the country as a whole. Through it, wage workers in Catamarca, for example, were promised a minimum wage of only 20% below those established for Buenos Aires province, while per capita production in the latter was three times that of the former.

The provisions of the Statute were impressive. It sought to treat rural workers in the same terms as their obrero counterparts. Minimum wages were tabulated for all types of work, and were to be periodically revised by the Secretaría. Restdays, holidays with pay, housing, and food were regulated. Medical assistance was made the Patrón's responsibility. Protection was given against arbitrary dismissal; workers dismissed after one year's employment without

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1. On 19 November 1945 it protested to the President against the pressure of employees of the Secretaría on Colonos in Santa Fe to set standards for the employment of harvest workers. The protest concluded:

'es necesario adoptar medidas para que sea garantizada la libertad del trabajo y permitir, en esta forma, que los agricultores puedan continuar sus actividades, pues de otra manera se perderá la recolección de las cosechas.'

La Prensa, 20 November 1945.

just cause were to receive compensation. Enforcement was in the hands of the Secretaría and its local agents.

The majority of these provisions were impossible to enforce; in addition, the Statute was limited in scope as it applied only to permanent labourers and not to an equally numerous migrant labour force.¹ The Statute was more important for what it represented. In opposition to the landowners, a government was attempting to regulate rural labour using the same criteria which it had used in the urban environment. A vote for Perón then would be given in the hope of sharing in the benefits which the Secretaría was obviously able to provide.

The rise of the opposition

We have seen that the list of groups which profited materially from Perón is extremely comprehensive, and that the opposition of the employers' organizations was one reason why peronismo took the form it did. But the attitude of these groups was part of a more general movement which included all the main parties of the pre-1943 era as well as most professional and cultural organizations. The March of the Constitution showed the extent of opposition, not only in the crowds it attracted - estimates averaged out at about 200,000 -

1. There were 286, 468 permanently employed farm workers, and about 260,000 migrant labourers in the country in 1937. Taylor, op. cit., p. 107.

but in the list of organizations which pledged their support. The rise of the opposition was the second most important current in 1943-1946. As Halperín says,¹ it was as much of a class movement as peronismo; a closing of the ranks of the liberal middle class, firstly because of the rightist tendencies of the military government, and then against its demagogic legacy.

This being said, it is customary to blame the opposition for allowing Perón to succeed. Irazusta is one writer who shares this view, which usually points to 9-17 October, when they failed to take advantage of their opportunity. They hesitated, and the only alternative they could produce was the demand for the government to be vested in the hands of the Supreme Court. This failed because the Supreme Court was unpopular among the Unions, and because Avalos could not agree. For the Army it would have meant losing control of the situation, and admitting in effect that two years of military government had failed.

The demand of the opposition, however, was made because the Supreme Court was a symbol of the return to legality and constitutionalism. It was the response to two years of political repression. Political activity had been proscribed until the State of Siege was lifted on 6 August, and even then, the parties were

1. Halperín, op. cit.

threatened by a Decree governing their organizations which would have reduced them to ineffectiveness if the government had chosen to use its powers. The censorship had been arbitrary and harsh, arrests for political offences common. When the parties had managed to make themselves heard, as in the demonstration to celebrate the liberation of Paris in 1944, or by signatures on manifestos, dismissals from University posts, prison or exile often followed. The exiles in Montevideo who returned in August and September testify to this; they included politicians from all parties as well as a number of professional men who were not members of political groupings. Finally, when liberalization was apparently fully under way in August and September, the government became alarmed at the extent of opposition, particularly in the Universities. On the 29th the State of Seige was restored, and there was another wave of arrests.

Given these obstacles, the achievements of the opposition are more striking than their failures. Particular parties had to face specific difficulties. The Communists and Socialists were in the process of fighting a losing battle with Perón for the unions. They had some success; the Unión Obrera Local included many important organizations. But it was not likely to make inroads into Perón's supporters when it opposed the agvinaldo decree. The Communists, in addition, had received instructions to oppose labour demands against industries which contributed to the Allied war effort, which hindered José Peter in the meatpacking plants.

For the Communist Party, the Unión Democrática was the culmination of a long series of efforts to form a popular front. The problem was that this put them in the same camp as the capitalists and Conservatives. The trauma of finding himself on the wrong side of the barricades emerges in Juan José Real's book.¹ One is struck not by the fact that he later turned to Perón, but that he remained with the Unión Democrática in 1946. He is a testimony to the substantial degree of unity which was achieved against Perón. This is shown also with the Radicals who joined an electoral coalition against their party traditions and their left wing. In spite of this, and of Perón's efforts to woo them earlier in the year, they remained united but for a small minority in the UCR Junta Renovadora. Again, the Conservatives were prepared to co-operate to the extent of remaining outside the formal structure of the U.D., and leaving their supporters free to vote for that list, in order to avoid alienating the Radical left.

Moreover, the Unión Democrática held no illusions about the real issues of the elections. Although their campaign still stressed the dangers of fascism, their programme showed that they were aware that the political spectrum had moved sharply to the left in 1945. Many of its provisions were fully as radical as those

1. Juan José Real, 30 años de historia argentina, B.A., 1962.

of the Partido Laborista; it included, for example, land reform, nationalization of public services, and extensive social legislation. As Real confessed, it was further to the left than the Communists' programme.¹ But its promises seem either to have not been believed, or to have been ignored in a highly personalized campaign where the Unión Democrática candidates were relatively colourless when compared with Perón. The promise of social legislation was not likely to win from Perón supporters who had received tangible evidence of the benefits which he could provide and who could not envisage the old parties outbidding him in this field in the light of their record before 1943. The content of the campaign speeches over the wireless from the two sides reinforced this belief. Perón, on the one hand, could rely on his record and speak to a solid sector of supporters:

Deseamos convertir la revolución en evolución, obteniendo del Estado el derecho a que los trabajadores lleguen al gobierno, a la administración y a la legislación. Así serán los mismos obreros los artífices de su propio destino; así las leyes no saldrán de charlatanes más o menos interesados, sino de ^{los} propios obreros, que han sentido en su carne desde niños el dolor del sacrificio en el trabajo.²

1. Real, op. cit., p. 93.

2. La Prensa 20 December 1945.

This contrasts with a characteristic statement from the Unión Democrática leadership which indicated that they were in fact addressing sectors of the population who were poles apart from the 'descamisados':

Hemos sellado la unión de los argentinos fieles a nuestra tradición histórica y leales servidores de nuestra ley fundamental. En estas filas de la decencia, del decoro, de la libertad y del idealismo, hay sitio para todos...¹

This speech of Mosca's shows the confidence felt by the opposition that Perón could not win against what was an efficiently co-ordinated front of all the major established parties. Their confidence was not totally misplaced as Perón won by a very narrow margin in 1946. They could later claim with justice that had it not been for the aguinaldo decree, Argentina would not have experienced ten years of Peronist rule. This further underlines the fact that there was no inevitability or regular pattern in the ebb and flow of currents which finally brought Perón to power.

1. La Prensa, 1 January 1946.

Conclusion

The bitterness of the campaign and the high percentage poll in the elections - 83.3% of the electorate voted - showed that most of Argentinian society was aligned on one side or other of the chasm which separated Perón's supporters from those who opposed him. His victory then seemed to mark a fundamentally new departure. For some, it was the advent of a social revolution; for others, it appeared to herald a period of totalitarian or fascist rule.

The 'fascism' of Perón's government, however, consisted only in formal analogies with models of European Fascism. It is possible to list a number of characteristics which both shared. Among these were the devotion to a leader or leaders, and the emphasis on a direct relationship between leader and mass expressed through the personal contact given by public rallies and demonstrations and the calculated exploitation of communications media. Again, they were ideologically similar in their opposition to marxism and to liberalism, and in the stress on order and discipline. This last was particularly evident in Perón's conception of a semi-corporate State, with major interests organized into tidy compartments. However, the differences between peronismo and fascist movements were more fundamental. They were distinct in their social composition and in the historical process which gave rise to each of them. If peronismo stressed order and discipline, it also effectively emphasised equality and the values of a broadly defined working

class against those of hierarchy and established class structures. It was a political movement which voiced the demands of lower income groups for substantial benefits in a period of economic prosperity, rather than that of a middle class threatened by economic crisis.

To what extent was it a revolution? It was certainly one at the political level, with the emergence of new elites displacing those who had had the experience of exercising political power. A total renewal took place, which affected not only the State apparatus, but also most private associations. Interest groups which had figured prominently under the old regimes found themselves displaced by new organizations or incorporated into Peronist structures. The Sociedad Rural was forced to change its leadership, and lost most of its old political influence. The Unión Industrial was dissolved. The universities were filled with peronista professors.

Many of the new elites came from different social origins, and Perón's election was also to some extent a social revolution. It was not, of course, a revolution in the Marxist sense, although it was an extensive alteration in the distribution of political and economic power. The effects of this change were to be seen, for example, in the political weight acquired by the Labour movement, in the extent of the redistribution of income which took place under Perón, and in the State's ideology and practice of social justice.

Perón's presidency also heralded a new departure for the peronista movement itself. We have seen that there were changes in Perón's ideology in the 1943-1946 period. Equally, the years after 1946 underline the difficulty of speaking of peronismo in the same terms over any length of time. It was to change in its ideology, organization and composition. The major turning point came with the foundation of a new political party. Many of the groups of the 1945-46 coalition were displaced, notably those laborista leaders such as Luis Gay and Cipriano Reyes who resisted the loss of the independence which they had hoped to maintain through the Partido Laborista. Again, the middle class farmers who had supported him found that they had not foreseen the extent to which Perón's economic programme was to tap the profits from the primary sector.

Why was Perón able to dispense with many of his original supporters? He was now secure in power and able to build up organizations which no longer had the autonomy of the unions on which he had been previously forced to rely for the elections. The coalition of 1946 included many diverse sectors, a diversity which increased as further groups joined the movement after 1946. The ability to balance one sector against another gave him a latitude which he did not possess before.

He was no longer forced to take the Military or the Opposition into consideration, at least to the extent that he had had to before

1946. The Army gratefully retired to barracks which were no longer 'casi inhabitable', and with the Navy shared the benefits of increased government expenditure. The Opposition were shattered by the results of the elections. Although they had obtained 46% of the total, the distribution of peronista votes minimized their share of representative posts. Where they were not displaced from those offices they were able to obtain, they suffered - as in Congress - at the hands of a majority which had a different conception of the rules of the game. Their unity of 1946 was broken. Individual parties, such as the UCR, split in the recriminations over the failure of the unionista policy. The Socialists and Communists had lost many of their supporters to Perón, as well as much of their influence with the leadership of the Unions.

Moreover, the bitterness which had characterized the 1946 elections diminished to some extent in the continued prosperity of the late 1940's. Many middle class sectors which had voted with the opposition in 1946 were now attracted by the advantages which co-operation with the government could bring. Through this process some 'industrialists' came to support Perón, though these were not the proprietors of large industries, who continued to oppose the constant encouragement of labour demands which was government policy in the 1946-1948 period. They were more likely to be smaller entrepreneurs or those who, for example, could use

their political connections to obtain import licences and favourable terms from IAPI in order to establish motor car assembly plants.¹

These later developments further underline that before 1946 peronismo was in many respects a distinct phenomenon. At that time it consisted primarily of support for a candidate by groups who were 'rationally' motivated to the extent that they saw what they wanted to see in Perón, and - as with the majority of union leaders - calculated to use him as a means for access to political power. Perón's rise should not be explained solely in terms of a dichotomy between structures, ideologies and 'rationality' on the one hand, and a mass, 'irrational' and personalist movement on the other. Both elements were clearly present, but a distinction should be made between that which gave peronismo its style and ideology, and those factors which weighed most heavily in Perón's rise to power. The marginal elements in the crowds which turned out for him, the 'descamisados' or 'cabecitas negras', determined that peronismo should be to some extent a movement of the most unorganized and neglected who bypassed intermediary structures to respond directly to a leader. Even in this context, however, it can be questioned whether many 'descamisados' in the crowds of

1. As Jorge Antonio could. Op. cit.

17 October were not in fact parts of a solid working class, rather than marginal déclassé elements. Again, it is not clear whether they were predominantly recent migrants from the interior, and if they were, whether their response to Perón was due to their having been recently mobilized from a 'traditional' environment. The evidence suggests that most migrants to Gran Buenos Aires came from the less 'traditional' areas of the country. In any case, the direct response of the crowds to Perón was not in itself surprising. Such a course of action appears to have been a perfectly rational one, given the benefits which Perón could bring. Finally, the size of the crowds was not in itself so exceptional. The March of the Constitution attracted numbers similar to those which emerged on 17 October, and both were a reflection of the fact that given the restrictions of this period, public demonstrations were the main means of political expression.

However, the only road to power open to Perón by was by means of freely held elections; the military would not support a dictatorship or an imposed government candidate. For this reason Perón was forced to rely on the unions for the organization of a party, and on other sectors besides the 'descamisados' for votes. The latter were possibly as much of a hindrance as a help from an electoral point of view. Those other sectors which he did win - some tenant farmers, rural peones, some empleados, and so on - responded to him rationally in the sense that he offered them material or political advantage.

This being said, what was exceptional about the peronista movement up to 1946? It was similar to Yrigoyen's in the 1920's; both were vehicles for the access to the political system of those previously excluded. Both were isolated and confronted by a coalition of opposition parties. Neither offered a fundamentally different economic policy from the Conservatives they attacked.

Yet Perón's movement was different from Yrigoyen's, if in degree rather than kind. It was more isolated, and provoked more antagonism. The differences were due to both long term and immediate factors. Peronismo was one result of the end of a form of society which had been characterised by continued economic expansion. After the 1920's, there was increasingly more definition to the contours which separated social groups, and a lower rate of social mobility. This fact, together with urbanization and industrial development gave rise to an urban popular sector which in peronismo was to make its demand for access to the system as a whole social class. Again, the developments after the 1920's brought new factors at the political level. The political struggle became more intense; new ideologies were emerging to challenge the old society; the Armed Forces acquired their direct influence in politics, and representative institutions were increasingly unable to satisfy the demands which Perón was to respond to.

Nevertheless, peronismo owed much of its originality to the events of the years in which it emerged. The fact that it arose

as a force isolated from the old party system can be partly explained because of its appearance from within a repressive, rightwing military government at a time when the issues raised by the behaviour of that government were intermingled with the terms of the international debate. This was one of the main reasons for the opposition front of the major parties and of much of the liberal middle class, and the bitterness of the conflicts of the time. To this source of division was added the fact that peronismo came to be based on one social class and to express a form of class consciousness. This was partly due to the background changes in the composition and relationships of classes, but boundaries were still blurred, and the class basis of peronismo owed as much to the political events of 1944-45 as to longer term causes; to the opposition of the middle class to what it regarded as fascism, but mainly to the counterattack of the employers' organizations to Perón's encouragement of labour. This gave rise to a class consciousness which in this period was that of a group aware of being in the process of achieving a new social, political and economic status. Before Perón's election, however, this had yet to receive political confirmation. The knowledge that the issue

remained in the balance partly explains the solidarity which emerged among the crowds of 17 October who, as Halperín suggests,¹ sought to preserve the new status quo rather than to carry forward a social revolution.

1. 'El sentimiento de clase que está detrás del peronismo no es entonces el de un grupo que se siente víctima de la sociedad, sino el de un grupo que ve colmadas sus aspiraciones, que se ve instalado en lo que su infinita inocencia juzga la prosperidad y quiere permanecer para siempre en ella. Pero si esta conciencia de clase no es socialmente revolucionaria, si en este campo es substancialmente conservadora, puede ser un cambio revolucionaria en lo político...El peronismo tuvo siempre cierto aire carnavalesco...'

Fayt, op. cit., p. 198.

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