ABSTRACT

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THE ARGENTINE NAVY AS AN AUTONOMOUS ACTOR IN ARGENTINE POLITICS

Virtually the entire corpus of literature on military intervention in politics treats "military" as synonymous with "army". In contrast, this thesis focuses on the Argentine Navy, other political actors being studied only tangentially, to the extent that they interact with the naval institution.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is a study of the Argentine Navy as a *political actor* from 1810 to the present day. This part of the thesis seeks to analyse the extent of, and limits on, naval political autonomy. Periods in which the Navy played a leading rôle are therefore emphasised: the Revolución Libertadora that overthrew Perón in September 1955, the *Azul-Colorado* factional struggles of September 1962 and April 1963, and the Proceso de Reorganisación Nacional (1976-83) with the so-called "war against subversion" (or "dirty war") and the South Atlantic War of 1982.

The second part analyses the Argentine Navy thematically as a *military institution* and *social group*. It deals with factors such as the influence of foreign navies and the social origins of the officer corps, which have been suggested in the past as reasons for political differences between the Argentine Army and Navy. Explanations are sought for important characteristic features of the Argentine Navy such as its strong institutional cohesion and its *laissez-faire* liberal economic ideology. The indoctrination and socialisation process within the Navy and its presumed anti-clerical and/or masonic orientation are also considered. Various aspects of inter-Force relations are studied: the annual struggle over budgetary allocations and the Navy-Air Force rivalry over military aviation. Finally, naval "jurisdictional hegemony" with regard to certain *regions* (Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and Antarctica) and *issues* (the atomic energy programme) is analysed.

The major conclusion is that the political behaviour of the Argentine Navy differs from that of the Army due to *endogenous* factors (naval comradeship and discipline) rather than to *exogenous* factors (social origins of naval officers and external institutional links). In other words, the political behaviour of the Argentine Navy differs from that of the Army not because it is Argentinian but because it is a *navy*, implying thereby a certain universality in naval political behaviour.

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To the Memory of

Shri Om Sharan Sahny
3 June 1903 - 29 January 1987
my grandfather

and my cousins

Geetanjali Sahney
30 July 1972 - 3 November 1986

Ashim Bhola
29 January 1972 - 19 May 1990

loved ones to whom
I could not say farewell
because I was away from home

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INTRODUCTION

Studying the Charts and Mapping the Route

Purpose of this Thesis

The military has, for long, been regarded as one of the most important actors in the political process of most Latin American countries, and there is, at the empirical level, much evidence to validate this perception. A significant *lacuna* has, however, existed in most of the research on military interventions in political and civic life. Traditionally, research studies on the military in politics have concentrated on the army, and have tended to either ignore or minimise the importance of the other armed forces. Indeed, the terms "military" and "army" have frequently been used interchangeably in these studies.[1] Thus, Rouquié's latest work, entitled *The Military and the State in Latin America*,[2] is actually a study of Latin American *armies* in the political process. Darío Cantón, on the other hand, does note the difference between the two:

> Decimos "Ejército" y no "Fuerzas Armadas" argentinas porque el ejército es sólo una de las tres fuerzas y la mayoría de nuestras observaciones se aplican a él.[3]

Lyle McAlister defines the terms he uses with characteristic care:

> The military is defined collectively as the regular armies, navies and air forces and, occasionally, the

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1 One problem is the use of the Spanish word "militar" ("military"), which is used in most Latin American countries to describe the "army" ("ejército"), as opposed to the "armed forces" ("fuerzas armadas") - the common usage in English. "Armada", "marina" and "marina de guerra" all describe the "navy", and are used synonymously.

2 Alain Rouquié, The Military and the State in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987)

3 Darío Cantón, La política de los militares argentinos 1900-1971 (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Argentina Editores, 1971), p. 95. An earlier version of this work, covering the period upto 1966, is 'Military Interventions in Argentina: 1900-1966' in Jacques Van Doorn, (ed.), Military Profession and Military Regimes: Commitments and Conflicts (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1969), pp. 241-268.

> gendarmeries of the several national states... Although navies and air forces have been significant influences in some countries, particularly in southern South America, in the main ground forces have been the dominant service, and the collective term "the military" should be construed as refering primarily to them.[4]

Guillermo O'Donnell is another scholar who does not use the two terms interchangeably:

> When refering to the "military" in this study, I am refering to the "officers of the armed forces." When I refer to any of the branches of the armed forces, I will specify which one I am refering to, "army", "navy", or "airforce".[5]

It is significant to note that despite the above disclaimer, O'Donnell *does not once refer to the naval institution* in this extensive and otherwise brilliant essay on the involvement of the military in the politics of Argentina. John J. Johnson, the pre-eminent scholar of yesteryear on the military in politics, explains this scholarly bias thus:

> Army officers are studied in greater depth than naval and air force officers because armies have ordinarily been more capable of imposing their will upon society, which has given greater potential power to army leaders. This emphasis seemed warranted despite the fact that quite recently the air forces of Ecuador, Venezuela and Guatemala and the navies of Argentina, Peru and Venezuela have shown an increasing disposition to challenge army domination.[6]

Janowitz argues that it is much easier for armies of the "new nations" to be involved in domestic politics than navies or air forces:

> It is because these military establishments are mainly infantry battalions, which can be deployed in urban centers or in rural areas, that they have the maximum

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4 Lyle N. McAlister, 'The Military', in John J. Johnson, (ed.), Continuity and Change in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 138.

5 Guillermo A. O'Donnell, 'Modernization and Military Coups: Theory, Comparisons and the Argentine Case', in Abraham F. Lowenthal, (ed.), Armies and Politics in Latin America (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976), p. 231, n. 1.

6 John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. vii.

potential for involvement in domestic politics... Naval units, by contrast, are much less effective for domestic political objectives and only Thailand has produced a group of politically involved naval officers. Air power has potential for domestic intervention, as has been demonstrated in South America where it has been used against ground forces in insurrection. It is more difficult, however, to use an air force against a civilian population. Only in Indonesia has the air force developed both a distinctive political orientation, strongly leftist, and direct involvement in domestic politics.[7]

Quite apart from specific criticisms - in 1964, when Janowitz's book was published, Thailand was *not the only* country in which naval officers were politically active, as this thesis will attempt to demonstrate - one important general criticism can be advanced of the views expressed by Johnson and Janowitz. Inherent in such views is the belief that if naval and air force officers were to play a more important role in politics, their political behaviour would not differ significantly from that of their army colleagues. This belief is, at the very least, questionable. A military institution, even in a demilitarised social environment, possesses a distinct corporate identity, which is the cumulative product of years of organic institutional development, particular and peculiar traditions and ceremonials, established training procedures and socialisation patterns, all of which result in a certain shared *Weltanschauung* within its ranks. Rouquié points out that the training of young recruits in relative isolation over a considerable period of time results in "...a strong internalization of the proposed values and models ... that assures a

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7 Morris Janowitz, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations : An Essay in Comparative Analysis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 33. In a later publication, Janowitz calls for a standardized definition of the term "armed forces", which he suggests should be "limited to the central government's formations of the army, the navy and the air force", and should "not include the different types of reserve units, auxiliary reserves, civilian defense forces, or special frontier guards and national police units". Morris Janowitz, 'Armed Forces and Society: A World Perspective', in Jacques Van Doorn, (ed.), Armed Forces and Society: Sociological Essays (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1968), p. 20.

specialized socialization and a deeply rooted corporate spirit."[8] José Luis de Imaz describes this process thus:

> ... a specific status mentality is fostered in the military individual as part of the system of socialization in the services. A boy is taken at a very young age, cast into a specific mould, and taught the belief that a military career, by identifying the individual with the highest degree of patriotism, converts him into a depositary of national values.[9]

Furthermore, Imaz adds:

> The formation of a specific status mentality varies with the service and with the history of the service within the nation. Hence one service may show greater cohesiveness than another, one may give greater emphasis to its values, may be more cautious and prudent in making public the tensions between its members, and may have more institutionalised group norms.[10]

It follows from the above that although armies, navies and air forces are all military institutions, there can be, and indeed frequently is, a great deal of divergence in their socio-political behaviour and attitudes, despite a shared socio-political environment.

With the above in mind, it is therefore being argued here that the "army" and the "navy" should be treated as discrete political actors when studying the role of the military in the political process. However, it is also important for us to keep in mind that "discrete" does not mean "monolithic"; intra-institutional divisions do exist in military institutions, even if these internal fissures are usually not quite as pronounced as those that exist in most civilian socio-political institutions. Despite their hierarchical command structures, and frequently rigid lines of control and communication, military institutions

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8 Rouquié, op. cit., p. 85.

9 José Luis de Imaz, Los Que Mandan (Those who Rule) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), p. 77.

10 ibid.

usually do not make unified and disciplined, let alone monolithic, political actors. This is quite an important point, as Sarkesian points out:

> [M]ilitary intervention is too often seen as intervention by a cohesive and monolithic military institution. On the contrary... [M]ilitary institutions have internal disagreements, disparate loyalties, and differing perceptions of their role. Moreover, coups do not necessarily require intervention by the "total" institution... The essential element of successful military intervention is for the coup perpetrators to insure (sic) the backing, neutrality, or atleast indifference of the rest of the military (or at least a sizable part of it.)[11]

Navies tend to differ from armies in this respect: Lieuwen may well be accused of oversimplifying the issue, and he is certainly wrong in his characterisation of navies as less political than armies, but he does have a point when he contends that armies "[reflect] social tensions more accurately, and therefore [are] more seriously wracked by internal splits", while navies, "less politically minded than armies, usually [remain] unified."[12]

Finally, the relationship between the armed forces, at both the institutional level (competition for budgetary allocations, for example) and the political level (struggle for power) must be considered. It is clear that inter-force rivalry and competition exists in virtually every multi-force military structure in the world, even those not normally involved in politics. In the event of a military intervention in the political process, inter-force rivalry can therefore become a major political factor. Johnson notes that

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11 Sam C. Sarkesian, 'A Political Perspective on Military Power in Developing Areas', in Sheldon W. Simon, (ed.), The Military and Security in the Third World: Domestic and International Impacts (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 3-4.

12 Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), pp. 131-132.

> When armies make decisions against the wishes of navies and air forces, the latter often have to be appeased by lavish spending on submarines, aircraft carriers, and jet fighters.[13]

The importance of navies and air forces in the political process extends far beyond what Johnson suggests, however. It is being argued here that during periods of military intervention and involvement in the political life of a country, the political role played by the navy and the air force is frequently substantial, and that these institutions must therefore be treated and studied as significant actors in the political system *in their own right*.

In this thesis, an attempt will be made to illustrate this general contention through a single case-study: an analysis of the Argentine Navy as an autonomous political actor. It is argued that there are a number of important events in the recent political history of Argentina which cannot be fully comprehended without a proper understanding of the political attitudes and actions of the naval institution. To the extent that this specific study of the Argentine Navy is meant to buttress a rather more general contention about the *rôle* of navies in politics, it raises the question of the *representativeness* of Argentina's naval institution. Is the Argentine Navy atypical? Clearly, Argentina's naval institution can be fruitfully compared to only a few other navies in the developing world, particularly in terms of size. This fact, however, should not deter this study, since life at sea imposes a certain regime on all sea-going fleets, irrespective of size. In the taxonomy of navies, the correct distintion to draw is that between riverine, coastal and blue water fleets; a multi-oceanic navy differs from its smaller high seas cousins only in terms of strategic deployment, not operational procedures, war-fighting tactics or

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13 Johnson, op. cit., p. 7.

inter-personal relations on board. Internal features, in other words, tend to be invariant.

Robert A. Potash, whose studies of the Argentine Army are justly regarded as authoritative, has this to say in the Preface of his second volume:

> ...increased attention ... must be paid to the other military services, especially the Navy. The Navy's emergence as a separate political force in 1955 and the continuing efforts of Navy officers to exercise political roles that previously had been monopolized by their Army colleagues add a new dimension to the civil-military relationship. Thus, though neither Navy nor Air Force is mentioned in the title, this volume will explore their interactions with the Army and with the governing authorities during periods when the latter had to look to the sea and air as well as the land to calculate the dangers of their political survival.[14]

There are undoubtedly some excellent sections on the politics of the Argentine Navy and its relationship to the Army during the period 1955-1962 in Potash's book, and consequently, parts of this thesis draw heavily on this source. However, despite the caveat above, Potash's work remains, in the main, what the title says it is - a study of the *Army* and politics in Argentina. A study of the Argentine Navy in Argentine politics, it is clear, would have to concentrate on the political behaviour and attitudes of the naval institution. The other political actors in the system, even those which perhaps play a more central role in the political process than the Navy, would have to be studied only tangentially, to the extent that they interact with the actor being focus ed upon. That is precisely what is attempted in this thesis, and the next section outlines just how the marshalling of evidence and argument will proceed.

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14 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1945-1962 Perón to Frondizi (London: The Athlone Press, 1980), pp. vii-viii.

Organisation of this Thesis

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part One, consisting of the first eleven chapters, treats the Argentine Navy as a political actor by focusing upon its political actions and behaviour from 1810 to the present day, while the second part of this thesis, comprising Chapters Twelve to Sixteen, attempts to explain this political behaviour by analysing the various factors that define the Argentine Navy as a military institution and a social group.

The first three chapters are essentially historical in nature. Chapter One covers the period from the Independence War (1810) to the establishment of the naval academy, the Escuela Naval Militar, in 1873, during the presidency of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Chapters Two and Three cover the first seventy years (1873-1943) of the Argentine Navy as an institution; the *coup* of 1930, the military takeover that ushered in a half-century of political instability in Argentina, is the dividing line between these two chapters. The first three chapters, taken together, attempt to provide the historical background to this study of the political *rôle* of the Argentine Navy.

The emphasis of Chapter One requires clarification. All institutions have their foundational myths; the Argentine Navy has its share of these, most of which pertain to the period covered by the first chapter. This was the period in which the Spanish Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata was swept away and the foundations of the Argentine Republic as a nation-state were laid. The Argentine Navy, like all other socio-political institutions in Argentina that can legitimately claim this historical heritage, traces its roots to this "patriotic" and "nation-building" period. The naval

forces of Buenos Aires and the United Provinces, the successor states to the *Virreynato*, were raised, armed and manned on an *ad hoc* basis every time a maritime or riverine threat loomed. However, despite the general lack of institutionalisation, the years 1810-1873 are seen by the Argentine Navy as constituting the formative period of the institution. The naval events and personalities of this period have therefore been subjected to many an official history and biography by the Argentine Navy. An understanding of how a social group views its *own* history can give us valuable insights into the personality and values of that collectivity. Official histories and biographies are the clearest manifestation of an institutional desire not only to *portray* the past in a certain light but, equally important, to *propagate* it. The first chapter views this period (1810-1873) through the institutional eyes of the Argentine Navy by critically analysing its official histories and biographies.

The *coup* of 1943 by the colonels of the Grupo de Oficiales Unidos (GOU) brought to power a group of Army officers to whom the Argentine Navy was fundamentally opposed. This opposition had something to do with the pro-Axis pretensions of the GOU colonels, which was in complete opposition to the pro-Allied spirit that permeated the naval institution. More importantly, the GOU *coup* brought a colonel named Juan Domingo Perón to power, thereby initiating the viscerally bitter opposition of the Navy to Peronism. The Navy's relations with Peronism from 1943 to 1955 is the subject of Chapter Four; in 1955, the last year of the *Peronato*, the Navy was the only traditional socio-political institution in Argentina apart from the Catholic Church that had successfully resisted any degree of "Peronisation".

An analysis of the *rôle* of the Navy in one of the most important events in Argentine history, the Revolución Libertadora that overthrew the government of Juan Domingo Perón in 1955, is attempted in Chapter Five. An attempt is made to show that this *golpe de estado* was, to a large extent, an autonomous naval operation in the wake of which the Argentine Navy temporarily established itself as a very important political actor in Argentina.

The sixth chapter studies the period from 1955 to 1958, during which the Navy under the leadership of the formidable Admiral Isaac Rojas exercised enormous power. The chapter that follows looks at the Navy's relations with the government of President Arturo Frondizi and with the other two Forces, and also analyses the relationship within the Junta de Almirantes.

The armed clashes between the military factions of the *Azules* and *Colorados*, which culminated with naval aircraft attacking army tanks in April 1963, is the topic covered in Chapter Eight. This event deserves an entire chapter because the defeat that was inflicted upon the Navy by the victorious Cavalry resulted in the loss of naval power and influence for over a decade. The period 1963-1976, during which the Cavalry was the undisputed force within the Argentine Armed Forces, is studied in the ninth chapter.

In 1976, in response to a rapidly-deteriorating internal situation marked with terrorist violence, the Argentine Armed Forces deposed the Peronist government and took over the reins of power for the fourth time this century. This *coup* marked the return of the Navy to power, and under the command of Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera the naval institution was in

the forefront of the anti-subversive campaign that has come to be known as the "Dirty War" because of widespread human rights violations. In 1982, with Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya at the helm, the Navy led the country into war with Britain over the disputed Falkland/Malvinas islands in the South Atlantic, a war that resulted in defeat. These two wars are the focus of Chapter Ten.

The last chapter in Part One looks at the period since 1983, when the civilian democratic goverments of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) and Carlos Menem (1989 onwards) have tried to keep civil-military relations at even keel but have continuously faced problems in defining the limits of institutional autonomy of the Armed Forces.

Conventionally, the British Royal Navy has been seen as the most important external influence on the Argentine Navy, in contradistinction to the Argentine Army which is regarded as being in the Prussian/German military tradition. Over the years, this "fact" of Argentine political life has gained a virtually universal acceptance, and has been used by a number of scholars to account for the difference in the political behaviour and ideological orientation of the Argentine Army and Navy. Chapter Twelve reassesses this received wisdom through an analysis of the nature and scope of the links that the Argentine Navy has built with external military institutions in different areas over the years.

If a naval institution modelled upon its British counterpart is one conventional view, the stereotypical image of the "upper-class" Argentine naval officer is another. Chapter Thirteen examines the social origins of the Argentine naval officer with the object of determining whether there is

any correlation between the class composition of the naval officer corps and the ideological position espoused by the naval institution.

Chapter Fourteen concentrates on the high degree of cohesiveness of the naval institution has always exhibited and attempts to attribute reasons for the powerful *espiritú de cuerpo* within the Argentine Navy. The corporate unity of the Navy is a factor of some significance in Argentine politics since it provides a dramatic contrast to the traditionally factionalised and divided Argentine Army, with its various *Armas* and ubiquitous *logias secretas*.

The first part of this thesis aims to demonstrate that there are significant differences in the political attitudes and ideological orientation of the officer corps of the three military institutions. The Argentine naval officer, at any rate, has always been regarded as being far more liberal than his Army and Air Force counterparts, the word "liberal" being used in the typically-Argentine sense of free trade and free markets. In order to avoid confusion, it is necessary to clarify that in Argentina economic liberals in most cases do not hold liberal views in the political or social arenas. Chapter Fifteen aims at studying the various factors that play a part in the formation of the political values and ideological orientation of the naval officer corps. Particular emphasis is placed on the *rôle* of naval educational and training institutions in fostering a common ideological perspective within the Navy. Chapter Sixteen focuses on the Navy's relations with the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and Freemasonry on the other.

In the last chapter (Chapter Seventeen) the focus is on the conflictive and accomodative aspects of inter-Force relations. This

chapter is built around four brief case-studies which illustrate differing degrees of conflict and accomodation. The first case-study is of an important area of independent naval activity, the atomic energy programme in Argentina, and provides a good example of how the three military institutions have sometimes divided the various institutions and activities of government into their respective spheres of power and influence, thus avoiding conflict. The second case-study also has to do with the "jurisdictional hegemony" of the Navy, and concentrates on the formulation of national policy towards the austral areas: Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, the disputed South Atlantic insular territories and Antarctica. However, in this particular case, unlike the atomic energy programme, the naval policy-making monopoly was never explicitly defined and accepted, creating conflictual situations *vis-à-vis* other governmental institutions and agencies from time-to-time. The third case-study deals with a situation of true conflict, the annual budgetary allocation competition. What is remarkable is that despite being a quintessentially zero-sum game, some sort of tacit agreement seems to exist amongst the three military institutions to ensure that the competition does not get totally out of hand. The last case-study pertains to the rivalry between the Air Force and Naval Aviation. In Argentina this rivalry appears to have a virulent and vituperative quality that far transcends the natural rivalry that exists between various types of military aviators throughout the world. This conflict has a lot to do with the self-advertisment that the Air Force indulged in after the South Atlantic War of 1982, and stems from the occasionally-expressed desire of the Air Force to monopolise *all* aviation, not merely military aviation, in Argentina.

Finally, the various threads that make up this study will be drawn together in the Conclusion. The three questions that will be addressed

are: (1) whether the Argentine Navy can be considered an autonomous actor, and if so, what the limits to its political autonomy are, (2) what, if any, the distinctive features of naval political behaviour and ideology are, and (3) what brought about these distinctive features.

CHAPTER ONE

WEIGHING ANCHOR, 1810-1872: THE EARLY YEARS

All institutions have their foundational myths; those of the Argentine Navy pertain to the period in which the Spanish Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata was swept away and the foundations of the Argentine Republic as a nation-state were laid. The Navy, like all other socio-political institutions in Argentina that can legitimately claim this historical heritage, traces its roots to this "patriotic" and "nation-building" period. As we shall see in this chapter, the naval forces of Buenos Aires and the United Provinces, the successor states to the *Virreynato*, were raised, armed and manned on an *ad hoc* basis every time a maritime or riverine threat loomed. However, despite the general lack of institutionalisation, the years 1810-1873 are seen by the Argentine Navy as constituting the formative period of the institution. This being the case, it comes as no surprise that the naval events and personalities of this period have been subjected to many an official history and biography. An understanding of how a social group views its *own* history can give us valuable insights into the personality and values of that collectivity. Official histories and biographies are the clearest manifestation of an institutional desire not only to *portray* the institutional past in a certain light but, equally important, to *propagate* a particular image of the institutional present. This chapter therefore views the period 1810-1873 through the institutional eyes of the Argentine Navy by critically analysing its official histories and biographies.[1] We shall see the manner in which the battles and voyages of this period, and the men and ships that

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1 For the purposes of this study, the books published by the Departamento de Estudios Históricos Navales (DEHN), and a few other works by serving and retired naval officers who are established institutional historians, are considered "official histories and biographies" of the Argentine Navy.

sailed and fought in them, are portrayed in the official institutional chronicles.

The Battles and the Voyages

The historical consciousness of Argentina's naval institution, like that of the Argentine Nation itself, begins not with the War of Independence against Spanish colonial rule, as is sometimes supposed,[2] but with the "Invasions of the English" in 1806-1807.[3] These invasions are extremely important for the Argentine Navy because they are regarded as unambiguous evidence of the importance of Cape Horn and the southern waters in global naval strategy. As Destéfani asserts, "[L]as invasiones inglesas tuvieron por causa la política imperialista inglesa, tratando en este caso de obtener una importante colonia de gran importancia estratégica naval..."[4] This perception in turn links up with the British occupation of the Malvinas islands in 1833; at the height of the South Atlantic crisis of 1982, Destéfani came out with the controversial and somewhat ahistorical thesis of the "Eight English Invasions" suffered by Argentina.[5]

Thus, the historical episode that sets the institutional clock of the Argentine Navy ticking is the Defensa and Reconquista of Buenos Aires. This is reflected in the official histories: most generalised narratives of Argentine naval history either ignore the colonial and pre-Hispanic period entirely[6] or cover it only briefly as an introductory chapter.[7] There are

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2 Robert Scheina implies this in his excellent naval history, although admittedly his study encompasses not just Argentina but all the countries of Latin America. See Robert L. Scheina, Latin America: A Naval History 1810-1987 (Annapolis: US Naval Institute Press, 1987), chapter one.

3 The naval history that covers this particular historical episode is Laurio Destefani, Los marinos en las Invasiones Inglesas (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráf. de la DIAB, 1975).

4 ibid., p.7.

5 Laurio H. Destéfani, The Malvinas, the South Georgias and the South Sandwich Islands: the Conflict with Britain (Buenos Aires: Edipress, 1982).

6 The classic naval history, Anjel Justiniano Carranza, Campañas Navales de la República Argentina, 4 vols., (Buenos Aires: publisher uncertain, 1914), starts with the independence war, as does the later work of Felipe Bosch, Historia Naval Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Alborada, 1962).

only a few specific studies of colonial naval history.[8] While a number of specific studies exist of naval events in the post-1800 period, the generalised institutional histories relating to the national period, with one important exception,[9] take the form of conventional historical narratives. Finally, historical studies of non-Argentine naval activity in the region, are limited in scope and few in number.[10] In summary, therefore, most official Argentine naval histories take the form either of generalised historical narratives or of specific historical studies of naval events of the post-colonial period, starting with the seminal, nation-building events of the English Invasions and the War of Independence from Spanish colonial rule.

One of the first acts of the Junta de Gobierno in May 1810 was to create a naval force under Francisco de Gurruchaga, one of its deputies from Salta, the importance of controlling the River Plate being immediately recognised. The first Argentine naval expedition ended in disaster: the squadron of three small ships, commanded by the Maltese sailor Juan

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7 Teodoro Caillet-Bois, Ensayo de historia naval argentina (Buenos Aires: publisher unknown, 1929), pp.15-29; Ricardo Piccirilli, Lecciones de historia naval argentina (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1967), pp.19-52; and Laurio H. Destéfani, Manual de Historia Naval Argentina (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráf. de la DIAB, 1980), pp.19-44, all have brief introductory chapters on the naval history of the colonial period. This period is covered somewhat more substantially in Héctor Raul Ratto, Hombres de mar en la historia argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial "El Ateneo", 1938), pp.3-117.

8 The two published histories of the colonial period, Eduardo H. Pinasco, Hombres de la historia del puerto de Buenos Aires en el periodo colonial (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráficos de la DIAB, 1972) and Tulia Piñero, Navegantes y maestres de bergantines en el Río de la Plata: Siglo XVI (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1962), are essentially no more than interesting compendia of names taken from the records of the period. The one major exception to the neglect of colonial naval history is Historia Marítima Argentina, the mammoth ten-volume study of Argentine naval history by the DEHN: volumes 2-4 cover the Age of Discovery, the Gobernación del Río de la Plata (1573-1776) and the Viceroyalty (1776-1814), respectively.

9 Humberto F. Burzio, Armada Nacional: Reseña historica de su origen y desarrollo organico (Buenos Aires: DEHN/Boletín del Centro Naval, 1960), is an extremely innovative historical study of the "organic development" of Argentina's naval institution.

10 The foreign naval presence in the River Plate area in the national period is analysed in two excellent histories: Héctor Ratto, Los comodores britanicos de estación en el Plata (1810-1852) (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca de la Sociedad de Historia Argentina, 1945) and Miguel Angel De Marco, La Armada Española en el Plata (1845-1900) (Rosario: Universidad Católica Argentina, 1981).

Bautista Azopardo, was destroyed by a small Spanish squadron at San Nicolás on the Río de la Plata in March 1811.[11]

The first significant patriotic squadron was created in Buenos Aires early in 1814, consisting largely of armed merchantmen and crewed by foreign merchant sailors, adventurers, and some local *creole* sailors, under the command of an Irish merchant captain, William "Guillermo" Brown. The naval company of 1814 had been created by a team of four men, all still revered as Argentina's first naval heroes: "la influencia de Alvear, el entusiasmo y la actividad de Larrea, la financiación de White y su confianza y apoyo a la revolución, aunque estuviera haciendo un negocio y el consejo profesional de Brown dieron sus frutos."[12] After an initial failure the Argentine fleet captured the island of Martín García and bottled up a Spanish squadron on the River Uruguay.[13] Between 14 and 17 May it defeated a Spanish force in the Battle of Montevideo. The seventeenth of May is still celebrated as the Día de la Armada.[14] Brown's victory permitted the blockade of the royalist stronghold of Montevideo, which had been successfully besieged by land for three years. Montevideo surrendered a month later, thus depriving Spain of her only South Atlantic base.

The newly formed naval company participated in the Expedición Libertadora of General San Martín to Peru in 1814. More significantly, however, the Buenos Aires authorities gave a number of "marques of authority" to foreign seamen to engage the Spanish mercantile fleet in the war of the corsairs, which was carried out between 1816 and 1819. This is a fascinating phase in Argentine naval history, when ships flying

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11 Scheina, op.cit., p.2.

12 Destefani, op. cit., p. 47

13 Luis E. Argüero, El combate naval de Martín García (10 al 15 de marzo de 1814) (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1968).

14 See Rodolfo A. Muzzio, 17 de Mayo de 1814: Día de la Armada (Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Marina, 1961).

the Argentine flag sailed the seven seas;[15] by some accounts, the Corsairs of Buenos Aires contributed to the liberation of Spain's Central American provinces in the Captaincy General of Guatemala.[16] Destefani informs us that "el corso no era piratería, sino una forma de guerra en el mar, desarrollada por civiles a los que se le daban grados equivalentes a los militares."[17] Under David Jewett, the *Heroina* landed on the Malvinas/Falklands in 1820, thus making these islands a very important part of the historical consciousness of the Argentine Navy.

Between 1826 and 1828, the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata were at war with the Brazilian Empire over the Banda Oriental. This was a war in which the Brazilians had the upper hand, but the tenacity with which the Buenos Aires fleet took on the superior naval force of Brazil is recalled with pride even today.[18] As Destéfani remarks, "no obstante su superioridad que era tremenda, los brasileños nunca pudieron dominar el Río de la Plata."[19] The United Provinces won two remarkable naval victories, at Los Pozos and Juncal, which led to the independence of Uruguay.

These naval forces were soon playing an important role in domestic power struggles. During the years 1828 to 1852, when Juan Manuel de Rosas was the *caudillo* of the United Provinces, naval forces were used to subdue rebelling *caudillos* in the Entre Ríos region.[20] During this period the

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15 This period of early Argentine naval history has been researched by many non-Argentine scholars. See, in particular, Lewis Winkler Bealer, Los Corsarios de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires: Casa Editora Coni, 1937) and Charles C. Griffen, 'Privateering from Baltimore during the Spanish American Wars of Independence', Maryland Historical Magazine, vol. XXXV, March 1940, no.1.

16 Pedro Rafael Gutiérrez, La Bandera Argentina origen de las Banderas Centroamericanas (San José: Ediciones Lena, 1983).

17 ibid., p. 57

18 See Humberto Burzio, (ed.), Acciones navales entre las flotas de Buenos Aires y brasileña en 1827 y 1828 (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1968).

19 ibid., p. 87

20 See Teodoro Caillet-Bois, Los marinos durante la Dictadura: Periodo 1841-1851 (Buenos Aires: Librería Nacional J. Lajouane, 1953).

United Provinces faced an intermittent Anglo-French blockade in which the Argentine naval forces were impotent to resist.[21]

Naval forces were again used between 1852 and 1858, during the civil war that pitted the Province of Buenos Aires against the Confederation. During these domestic conflicts, the task of maintaining a naval force was neglected, and so the War of the Triple Alliance of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay against Paraguay (1866-1870) found the Argentine naval intervention ineffective. As Destefani puts it, "la Guerra del Paraguay fue otra demostración de nuestra falta de previsión en lo naval."[22] As we shall see in the next chapter, it was this sense of naval and military ineffectiveness which led to the institutionalisation of Argentina's military forces under the presidency of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento.

The Men and their Ships

A navy, any navy, is made up of its ships and the men who sail in them. Thus, the history of a navy is in effect the story of its ships and the biography of its men, and it is usually not easy to separate these two aspects. As Destefani puts it, "[s]iempre hemos pensado que una nave es como un enorme ser, con una parte física e inerte, que es su estructura y una espiritual y viva que es su dotación."[23] This being the case, our study of the official version of Argentine naval history will be incomplete without a close look at the biographies and stories that the naval institution takes enormous pains, and a good deal of pride, in sponsoring and promoting.

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21 See Ernesto J. Fitte, La agresión francesa a la escuadra argentina en 1829 (Buenos Aires: Editora Plus Ultra, 1976).

22 Destefani, op. cit., p. 121

23 Laurio H. Destefani, 'Prologo', in Pablo E. Arguindeguy, Apuntes sobre los buques de la Armada Argentina (1810-1970), vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estudios Históricos Navales, 1972), p.5.

The attitude of official Argentine naval historians writing on the life and career of William "Guillermo" Brown, *"el gran almirante"*, is nothing short of hagiographical. This is reflected in all manner of historical works, ranging from substantial biographies[24] to conference papers[25] and story books for children.[26] The entire thrust of official writing has been to present "the first admiral" of the Argentine Navy as the marine counterpart to General San Martín, as the "Padre de la Patria en el Mar". Thus, an official biography of forty five famous naval personalities is organised on an alphabetical basis, except for the first biography, which is that of Brown.[27] There is a constant effort to portray Brown as "la personalidad más alta y más pura de nuestra historia naval."[28] The ultimate aim of much of this hagiography is to illuminate the image of the naval institution in the reflected glory of its "First Admiral";[29] in Ratto's words:

> [E]s de no olvidar que si los miembros de nuestra armada son también nobles y caballeros; generosos, disciplinados y altivos; respetuosos de la convicciones ajenas, hondamente humanos y profundamente inclinados del mantenimiento de la jerarquía, de la ley y de las virtudes que fundamentarán una existencia digna, a Brown se le debe buena parte de esas características que el país ha reconocido ya a los herederos de sus glorias y que el héroe naval les dicta desde la entraña viva de su portentosa existencia.[30]

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24 For example, see Héctor Raúl Ratto, Historia de Brown, 2 vols., (Buenos Aires: Editorial "La Facultad", 1939) and Leoncio Gianello, Almirante Guillermo Brown (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Estrada, 1957).

25 Juan Silva Riestra, 'El Almirante Brown', Instituto Naval de Conferencias, 12 September 1966 (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 1967).

26 Eros Nicola Siri, El Almirante de Bronce (Guillermo Brown) (Buenos Aires: Acme Agency, 1952).

27 Ricardo Piccirilli and Leoncio Gianello, Biografias navales (Cuarenta y cinco semblanzas de marinos) (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1963).

28 ibid., p.13.

29 Strictly speaking, it is inaccurate to regard Guillermo Brown as the "first admiral" of the Argentine Navy. This designation should properly go to Robert Ramsay, a Royal Navy captain who was appointed "coronel mayor" (equivalent to the current Argentine designation of contraalmirante) by the government of Buenos Aires Province on 5 November 1825. Ramsay held this position till the end of 1826. Brown did not ascend to the rank of coronel mayor till 12 January 1826. Pablo E. Arguindeguy, 'Oficiales Almirantes en ARA, previos a la Escuela Naval Militar o no cursantes en ella', typewritten memorandum, September 1990.

30 Héctor Raul Ratto, Almirante Guillermo Brown (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1961), p.60.

The historical treatment of Admiral Brown is indicative of the general problem faced by official historians writing about this period of Argentine naval history. There is, in particular, the problem of incorporating an Irish sailor-adventurer into the pantheon of national and naval heroes. Destéfani argues that the "Gran Señor de nuestros mares... [p]rimero luchó por el botín y la causa, por la causa y el botín después, finalmente por la causa."[31] Also, while Brown had some notable naval victories to his credit, he also had some spectacular failures; the latter events tend not to be treated in the official histories with the required scholarly rigour and detachment. Brown died an authentic national hero, mourned equally by Mitre and Urquiza, the respective leaders of Buenos Aires and the Confederation, locked at that time in civil war. Brown's legacy in the Argentine Navy is enduring and pervasive, and this is amply reflected in the official histories and biographies of the naval institution.

Compared with the above, it might seem that other figures in Argentine naval history have been neglected by the Navy's official historians and biographers. This, however, is not the case. Indeed, in many ways other naval heroes of the national period have been studied in a far more substantial and scholarly manner than the *gran almirante* has been, precisely because their names are not primordial to the institutional consciousness in the elemental sense in which the Brownian legacy so clearly is.[32] An interesting aspect of these official biographies is that

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31 Destéfani, 'Prologo', in Arguindeguy, Apuntes, op.cit., p.6.

32 Important biographies of Argentine naval heroes of the national period include Pedro Isidro Caraffa, Don Juan Larrea (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1961); Bernardo Frías, Don Francisco de Gurruchaga, new edition (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1961); Enrique Gonzalez Lonzieme, Martín Jacobo Thompson: ensayo para la biografía de un marino criollo (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1969); Hector Raúl Ratto, Capitán de Navío Hipolito Bouchard, new edition (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1961); Francisco Lajous, et al., Hipolito Bouchard: Marino al servicio de la independencia argentina y americana (Buenos Aires: 1967); Juan Hilarion Lenzi, Carlos María Moyano: Marino, Explorador y Gobernante (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1962); and Enrique Zaracondegui, Coronel de Marina José Murature: el segundo almirante argentino: la marina en la "Troya Porte a" sitio de Buenos Aires - 1853 (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1961).

many of them were written with the specific purpose of marking an important anniversary.[33]

Along with the men are the ships. The names of naval ships commemorate important events and personalities of both national and institutional importance. Names live on in navies precisely because successive generations of vessels inherit them, thus making them, over a period of time, "traditional" names. But the ships themselves are an important aspect of naval institutional history. In the official histories of the Argentine Navy, the story of its vessels has been strangely neglected. In particular, few historical studies have been done about specific ships.[34] To an extent this lack is compensated by a intensive seven-volume "micro-study" of the individual histories of each and every naval vessel, from launch to aircraft carrier, to have flown the Argentine flag between 1810 and 1970.[35] The fact that Argentina had not fought any wars this century before the South Atlantic Conflict of 1982 probably explains why the ships themselves have not been the main focus of Argentina's official naval histories.

The Impact on the Present

In many ways the naval forces which cruised up the River Plate estuary, fought battles in the South Atlantic and South American coastal

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33 Eleazar Videla, Ricardo Levene and Benjamín Villegas Basavilbaso, Homenaje a la Memoria del almirante Guillermo Brown en el Centenario de su Muerte, 1857-1957 (Buenos Aires: Comisión Nacional de Homenaje al Almirante Guillermo Brown/Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1957) and Laurio H. Destéfani and V. Mario Quartaruolo, Comodoro Clodomiro Urtubey (Buenos Aires: Comisión de Homenaje al Comodoro Clodomiro Urtubey, 1967) are good examples of this biographical genre. Other examples of commemorative naval biographies are two books by Héctor Raúl Ratto: Espora: 1835-1935: Impresión dispuesta por el Centro Naval al cumplirse el centenario del fallecimiento (Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Gráfico Argentino, 1935) and Rosales: 1836-1936: Impresión dispuesta por el Centro Naval al cumplirse el centenario del fallecimiento (Buenos Aires: Taller Gráfico de Luis Bernard, 1936).

34 An exception is V. Mario Quartaruolo, Fragata "La Argentina": su vuelta al mundo (1817-1819) (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1967).

35 Pablo E. Arguindeguy, Apuntes sobre los buques de la Armada Argentina (1810-1970), 7 vols. (Buenos Aires: DEHN, 1972).

waters, and even occasionally circumnavigated the globe during the period covered by this chapter, are far removed from the Argentine Navy of the present day. The historical distance is compounded by the vast difference in their respective levels of institutionalisation. Nonetheless, the various naval forces created in the Buenos Aires region in the nineteenth century have had an enormous impact upon the institutional consciousness of the Argentine Navy. These ancestral naval forces are seen as precursors of the present institution; the committed yet competent corps of naval historians in the Departamento de Estudios Históricos Navales have done much to foster this view. However, from the perspective of our study of the political *rôle* of the Argentine Navy, what is even more important is that the naval institution draws justification for its political activism in the last four decades from the part played by naval forces in this patriotic and nation-building period.[36] In other words, this period is seen within the Navy as a *historical validation of the legitimacy of its political aspirations and activism.*[37] In the following chapters, we will see how Argentina institutionalised her naval forces, and how the naval institution intervened in domestic political conflicts.

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36 That this is indeed the case can be seen in the assertion by Admiral Rojas, easily the most prominent naval politician in Argentina, that "[t]he first intervention of the Navy in the political affairs of our nation ... was during the Independence War." Interview with Almirante (R) Issac Francisco Rojas, 25 August 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

37 It must be noted, however, that this partisan use of history is by no means limited to the Argentine Navy alone. The Argentine Army has been extremely successful in appropriating the heritage of the Independence War. As Rouquié points out, "in Argentina, the native land of the liberator, General San Martín... many people believe that one hundred generals created the nation." Alain Rouquié, The Military and the State in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.42.

CHAPTER TWO

SETTING SAIL, 1872-1930: INSTITUTIONAL CONSOLIDATION

By the time the War of the Triple Alliance ended in 1870, the urgent necessity of institutionalising the land and naval forces of the Argentine Republic was apparent. As far as the Argentine naval forces were concerned, the major lesson of this war, Admiral Destéfani tells us, "fue la necesidad de que el país siempre debía contar con una fuerza naval permanente y poderosa para la defensa de la soberanía en sus aguas y litoral."[1] Up until the 1880s, the officers of the fleet had usually been patriotic, yet transitory, adventurers, who had volunteered at the time of a crisis, while the sailors who made up the crews of the ships were usually press-ganged for a campaign. Admiral Isaac Rojas describes this state of affairs in the following colourful manner:

> [At] that time we had no naval school, no organisation, we had no national government - stability was very very weak ... When a naval campaign [was over], all [the] sailors [went] to shore - *gauchos!*[2]

Huntington draws the proper distinction between professional officers who have graduated from military academies and the earlier generation of military leaders:

> Armies and navies led by officers existed before 1800. If these officers were not professionals, what were they? Generally they were either mercenaries or aristocrats. Neither viewed officership as a profession. For the mercenary it was a business; for the amateur aristocrat it was a hobby. In the place of the professional goal of expert service, the former pursued profit, the latter honor and adventure.[3]

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1 Laurio H. Destéfani, Manual de Historia Naval Argentina (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráf. de la D.I.A.B., 1980), p.124.

2 Interview with Almirante (R.E.) Isaac Francisco Rojas, 25 August 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

3 Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p.20.

President Bartolomé Mitre anticipated the need for a special military system of education when he sent a number of Army officers to France to study at the academy of Saint-Cyr.[4] However, it was Mitre's successor who made a more permanent impact on the organisation of the Armed Forces.

The Squadron of Sarmiento

The land and naval forces were institutionalised during the Presidency of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1868-1874) with the creation of permanent institutions for the education of the officer corps. The establishment of the Colegio Militar in 1869 and the Escuela Naval Militar three years later laid the foundation of the modern Argentine Army and the Argentine Navy. In the context of the Navy, Sarmiento is known for three achievements. He first paid attention to the modernization of the fleet. On 27 May 1872 the Congress sanctioned a request for funds to acquire a fleet of *"hierro y vapor"*. The "Escuadra de Sarmiento" consisted of the river monitors *Plata* and *Andes*, the gunships *Paraná* and *Uruguay*, and the gunboats *Pilcomayo*, *Bermejo*, *Constitución* and *República*. With the incorporation of these vessels Argentina acquired the most powerful fleet in South America.

Sarmiento's second accomplishment in the naval context, and certainly his most enduring, was the establishment of the Escuela Naval Militar in 1872. Destéfani remarks

> La fundación de la Escuela Naval Militar fué una de las obras fundamentales de Sarmiento por la Armada. Ella puso a la Institución en su camino de perfeccionamiento técnico y profesional y la colocó en un pie de igualdad, en cuanto a consideración, con el ejército más poderoso.[5]

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4 Raymond Estep, The Argentine Armed Forces and Government (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Documentary Research Division, Aerospace Studies Institute, Air University, July 1970), p.69.

5 Destéfani, op.cit., p.126.

As Humberto Burzio put it:

> Las nuevas unidades de guerra adquiridas por la ley de adquisiciones navales de 1872, imponían al personal encargado de su dirección, manejo y cuidado, conocimientos técnicos de los cuales carecía prácticamente el personal de la marina de entonces, formado y reclutado entre los azares de nuestras guerras exteriores y civiles. El valor personal y el espíritu de sacrificio debían ser complementados con los conocimientos científicos que las nuevas armas exigían; así lo comprendió el gran Educador...[6]

The establishment of a naval arsenal was Sarmiento's third big achievement. On 16 December 1873 Congress decreed the creation of the Arsenal de Marina at Zárate, but the construction was not completed until after the retirement of the *"Reformador de la Armada"*.

When the social club of naval officers, the Centro Naval, was established in 1882, Sarmiento was invited to be the first honorary president of the institution. At his death, the message of condolence from the Centro Naval spoke for all naval personnel: "El general Sarmiento pertenece al Ejército por la jerarquía y a la Marina por el cariño que le profesaba."[7] More than any other Argentine President, Sarmiento is a part of the institutional memory of the Argentine Navy. One of the most renowned vessels in the history of the Argentine fleet was the training ship *Presidente Sarmiento* that is now a permanent *buque museo*.

Exploration and the Civilising Mission

From the 1870s until the turn of the century, the Argentine Army and Navy contributed to the continental and maritime "opening up" of the

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6 Humberto F. Burzio, 'Sarmiento y la Marina de Guerra', in José Craviotto and Humberto F. Burzio, (ed.), Sarmiento y la Marina de Guerra: Trabajos y Conferencias (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estudios Históricos Navales, 1963), p.267.

7 Quoted in Héctor R. Ratto, 'Las creaciones Navales de Sarmiento', in Craviotto and Burzio, (eds.), op.cit., p.74.

country. Much of this opening up involved Antarctic and Patagonian exploration, and most of it was in response to a fear of Chilean expansion in "las tierras australes". The Conquista del Desierto was a systematic military campaign initiated by General Julio Argentino Roca in 1879 to defeat the various indigenous tribes of Patagonia. González Lonzieme describes the Conquista del Desierto thus:

> En nuestra historia se llama Conquista del Desierto a la serie de campañas militares emprendidas para incorporar definitivamente para la civilización los territorios que hasta entonces estaban ocupados por tribus de indios salvages e irreductibles, que solian asolar con sus malones las Pampas. Pero además de estos hechos de armas, está bien presente la labor de quienes, por medio de expediciones exploradores o colonizadores, con ribuyen a mantener nuestra soberanía en los territorios del Sur. Estas acciones carecen del brillo de las gestas militares, pero no podemos menos que reconocer que la callada tarea de aquellos pioneros fue decisiva para la incorporación de las tierras patagónicas a nuestro territorio...[8]

In the words of Ricardo Capdevila, the plan of General Julio Argentino Roca "comprendía la actividad de cinco divisiones terrestres que avanzarían hacia la zone de operaciones, y una expedición naval cuyo objetivo era establecer la viabilidad de la navegación en los ríos Negro y Limay dejando establecida una línea de transporte fluvial hacia el "triángulo neuquino" desde Carmen de Patagones, para apoyo logístico de la zona de operaciones."[9] According to González Lonzieme, "[e]l plan de operaciones contemplaba el avance de tres columnas de tropas del Ejército que debían convergir sobre el lago Nahuel-Huapi, mientras que una comisión exploradora, a cargo de la Armada, debia remontar el curso de los ríos Negro y Limay para encontrarse en el lago, junto con sus camaradas de

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8 Enrique González Lonzieme, La Armada en la Conquista del Desierto, second edition (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1977), p.1.

9 Ricardo Capdevila, 'La Corbeta "Uruguay": su participación en la Conquista del Desierto y las tierras australes argentinas', in Academia Nacional de la Historia, Congreso Nacional de Historia sobre la Conquista del Desierto: celebrado en la Ciudad de Gral. Roca del 6 al 10 de Noviembre de 1979, volume 1. (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1980), pp.260-261.

tierra."[10] From the above it is evident that these two scholars are not agreed on the number of Army columns involved in the operation. The Navy faced a dual task: exploring the Río Negro and the Río Limay, and simultaneously keeping the Army's lines of logistic supply open. The naval force consisted of the river monitor *Los Andes*, the cannonboat *Uruguay*, the gunboats *Constitución* and *República*, and the cutter *Los Estados*, under the command of Naval Colonel *(Coronel de Marina)* Martín Guerrico. Apart from the cutter, all the other ships were riverine vessels totally unsuited to the southern seas, and yet they successfully carried out their mission.[11] The various tasks, assigned and voluntary, carried out by the *Uruguay* gives a good indication of the Navy's self-perceived *rôle* during this period. Apart from its primary task of exploring the Patagonian river system and supporting the Army, the *Uruguay* also performed various functions in conformity with the naval pioneering tradition. To give an example, the *Uruguay* travelled from Patagones to the San José area in search of sources of fresh water for the colony of Welsh settlers in Chubut.[12] Naval ships, as representatives of the state, were also involved in the establishment of structures of government in the small frontier settlements. In 1882, for instance, the *Uruguay* established the subprefectures of Roca and Deseado.[13] These were the years in which a number of naval officers were involved in the exploration of frontier territory and uncharted waterways. Some of the less well-known names in this context are Carlos María Moyano, the explorer of Patagonia who ended his career as the first governor of Santa Cruz Province, Agustín del Castillo, the discoverer of coal deposits in the Río Turbio area, and Valentín Feilberg, the explorer of the rivers Pilcomayo and Santa Cruz and the first Argentine national to reach Lago Argentino.[14]

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10 González Lonzieme, op.cit., p.13.

11 ibid., p.11.

12 Capedevila, op.cit., p.262.

13 Capedevila, op.cit., p.264.

14 Héctor José Tanzi, 'Valentín Feilberg, marino y explorador del territorio argentino', in Academia Nacional de la Historia, Congreso Nacional de Historia sobre la Conquista del Desierto:

In terms of Antarctic exploration, the first voyage made by an Argentine naval vessel to the region is perhaps the most famous.[15] In 1901 the Swedish explorer Otto Nordenskjöld left Buenos Aires on the sail-cum-steam ship *Antarctic*, which was commanded by the experienced Captain Larsen. On board was a young Argentine naval officer, Ensign José María Sobral. At Snow Hill, off the Weddell Sea, the *Antarctic* disembarked Nordenskjöld, Sobral and six other crew members for the winter and left for Ushuaia with the intention of returning in the summer. The following summer the *Antarctic* disembarked Anderson and two other expedition members on Graham Land and sailed toward Snow Hill to pick up Nordenskjöld and his colleagues. However, conditions in the Weddell Sea were far worse than the year before and the *Antarctic* sank amidst the ice-floes. Thus, there were three isolated groups of men on Antarctica in 1902. When the expedition did not return by the beginning of the autumn of 1903, a number of countries prepared rescue missions: Argentina dispatched Commander Julián Irizar with the *Uruguay* in November 1903. By the time the Uruguay reached Snow Hill, the Nordenskjöld and Anderson groups had chanced upon each other and were together again. Meanwhile, Larsen and his crew, who had been given up for dead, walked all the way to Snow Hill and reached the *Uruguay* just before she set sail for home. Miraculously, only one expedition member died in the entire period and the extremely successful rescue mission greatly enhanced the professional image of the Argentine Navy, both within the country and abroad.

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celebrado en la Ciudad de Gral. Roca del 6 al 10 de Noviembre de 1979, volume 1. (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1980), p.449.

15 This account is taken from Enrique González Lonzieme, 'Actividades marítimas en la Antártida', in Temas de historia marítima argentina (Buenos Aires: Fundación Argentina de Estudios Marítimos, 1970), pp. 239-242. For a more detailed account of the Nordenskjöld expedition see Laurio Destéfani, El alfarez Sobral y la soberania argentina en la Antartida, Second Edition (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1979), Chapter VIII, pp.165-199.

The Argentine Navy entered the age of aviation at about the same time as the major northern hemispheric navies, during the First World War. On 19 April 1915, the Navy Minister Admiral Juan Pablo Sáenz Valiente passed a resolution decreeing that a flying school, the Escuela de Aviación de la Armada, be temporarily created at the Arsenal del Río de la Plata.[16] On 17 October 1919 the División Aviación Naval was created by Orden General 181/1919, under the command of Captain José Gregores.[17] The permanent establishment of the Escuela de Aviación Naval was ordered by Orden General 166/1921, and on 20 April 1922 this training institution was inaugurated at Bahía Blanca.[18] The name of Lieutenant Marcos Zar stands out from among the pioneers who gave wings to the Argentine Navy. Through the 1920s and 1930s Zar set many distance, speed and height records in South America. He had a career of great distinction, and was a Vice Admiral when he died in 1955.

The Rise of Radicalism

In the political arena, the Armed Forces assisted the "Generation of 1880" in maintaining their "enlightened", yet limited, democracy by keeping anarchist and syndicalist movements under control. The Navy saw a coincidence of interest between the institution and Argentina's agro-producing and exporting elite. However, the Navy was not actively involved in politics. An emphasis on professionalism ensured that the institution did not take on an active political *rôle*.

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16 Julio Victor Lironi, Génesis de la aviación argentina, 1910-1915: su historia y su hombres (Buenos Aires: Aero Club Argentina, 1974), p.395.

17 Julio Victor Lironi, Misiones Aeronauticas Extranjeras, 1919-1924: Beneficios y Consequencias de su Proceso, en la Evolución de la Aviación Militar y Civil en nuestro País (Buenos Aires: Instituto Argentino de Historia Aeronáutica, 1980), p.43.

18 ibid., p.174.

A new political movement of professional groups against the old "oligarchic" interests was gathering pace in Argentina by the mid-1880s. The Unión Cívica Radical was agitating for clean elections and universal suffrage. On 18 July 1890 the Radicals encouraged General Manuel Campos to lead an uprising against the government of President Juárez Celman. Arrested by the government, Campos was freed by his partymen on 26 July. According to Arguindeguy, some naval officers did support the Radical rebellion: "Bombardearon navalmente Retiro, en cuyo cuartel el Presidente de la República había instal ado su comando en jefe."[19] On 6 August 1890 Juárez Celman resigned and was replaced by his Vice-President, Carlos Pellegrini, who with great skill and tact diffused the situation. However, by 1893 the another coup attempt by the Radicals was under way, this time led by the Radical leader Hipólito Yrigoyen. This uprising aimed at the overthrow of Julio A. Costa, the Governor of Buenos Aires Province, whom the Radicals accused of electoral fraud. Lieutenant Colonel Martín Yrigoyen, Hipólito's brother, was an important part of the uprising of 6 August 1893, "con fuerzas cívico-militares que incluyeron unidades navales a flota."[20] This uprising was firmly put down by General Julio Argentino Roca, and all the conspiring Radical leaders were arrested. However, by the end of 1894 an amnesty law had been passed by Congress which provoked the resignation of President Saenz Peña and the assumption of the Presidency by José Evaristo Uriburu.

In General Julio Roca's second presidencial tenure, a new Ley de Ministerios was promulgated on 12 October 1898. This law increased the number of cabinet posts available to a president from six to eight, which meant that the Ministerio de Guerra y Marina was divided into two separate

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19 Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.33.

20 ibid., p.35.

ministries. With its own ministry, the institutional independence of the Navy from the Army was at last complete.

In 1901, the organic military statute known as the Riccheri Law, after the then Minister of War, introduced universal military service. As amended in 1905, it made serving for a year in the Army or two years in the Navy compulsory for all twenty-year-olds. Thus, the enlisted ranks of the military institutions "consisted of a permanent cadre fleshed out by annually renewed contingents of citizen-soldiers."[21] On 4 February 1905, the third Radical uprising was led by Hipólito Yrigoyen, but there appears to be no evidence of a naval officer joining hands with the Radical cause on this occasion.

On 10 February 1912, the "Saenz Peña Law" - Ley Nacional de Elecciones, law no. 8871 - was enacted. This law, for the first time, provided for universal suffrage over the age of 18 years,[22] an individual, secret and obligatory ballot, an incomplete list system, and the guarantee of free elections. With this law the door was at last opened for the Radicals to compete in electoral politics, which they rapidly came to dominate.

The Radical leader Hipólito Yrigoyen was elected to the Presidency in Argentina's first popular election on 12 October 1916. Rouquié points out that although "la política militar de Yrigoyen no hace más que acentuar el malestar dentro de las Fuerzas Armadas", "la desavenencia entre Yrigoyen y los militares sobrevendrá tardíamente." [23] Given the "chronic tendency of

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21 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1928-1945 Yrigoyen to Perón Vol.1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p.2.

22 This applied only to men.

23 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina I. hasta 1943 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1981), p.151.

Argentine military officers to form political clubs and cliques among themselves",[24] a number of military officers started getting involved in political intrigues against the "demagogic" Radical government. During the so-called Red scare in 1918 after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, a group of senior armed forces officers, epitomising the reaction within the Argentine middle and upper classes, met each day at the Naval Club and organised an anti-worker "Patriot Movement".[25] Among some groups within the armed forces, Radicalism began to be equated in a loose way with Bolshevism. Despite this evidence of military disaffection, "Yrigoyen no vacila en depositar su confianza en oficiales de las Fuerzas Armadas para misiones civiles a veces delicadas."[26] Thus, the Navy, being the more technical military institution, was entrusted with the running of the oil wells around Comodoro Rivadavia when they were plagued by strikes, and asked to inspect land to be colonised by the Ministry of Agriculture,[27] not the most nautical of activities!

The naval institution as a whole was still removed from politics. Admiral Perren recalls his days as a cadet at the Escuela Naval Militar:

> Naturalmente, en la Escuela Naval los errores y desaciertos del gobierno no eran objeto de preoc upación ni aún de interés para los doscientos cincuenta cadetes entre 16 y 20 añod de edad, pues en esa época la política nos parecía totalmente ajena a las Fuerzas Armadas.[28]

However, politics did not stay entirely away from the naval academy. Admiral Questa pointed out that a few positions in the Escuela Naval were at the disposal of the Radical President, and he was free to nominate whomsoever he chose to these slots. These presidentially-nominated cadets

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24 George I. Blanksten, Perón's Argentina (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.307.

25 David Rock, Politics in Argentina 1890-1930 : The Rise and Fall of Radicalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.173.

26 Rouquié, I. hasta 1943, op.cit., p.151.

27 ibid.

28 Jorge Enrique Perren, 'Memoirs', typewritten manuscript, p.5.

had the letters "OP" after their names on the list of cadets and could therefore be easily identified; the initials stood for "Orden del Presidente". It was common knowledge that only the sons of Radical politicians were ever nominated to these places. Questa was the son of a senior Radical politician himself, but had joined the academy the "hard way": by passing the qualifying tests. Questa remembers that he was initially envious of the cadets with the special initials behind their names, but came to his senses when he saw all four of the "OP"s being dismissed from the academy at one go for failing their examinations! Apparently, this was the regular practice with every *promoción;* a pretext was found to weed out cadets who had been admitted to the naval academy by other than the standard institutional route.[29]

The Navy did not win all its battles with the Radical administration in this manner, however. Admiral Perren narrates an incident of political interference in the academy in 1928. Two cadets in their final year were dismissed from the academy by the Director, Captain Pedro Casal, on the recommendation of the Consejo de Disciplina. After his return to the Presidency in 1928, Yrigoyen ordered the reincorporation of the dismissed cadets into the academy. When the Director refused, he was removed from his post and the decision was overturned. Perren remarks: "En la Escuela el episodio conmovió a los cadetes; se empezó a hablar de política, a criticar al gobierno e incluso al nuevo Director a quien injustamente mirábamos con suspicacia y prevención."[30]

The cadets in question were dismissed only after the Radical President was overthrown in the *coup* of 1930. This *coup* will be studied in

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29 Unrecorded conversation with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Juan H.R. Questa, 6 August 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

30 Perren, op.cit., pp.5-6.

the following chapter. It should be evident, however, that few tears were shed for the deposed President within the Navy. The naval institution still managed to keep politics at arms length, but more and more naval officers were being politicised through contact with civilian politics.

CHAPTER THREE

Fixing Course, 1930-1943: Politicisation Begins

When the Argentine Army toppled the second administration of Radical President Hipólito Yrigoyen on 6 September 1930, "[a]n unbroken succession of constitutional presidencies that stretched back almost seventy years was interrupted; the tradition of military abstention from political ventures that had lasted for 25 years was cast aside."[1] Admiral Arguindeguy argues, quite rightly, that that the *coup* of 1930 was the "irrupción de los militares en la política argentina "con partido propio", ideología y planes de gobierno"[2] - the first time that the "Ejército marchaba a la revolución por la suyas, sin tutores, líderes o programas de políticos civiles."[3] The fact that this distinguished naval historian does not even mention the Navy in this context is indicative of the minor naval *rôle* in this *coup*. It is important to emphasise that in 1930 the Navy was still an apolitical and unpoliticised institution. Rouquié regards the position of the Navy *vis-à-vis* the *coup* of 1930 as ambiguous,[4] and to prove his contention he mentions an incident when a naval captain named Andrés Laprade detained Admiral Abel Renard, one of the few naval conspirators, on the orders of the constitutional government, but made no attempt to either join the uprising or suppress it.[5] The only naval activity of note in support of the *coup* was the action of the cadets of the Escuela Naval Militar, along with their counterparts in the Colegio Militar, to secure the Casa Rosada; three naval cadets were injured in this operation.[6] Indeed, even this limited naval involvement in the *coup* had more to do with inter-academy rivalry than

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1 Robert Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1928-1945 Yrigoyen to Perón (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p.1.

2 Pablo Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, p.48.

3 ibid., p.50.

4 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina: I. hasta 1943 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1981), p.200.

5 ibid., p.200, n.54.

6 Jorge Enrique Perren, 'Memoirs', typewritten manuscript, pp.8-10.

political convictions, as Admiral Perren, then a cadet at Río Santiago, recalls:

> [E]l Colegio Militar formaba la vanguardia del movimiento. Y nosotros en Río Santiago sin hacer nada! La vieja rivalidad entre el Colegio y la Escuela saltó al primer plano y tumultuosamente surgió un deseo vehemente y unánime: marchar a Buenos Aires para demostrar que podíamos combatir tan bien o mejor que el Colegio Militar.[7]

It is interesting and important to record the sense of unhappiness that a number of naval officers have expressed about the *coup* of 1930. What is particularly fascinating is the sense of "paradise lost"; Admiral Rivero de Olazábal gives us the classic liberal vision of Argentine history from the fall of Rosas to the rise of Uriburu:

> Durante los primeros 50 años de vida independiente nuestro país se vió envuelto en convulsiones internas que le costaron miles de muertos y una economía empobrecida. Pero a partir de 1862 se sucedieron 70 años de gobiernos constitucionales sin intermitencia alguna, y esta continuidad constitucional fue suficiente para dar seguridad a los millones de inmigrantes que llegaron, y a los inmensos capitales que arribaron gracias a la seguridad jurídica existente, que, en conjunto, llevaron al país a colocarse entre las mas prósperas naciones del mundo.[8]

Admiral Rivero de Olazábal, who was stationed in Europe in 1930, recalls a conversation he had with an Italian naval officer aboard an Italian cruiser. When the Italian officer remarked on the unsettled political situation in Argentina and suggested that a *coup* might result, the Argentine officer replied "con cierto orgullo": "No señor; la Argentina es un país muy civilizado."[9] Rivero de Olazábal was in London on the day of the *coup*; he describes the reaction of the Argentine naval team to the London *Times* headline:

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7 ibid., p.6.

8 Almirante (RE) Carlos Rivero de Olazábal, written statement, 9 October 1990.

9 ibid.

> Nuestra consternación fue tremenda porque nunca hubiéramos supuesto que nuestro país, del que estábamos tan orgullosos, políticamente se mostrara a la misma altura que las convulsionadas repúblicas centroamericanas.[10]

A number of other naval officers, many of them highly-respected within the institution, would concur with the views expressed above. Admiral Jorge Perren, no admirer of the Radical Party, has this to say:

> No mejoró en nada mi opinión del gobierno de Irigoyen (sic) ni aumentó mis escasas simpatías por el partido radical; simplemente debía reconocer que no habían estado dadas las condiciones que justificaran sin lugar a dudas el derrocamiento por la fuerza de un presidente constitucional, rompiendo así una ya larga tradición estabilidad de los gobiernos que tanto prestigiara hasta entonces al país.[11]

Likewise, Admiral Arguindeguy celebrates Argentina's democratic tradition prior to the *coup* of 1930:

> Existía pués hacia 1930 una tradición de setenta años continuos de gobiernos que podemos llamar sin mayor error "civiles", y ello en una nación que llevaba sólo sesenta y siete años de constituida como tal.[12]
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> [L]os conspiradores militares del treinta, tal vez sin saberlo, inauguraron una época en la historia argentina, en la cual y en repetidas oportunidades la continuidad constitucional fué quebrada por golpes militares, en los que las fuerzas armadas se erigieran en los árbitros del cumplimiento de la Constitución Nacional en lugar de los representantes del pueblo o el Poder Judicial."[13]

It is important to note that even those naval officers who participated in the conspiracy against the Yrigoyen government doubted the legal credentials of the leading *antiyrigoyenistas* within the Army. They therefore signed an agreement that restricted their political activities to "lucharán con las mismas armas contra todo intento de dictadura civil o

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10 ibid.

11 Perren, op.cit., p.13.

12 Arguindeguy, op.cit., p.45.

13 ibid., p.48.

militar... [y] defenderán el fiel y estricto cumplimiento de la Constitución Nacional".[14] In all these political developments, it is necessary for us to remember, the naval institution remained peripheral and uninvolved. The few naval officers who did participate in the Army conspiracy against Yrigoyen did so either in their individual capacity, or as members of a secret club or lodge, not as officers of the Argentine Navy.

Between 1930 and 1932, there was a struggle within the Army between the nationalist officers led by the de-facto President General Uriburu and liberal officers led by General Justo. For reasons of ideological affinity, naval officers involved in the anti-Yrigoyen conspiracy of 1930 supported General Justo and were insistent on a return to Constitutional rule. In 1932, General Justo was elected to the Presidency in fraudulent elections that excluded the Radicals. The years 1932-1943 comprise the so-called "Decade of Infamy", when the old oligarchy attempted to regain and retain power as if the electoral victory of the Radicals in 1916 and the *coup* of 1930 had never taken place. It was during these years that the politicisation of the naval institution, *qua* Navy, began. According to Goldwert, "[i]n 1934 an integral nationalist officer clique, headed by Admiral Abel Renard, was organized in the navy..."[15] Admiral Abel Renard was one of the most influential admirals in the Navy during these years, but his ideological affiliation did not rub off on many naval officers. Indeed, the naval institution retained its liberal orientation during this period. This might have something to do with the fact that other influential admirals, amongst whom Admiral Segundo Storni requires special mention, were firmly liberal.

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14 Rouquié, op.cit., p.239.

15 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p.73.

Admiral Perren talks about life returning to normal at Río Santiago, but something had changed:

> La vida en la Escuela Naval retomó su curso y rápidamente la preocupación por los estudios y el imperio de la disciplina borraron los efectos de nuestra fugaz aventura político-militar. Pero algo había cambiado y en nuestras conversaciones aparecían ahora con frecuencia temas relacionados con la situación política del país.[16]

Likewise, it was not "business as usual" in the institution as a whole:

> La intervención de la Armada en la revolución de 1930, por limitada que fuera, no podía dejar de provocar, como es inevitable en circunstancias similares, cierto grado de politización en sus filas, con los consiguientes efectos perjudiciales sobre la disciplina, la unidad de los cuadros y el régimen normal de promociones, retiros y asignación de destinos, especialmente entre los oficiales de mayor jerarquía, culminando con la renovación total del almirantazgo...[17]

The retirement of the Admiralty and the appointment of new admirals was ordered by the Navy Minister Admiral Eleazar Videla in 1933 in response to an outbreak of serious indiscipline by the *personales subalternos* in a number of vessels. As we now know, the indiscipline was instigated by Communist cells as part of a concerted Comintern plan to infiltrate the naval formations of the "plutocracies". In the early 1930s, however, this was not known, and was therefore seen in Argentina as a sign of opposition to the fraudulent electoral system. While the discontent amongst the *marineros* and *conscriptos* did not amount to mutiny and was far less serious than similar manifestations in a number of navies during the same period, the Argentine naval authorities naturally took this misbehaviour very seriously indeed. The response was firm, as Perren points out:

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16 Perren, op.cit., p.10.

17 ibid., p.15.

> La reacción en la Armada ante los sucesos de esos años y sus consecuencias para la misma fue la clásica vuelta a la actividad profesional y la más estricta aplicación de uno de los más sabios artículos del viejo Reglamento de Servicio Abordo:"En las cámaras está prohibido hablar de política y de religión".[18]

Despite the increasing politicisation, these were good years from the point of view of institutional development. The Argentine fleet was enlarged considerably with new ship purchases, submarines were acquired for the first time, the Infantería de Marina came into being in the guise of the Artillería de Costas, the Aviación Naval was modernised considerably, the Escuela de Guerra Naval was established for higher war studies, and the construction of warships was initialed in shipyards within Argentina. When the Second World War broke out in 1939 the Argentine Navy was in peak operational condition. When a secret lodge of colonels decided to overthrow the government in 1943, largely due to disagreement over Argentine neutrality, the Navy was well placed to oppose the new political order. The Navy had discovered politics.

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18 ibid., p.16.

CHAPTER FOUR

Marking Time, 1943-1955: Opposing Peron

From the time he assumed power in June 1943 as one of the GOU colonels, and throughout his years in power, Juan Domingo Perón remained more consistently unpopular within the Navy than within any other Argentine institution. Indeed, anti-Peronism came to be recognised as a distinguishing feature of the Navy, both within the institution and without. In this chapter an attempt will be made to trace the history of anti-Peronism within the Navy and to ascribe reasons for this antagonistic political relationship.

The Navy and the Colonels

The Navy was totally unsympathetic to the GOU[1] from the very beginning. Naval loyalties were clearly with the deposed President, Dr. Ramón Castillo, who took refuge aboard the naval river monitor *Drummond* after the *coup*.[2] As soon he boarded the naval vessel, his flag was flown on the masthead, an indication of naval opposition to the *coup*. Following the *coup*, the military government could find no high-ranking naval officer willing to accept the post of navy minister until March 1944,[3] a gap of nine months, even though it went to considerable lengths to woo the naval establishment by offering senior government offices to politically

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1 The Grupo Obra de Unificación or Grupo de Oficiales Unidos, a secret military lodge consisting of a group of colonels among whom Colonel Juan Domingo Perón was a prominent member. The GOU overthrew the neutralist government of Ramón Castillo in 1943 because it was concerned that the government was beginning to take a pro-Allied stance in the Second World War. This put the military government in conflict with the Navy, which remained solidly pro-Allied throughout the War. One of the finest books on the GOU is Robert Potash, (com.), Perón y el G.O.U.: Los Documentos de una Logía Secreta (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1984).

2 La Nación, 5 June 1943. For an interesting explanation of Dr. Castillo's flight to the ARA Drummond, see Chapter Sixteen.

3 Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 1961), p.71.

significant naval officers. Vice Admiral Sabá H. Sueyro was appointed vice-president on 6 June 1943,[4] but by the time Sueyro died in office a month later the GOU had abandoned the idea of offering the vice-presidency to the naval establishment in exchange for its support.[5] Vice Admiral Segundo Storni was designated as the foreign minister in 1943 in an attempt to win the confidence of the Allies, Storni having a pro-British reputation. However, he failed to convince the United States to supply Lend-Lease aid to Argentina (still neutral in the War), and he was forced to resign from the cabinet when his correspondence with US Secretary of State Cordell Hull became public knowledge and created a furore at home.[6] Likewise, Captain Ricardo Vago, named minister of public works in October 1943, departed only a couple of months later.[7] Admiral Bustamante, whose father was an admiral in 1943, assured me that senior naval officers such as his father did not support the *coup*, even though they held senior positions in the military government and the naval institution in the international context of the Second World War.[8] Admiral Benito Sueyro, younger brother of the deceased vice-president and the Secretary of State for the Department of the Navy, failed to convince the elder Admiral Bustamante to withdraw his resignation after the *coup*. Sueyro himself refused to take over as Minister of the Navy and finally resigned as Secretary of State on 29 February 1944.[9]

However, it would be overstated to claim that the GOU colonels had absolutely no support in the Navy. Goldwert points out that "[p]rior to the revolution of 1943, a group of ambitious integral nationalist junior

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4 La Nación, 6 June 1943.

5 La Nación, 27 July 1943.

6 R.A. Humphreys, Latin America and the Second World War, Volume Two 1942-1945 (London: The Athlone Press Ltd., 1982), pp.152-153.

7 George I. Blanksten, Perón's Argentina (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953).

8 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Gonzalo Bustamante, 7 August 1990, Centro Naval Anexo, Buenos Aires.

9 Presidential Decree No. 4993/43.

naval officers, headed by Captain Alberto Teisaire, was linked to the GOU conspiracy."[10] Teisaire was the only senior naval officer that the GOU was able to convert, and he took over as minister of the navy in February 1944.[11] He was the only naval man to rise to senior positions in both the *Peronista* party and Perón's government, presiding over the convention which rewrote the Constitution in 1949, heading the party, becoming a *Peronista* senator, and even serving as acting president of the Argentine Republic when Perón temporarily resigned to stand for reelection in 1951.[12] He ended his political career as Perón's vice-president.

It was clear right from the beginning, however, that Teisaire did not represent the naval institution in any measure, and remained largely peripheral within it. As early as February 1944, the Navy launched a conspiracy to overthrow the Farrell-Perón regime. In August and September 1945, high-ranking naval officers were demanding and petitioning against Perón's proposed candidacy in the presidential elections. And in October of that year the bulk of the Navy, led by Admiral Héctor Vernengo Lima, joined a disgruntled army group headed by General Eduardo Avalos that nearly succeeded in ousting Perón from power. The Navy's opposition to Perón was such that when Interior Minister Bartolomé Descalzo desired to appoint a naval officer as Federal Interventor for the Province of Buenos Aires, there was not a single officer in the entire Argentine Navy willing to fill that position.[13] In a situation of such extreme dissidence, it is hardly surprising that naval dissatisfaction became public knowledge. The US Chargé reported to Washington at the time of Perón's election campaign in 1946:

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10 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), pp.73-74.

11 La Nación, 1 March 1943.

12 ibid., p.315.

13 ibid., p.316.

> The Navy is frankly disregarding Government's orders. A prominent retired naval officer describes it picturesquely as being "in a state of belligerency with the Government"...[14]

Nor did things get any better after Perón's election to the Presidency in 1946, when the Peronists trounced their combined opposition in the first Argentine elections in a quarter of a century that were free and fair. Writing at the time of the first Peronist administration (1946-1952), Alexander remarked that "[a]lthough Admiral Teisaire has played a part in Peronista politics, and other Navy men have held posts of importance in the administration, the Navy has the reputation of being the service most unfriendly to President Perón",[15] adding that "[t]oday those young men who, though anti-Peronista, want to enter the armed forces, gravitate toward the Navy."[16]

The anti-Peronist character of the Navy set the institution apart from the dominant political force in Argentine society, however. Indeed, at mid-century it appeared to most people, both within the country and abroad, that Juan Domingo Perón and the political movement that bore his name were in firm control of the reins of power in Argentina. The social revolution he had initiated with the systematic mobilisation and incorporation of traditionally marginal social sectors - the *descamisados* - seemed likely to alter forever the political landscape in their favour. Furthermore, there had been, since the very beginning of the Peronist regime, a steady "Peronisation" of an ever-growing number of Argentina's traditional socio-political institutions. Finally, with a personalist political party and the apparatus of a police state at his command, Perón

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14 Secret telegram, 835.00/3-746, Buenos Aires, 7 March 1946. Quoted in Foreign Relations of the United States 1946, Volume XI.

15 Robert J. Alexander, The Perón Era (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1952), p.121.

16 ibid., p.121.

had successfully created a populist-authoritarian political system in Argentina.

The Peronist system was based on a complex alliance of the Army, the organised urban labour movement, and the newly-emerged entrepreneurial sector, a nationalist and populist coalition against the traditional agro-exporting oligarchy and its foreign associates. Since the beginning of his regime, Perón's basic political strategy had been to control the military and the popular sectors by using them to neutralise one another. The Army itself would have destroyed Perón as a political force in 1945 had he not succeeded in marshalling the *descamisado* masses on the 17th of October. In both his major sectors of support, Evita[17] was clearly seen as representing the popular against the military, and ensuring that the former was not relegated to the latter. Therefore, when there were moves to nominate Evita to the vice-presidency for the 1952 elections, it seemed that the uneasy balance that Perón had managed to maintain between the men in uniform and the men without shirts[18] since his election in 1946 had finally tilted decisively in the favour of the latter.

The Rebellion of 1951 and the Suárez Conspiracy

Apart from the above, the military (Army as well as Navy) was also opposed to the idea of elevating Evita to a position from which she could succeed Perón as President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, a distasteful prospect for them. As this possibility was unacceptable to all shades of the political spectrum within the officer

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17 María Eva Duarte de Perón, Perón's second wife and close political associate, who played a very important role in the Peronist movement and was regarded, by anti-Peronists, as "the high priestess of the descamisado cult." Arthur P. Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval: Peron's fall and the new regime (London: Atlantic Press, 1956).

18 Blanksten's colourful description of the military and popular sectors. Blanksten, op.cit., pp.314-315.

corps, military opposition to this plan took a number of forms. First, there were a number of *peronista* generals, such as General José Humberto Sosa Molina and General Franklin Lucero, who wished to prevent Evita's nomination by applying political pressure from *within* the Peronist system.[19] Second, there was a serious conspiracy led by General Eduardo Lonardi, a till-then apolitical and much respected officer, who was supported by many Army officers and much of the Navy and Air Force, as well as by the Córdoba-based Catholic-nationalist civilian opposition.[20] The most serious conspiracy, and also the most foolhardy, was led by General Benjamín Menéndez, a cavalry officer with a long record of unsuccessful conspiracies behind him.[21]

As things turned out, a military insurrection was not needed to prevent the nomination of Evita as a candidate for the vice-presidency. Though the joint ticket of Perón and Evita was to have been announced at a carefully orchestrated CGT[22] rally on 22 August 1951, Evita finally announced, nine days later, that she would not be accepting the nomination. Though a number of scholars have opined that the Army hierarchy was able to force Perón to stop Evita's candidature,[23] Potash, who has studied these events more thoroughly than any other scholar, asserts that he was "unable to uncover any evidence that Army officers, either alone or in groups, ever

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19 Eduardo Crawley, A House Divided: Argentina 1880-1980 (London: C. Hurst, 1984), p.142.

20 Goldwert, op.cit., p.112.

21 Crawley, op.cit., p.142.

22 The Confederación General de Trabajo, the massive union, with a claimed strength of six million, that was Perón's major support base. Perón regarded it as the "backbone" (la columna vertebral) of his movement.

23 For instance, Rock states that "Eva Perón's followers in the CGT wanted to nominate her as a candidate for vice-president, but the army immediately interposed with a veto." David Rock, Argentina 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986), p.305. Crawley, more dramatically, states:

> When the day [22 August 1951] came ... [t]he generals had done their head-counting at the 9 de Julio spectacular, and their arithmetic, far from showing the promised two million [descamisados], revealed a figure a lot closer to a quarter of a million. The difference was large enough to give them confidence, and they issued their ultimatum.

Crawley, op.cit., p.143.

approached the President with such a demand."[24] Potash speculates that Perón must have realised the level of military opposition to Evita's nomination through his network of intelligence agents, and decided that pushing for his wife's candidature was a political risk not worth taking.[25]

With the elimination of Evita's candidature, General Lonardi lost his enthusiasm for leading the proposed *coup*, whereupon at least some of his supporters defected to the Menéndez conspiracy. Seeing the retreat of the Peronist regime on the issue of Evita's candidature as a sign of its weakness, Menéndez decided that it would take just a small shove to bring the entire edifice crumbling down. With some air support from the bases of Palomar, Morón, and Punta Indio naval airbase, the rebels planned to march on Buenos Aires from the Campo de Mayo. The naval participation in this rebellion was limited to the Punta Indio naval airbase, from which Captain Vicente Baroja "led a squadron of fourteen fighter planes in a show of strength."[26] It was a poorly-planned attempt, supported by only two tanks, three armoured cars, a few junior officers, and two hundred men. Peronist artillery stopped the rebel column at El Palomar itself, and by late afternoon the *coup* had fizzled out. In response to this revolt, Perón removed the coast guard from naval and the national gendarmerie from army supervision and put them under the Ministry of the Interior.[27] As Scheina notes, in the retirements that followed, the minister of the Navy, the undersecretary of the Navy, the chief of naval operations and the director of naval intelligence, along with numerous ranking naval officers, were replaced.[28] Captain Aníbal Olivieri was appointed as the new Navy

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24 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1945-1962 Perón to Frondizi (Volume 2) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p.130.

25 ibid., p.130.

26 Robert L. Scheina, Latin America: A Naval History 1810-1987 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), p.209.

27 Goldwert, op.cit., p.113.

28 Scheina, op.cit., p.209.

Minister,[29] and three months later he was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral by a special resolution of the Senate that met with presidential approval.[30]

Perón's problems with military elements opposed to his rule did not end with his reelection in 1952, however. His opponents, getting desperate, planned an elaborate conspiracy to assassinate Perón and Evita, under the leadership of Colonel José Francisco Suárez.[31] The security forces prevented the Suárez plot from maturing, but the lengths to which the conspirators were willing to go in order to eliminate Perón did indicate the depth of opposition to Perón among certain quarters within the Army. Some senior naval officers were also involved in the Suárez conspiracy, of whom Captains Estevez, Kolungia and Beláustegui were the most notable.[32]

In all these plots and conspiracies against Perón, although some naval officers had been involved, the naval institution had remained dormant, even aloof. It is not that the Navy, so anti-Peronist from the beginning, had reconciled itself to Peronism when Perón won his second presidential election even more convincingly than he had his first. Notning could be further from the truth, as the *rôle* of the naval institution in 1955 amply demonstrates.

The Navy and Peronism

Admiral Isaac Rojas described the Navy's opposition to Perón thus:

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29 La Nación, 30 September 1951.

30 La Nación, 29 December 1951.

31 Potash, op.cit., pp.140-141.

32 Confirmado, 3 August 1967, p.36.

> [I]n the Navy the spirit, the soul, of the officers was absolutely, absolutely liberal, and the government, the Peronist system, were anti-liberal.[33]

Likewise, Admiral Sánchez Sañudo insists that the naval opposition to Perón, from the very beginning, was ideological in nature, and it remained, till the end, a struggle between the liberal and totalitarian forces in society:

> La Marina ... desde 1946, en que hubo un movimiento para negarse a la elección justicialista, por razones ideológicas estaba en "contrera" anti-nazi y liberal.[34]

However, Admiral Rivero de Olazábal, the last admiral to be appointed by Perón to command the naval institution during the Peronato, argues that "el sentimiento anti-peronista en la Armada se generó mucho antes y tiene sus raíces en los acontecimientos que tuvieron lugar entre 1943 y 1945."[35]

Some naval shows of dissidence were really quite spectacular, particularly in the context of the Peronist police state. In response to the nationwide campaign of October 1952 to finance the huge memorial to Evita, 90 percent of the ships' crews at Puerto Belgrano refused to authorise the deduction of one day's pay that the sponsors of the collection were requesting, and on some vessels not a single crew member was willing to do so.[36] Even more strikingly, when military personnel stationed in Antarctica at the time of the vice-presidential elections of April 1954 had to vote openly by radio, Navy personnel without exception, in contrast to their Army colleagues, voted 100 percent against the

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33 Interview with Almirante (R) Issac Francisco Rojas, 25 August 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

34 Interview with Almirante Sánchez Sañudo, op.cit.

35 Written statement received from Almirante (R.E.) Carlos Rivero de Olazábal, 9 October 1990, Buenos Aires.

36 Potash, op.cit., p.182.

Peronist candidate,[37] *who was none other than Admiral Teisaire, the only high ranking naval officer within the Peronist structure.*

Admiral Rivero de Olazábal points out that naval anti-Peronism notwithstanding, "[l]a relación entre el Gobierno peronista y la Armada eran las que regulan la Constitución nacional y las leyes, y no hubieran podido ser de otra forma."[38] The relationship was icy, but proper. Scheina describes the interaction between Peronist and naval officials in public:

> The relationship between the [naval] service and the government was manifestly cool at public gatherings. Rarely did a naval official sit in the place of honor next to the president and seldom did Perón receive an enthusiastic reception at a naval sponsored event.[39]

Peronists Within the Navy: The Fourteen Grenadiers

Admiral Rivero de Olazábal seeks to draw a distinction between the anti-Peronism of the officers and the political sentiments of the conscripts, noncoms and petty officers:

> [E]xistía si un fuerte sentimiento anti-peronista en la mayoría de los oficiales de la Armada, porque en el resto de las tripulaciones, dado que en gran parte provenían del servicio militar obligatorio, sus sentimientos políticos debieron estar repartidos como en el resto de ciudadanía.[40]

It is clear that unlike their officers, many *suboficiales* regarded Perón as *their* leader. Admiral Olivieri mentions that on at least two occasions, Perón's election in 1946 and the attempted *coup* led by General

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37 ibid., p.182, fn.26.

38 Written statement from Admiral Rivero de Olazábal, op.cit.

39 Scheina, op.cit., p.209.

40 Written statement from Admiral Rivero de Olazábal, op.cit.

Menéndez in 1951, the *suboficiales* had planned counterconspiracies against their officers.[41]

There were undoubtedly some naval officers with Peronist inclinations, whether for reasons of personal convictions or family ties. Within the Navy, these officers came to be known apocryphally, and affectionately, as *"Los Catorce Granaderos"* to emphasise that they were few in number. The number fourteen derives from a statement made by Admiral Luis Cornes, Olivieri's successor as Navy Minister after the failed naval rebellion of 16 June 1955.[42] After an inspection visit to the Base Aeronaval de Comandante Espora and the Base Naval de Puerto Belgrano, Admiral Cornes reported to Perón: *"Sólo le puede garantizar la lealtad de 14 jefes y oficiales de la Marina."*[43] It was interesting to see even die-hard anti-Peronists insist in interviews that these officers were all good professionals who did not permit their political affiliation to come in the way of institutional loyalty and professional performance. Naval solidarity, the interviewees argued, triumphed over Peronist allegiences.

Perón's Admirals

But what, indeed, was the position of the admirals themselves? Rear Admirals Pantin and Vernengo Lima, the two successive Chiefs of Naval General Staff during the GOU regime, were firmly anti-Perón. After the election of Perón to the Presidency, the Chiefs of Naval General Staff were, unsurprisingly, either neutral or superficially pro-Perón: Rear Admirals Sciurano, Carranza, Castro, Izaguirre, Rivero de Olazábal, Gabrielli and Hollmann. As can be seen from the lists above, there were

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41 Aníbal O. Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde: Memorias de Contraalmirante Aníbal O. Olivieri: Julio 1945-Abril 1957 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sigla, 1958), p.15.

42 This rebellion is covered in detail in the next chapter.

43 Siete Dias, 10 September 1980, p.108.

frequent changes in the top leadership of the Navy during the Peronato. In 1947 Perón created the new post of Commander of Naval Operations to coordinate and command all three wings of the Navy, the Flota de Mar, the Infantería de Marina and the Aviación Naval. This post was held successively by Vice Admiral Carranza, Admiral Martínez, Admiral Pérez del Cerro, Vice Admiral Villanueva, Admiral Brunet and Vice Admiral Rivero de Olazábal. It must be remembered that Perón's most important admirals, Teisaire and Olivieri, had served in the highest ranks of Perón's government. Olivieri himself is extremely honest about his relationship to the Peronists in his memoirs:

> I never liked to call myself a Peronist, insofar as doing so might imply an active political role, which I have not practiced, or the following of a political leader.
>
> ...
>
> I have never participated in the conduct of internal political problems, nor have I sought out contact with political circles. Not even as a [cabinet] minister was I affiliated with the Peronist Party. I have never been acquainted with a basic party unit nor have I ever entered the headquarters of the presidency of the Peronist Party. Although it may be difficult to believe, I do not even know where it was located.
>
> But all this only pertains to the forms. As in everything, the important thing is that which one does regarding the essential aspects of things. And in this respect I say that I have been a sincere and enthusiastic partisan in the initial plan of General Perón.
>
> I concurred with his initial focus on some fundamental problems, particularly those having to do with the fortunes of the people and the independence of the republic from foreign economic servitude.[44]

Further, Admiral Olivieri asserts that it was the blatant intervention by the former US ambassador to Argentina, Spruille Braden, against Perón's candidacy in the presidential elections of 1946, and

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44 Aníbal O. Olivieri, 'Why I Followed Perón', in Joseph R. Barager (ed.), Why Perón Came to Power: The Background to Peronism in Argentina (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), pp.225-226. Translated from Aníbal O. Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde, op.cit., pp.23-27.

Perón's reaction to this interference in domestic Argentine affairs, that attracted him to the populist colonel:

> ... the intervention of a foreign diplomat in our internal problems was ... more than visible.
>
> Painfully, I heard him one afternoon, over the radio, addressing the country from the elevated tribunal of the University of the Littoral. He spoke to us Argentines, harangued us as Sarmiento would have. Much of the road I have travelled since then I owe to that gentleman.
>
> I could not tolerate the unheard of affront to us. I decided to oppose that insulting interference, which so greatly wounded my feelings, with all the strength I could muster. It wounded my feelings just as much as it would have those of North Americans, Indonesians or Frenchmen if a stranger were permitted a similar attack on the rights and respect free countries deserve. I decided to support Colonel Perón. I would have supported any other Argentine who adopted the position he did. If the other presidential candidates also would have rejected the interference, perhaps fate would have maintained me aloof from all the open struggle, but he [Perón] was the only one who did.[45]

The statement made by Admiral Olivieri to the press soon after taking over as the Navy Minister is interesting:

> Sólo deseo decirles que, como ministro de Marina, inspiraré mi acción teniendo como proposito inmediato y definitivo, a tal vez, el que la marina de guerra, que es una institución que nutre sus raíses en lo más profundo de nuestro pueblo porque de él proviene la inmensa mayoría de su personal superior y subalterno, tenga como única misión el servir con lealdad a su pueblo, que es servir a la patria.
>
> Este es mi sentimiento como ministro de Marina: es la síntesis de lo que va a mover mi acción.[46]

The references to "el pueblo" and "lealdad" in this statement should not obscure the fact that Olivieri was taking charge of the Navy Ministry in the aftermath of a failed *coup* attempt in which a squadron of naval

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45 ibid., p.228.

46 Quoted in La Nación, 30 September 1951.

aircraft had participated. Despite these circumstances, it is remarkable that the new Navy Minister did not even mention Perón, far less express personal and institutional loyalty to *el líder*. In 1951, when pledges of loyalty to Perón and Evita were established rituals, this statement must have been most unusual.

A number of interviewees asserted that a strong consensus had always existed within the naval officer corps that the internal organisation of the institution should not be interfered with. This was in contrast to the deep Peronist involvement with the internal working of the Army.[47] When asked if there had been any attempts to enforce *peronista* doctrine within the Navy, Admiral Sánchez Sañudo insisted that there was unanimity within the naval officer corps that any Peronist moves in this regard would be opposed:

> En realidad, en la Marina nunca se pudo dictar la doctrina peronista. Porque la organización de la Marina y los oficiales intermedios y los jefes y los oficiales superiores, capitanes de navío, algunos almirantes también, estaban totalmente en contra, entonces, no la imponían. Cierto. Nunca, ninguna clase, ni doctrina, ni al personal subalterno, ni al personal superior, ... nada. Y los oficiales almirantes más antiguos, formaron una pantalla, para que de afuera no se pudiera presionar hacia adentro. Y ésa es la verdad.[48]

Admiral Mayorga, who was Admiral Olivieri's adjutant officer during this period, has nothing but admiration for the manner in which the Navy Minister insulated the naval institution from Peronist influence, irrespective of his own political allegience to Perón. Mayorga points out:

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47 In the aftermath of the 1951 coup by General Menéndez, Perón imposed loyalty tests in army promotions, and doctrina peronista was added to the required courses at the military academies, the Colegio Militar and the Escuela Superior de Guerra. David Rock, op.cit., p.305. No such development was possible within the Navy.

48 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Carlos A. Sanchez Sañudo, 10 September 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

Olivieri resiste la introducción de la doctrina peronista dentro de las Fuerzas. Aquella teoría que entra, esa teoría entra a raiz del quinto plan o del no sé cuanto, tercer o segundo plan quinquenal donde se trata de demonstrar la fuerza del peronismo. Olivieri les prohibió totalmente dentro de la Marina. Preservó el espíritu naval y nunca hubo en la Armada sanciones por ser crítico del sistema peronista, nunca, mientras que en el Ejército hubo gente que se fue de baja por criticarlo a Perón... En la Armada no hubo delaciones y cuando las hubo se detuvieron todas a nivel del Ministro que no las dejó pasar. Perón le decia a Olivieri cuando la saludaba: ¿cómo anda su pequeña cueva de opositores? Siempre le decia así...[49]

The Peronato: A Stormy Sea?

It has been argued by many commentators that part of the Navy's resentment of the Peronist government arose as a result of Perón's deliberate neglect of the naval rearmament programme. As Rouquié points out, the Peronist government "favorecía sistemáticamente al ejército y a la aeronáutica en detrimento de la marina."[50] In much the same vein, Lieuwen remarks that "... the navy's resentment continued to smoulder [even after Perón's election to the Presidency in 1946] as the regime lavished funds on the ground forces while refusing to purchase new naval combat forces."[51] Goldwert is of the opinion that it was only after the seriousness of the *coup* attempts of 1951 and 1952 dawned on Perón that he purchased two cruisers from the United States, and engaged a Japanese company to construct destroyers and frigates for the Navy. However, "this was too little too late. The time had long passed when Perón ... could purchase the loyalty of his naval opposition."[52] However, only a minority of naval

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49 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Horacio Alberto Mayorga, 11 September 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

50 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina II. 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), p.86.

51 Lieuwen, op.cit., p.71.

52 Goldwert, op.cit., p.126.

officers interviewed by me agreed with this scholarly assessment. Of those who did, Admiral Mayorga was the most prominent:

> Perón se dío cuenta rápidamente que en la Armada tenía la "su cueva de opositores", como decía Olivieri... Peró realmente compró lo mínimo: los dos cruceros en Estados Unidos, cruceros que venían de gastar semi-hundidos, ¿no es cierto?[53]

Most of the other interviewees disagreed. Admiral Bustamante pointed out that an ambitious shipbuilding programme was an integral part of Perón's first Five Year Plan.[54] Admiral Rojas was likewise of the view that naval armament was not neglected during the Peronato, and in any case it was not a factor in naval anti-Peronism.[55] On this matter Admiral Rivero de Olazábal's response was detailed:

> Nunca advertí que hubiera una deliberada política económica discriminatoria en contra de la Armada... [E]n 1946, tuve oportunidad de asistir a una reunión de altos oficiales de la Armada con el Presidente Perón en la Casa de Gobierno, estando presente el Ministro de Marina. En ese ocasión, el Presidente dijo que se le había asignado a la Armada un fondo de 80 millones de dólares para su reequipamiento y modernización.
>
> Fue en esa época (yo era Jefe del Servicio de Comunicaciones Navales) en que fui autorizado a adquirir elementos militares (radares, equipos de radio, estaciones móviles, etc) en cantidad suficiente para equipar a todos los buques de la Armada, y además para equipar con elementos móviles de comunicación a la Infantería de Marina y a la Prefectura Marítima. E incluso se adquirieron otros elementos indispensables para sondajes ionosféricos.
>
> La Marina adquirió con posterioridad una cantidad grande de buques transportes de tanques (B.D.T.), otros para transporte de tropas (B.D.I.) y varios transportes generales. Mas tarde fueron adquiridos 2 cruceros del

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53 Interview with Almirante Mayorga, op.cit.

54 Interview with Almirante Bustamante, op.cit.

55 Written statement received from Almirante (R.E.) Isaac Francisco Rojas. 29 September 1990. Buenos Aires.

> tipo del "General Belgrano" en los Estados Unidos, y aviones para la Aviación Naval.[56]

One final question remains to be answered. If the naval institution indeed had such an anti-*peronista* personality, why did the Peronists not attempt to take it over and subvert it to their own political ends, as they had so successfully done with a large part of the Army? Potash's analysis on this point is pertinent:

> ... because of the technical requirements of the Navy, especially its need for highly trained officers to operate its vessels, Perón had been unable to carry out a thoroughgoing purge of disaffected elements. Thus, it was possible for officers of questionable loyalty to receive key assignments and to use their posts to obstruct Perón's wishes. A case in point was the Naval Intelligence Service (SIN), which, unlike its Army and Air Force counterparts, concentrated on external intelligence rather than on reporting on the political loyalty of naval officers. The SIN was of little help to the government in detecting the conspiracies of 1951 and 1952 even though naval officers were involved.[57]

It is also clear that, as far as Perón was concerned, there was little love lost between him and the Navy. His total contempt for the naval institution is evident:

> Sus oficiales, alejados del sentido de nacionalidad, constituyen una casta aparte, preocupada más de la suerte de la marina que de los intereses de la Patria. Herederos de tradiciones ajenas, pues nuestra marina carece de tradición, se siente siempre inclinada a despreciar lo propio. Ignorantes en general, con un barniz de sociabilidad mundana, viven al margen de la profesión. Son más bien empleados de la profesión que profesionales. Navegan cuando están obligados a ello. Lo normal es que el 80% vivan en tierra en puestos burocráticos...[58]

He also accuses the Navy of smuggling:

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56 Written statement from Admiral Rivero de Olazábal, op.cit.

57 Potash, op.cit., pp.181-182.

58 Perón, La fuerza, op.cit., p.190.

> Durante mi gobierno se sancionó severamente el contrabando y en esta actividad delictuosa estuvieron incursos numerosos oficiales de marina que prestaban sus barcos para el transporte clandestino de mercaderías de país.[59]

Perón was contemptuous of the Navy's opposition to his government because he did not think that the naval institution had either the strength or the ability to overthrow him. Admiral Mayorga's remarks in this context are noteworthy:

> Perón cometió un error, fue de no sentir ningun respeto por la Armada. O sea era una sarta de oficiales que querían ser clasistas, que ponían uniforme azul, herencia de la armada inglesa que no se había sacado de nuestras tradiciones, que tenían ceremonias de lo más austeras y todo esta casa, ¿no es cierto? Entonces, Perón los despreció... Perón cometió un error y fue menospreciar la Armada. Y lo que menos se puede menospreciar de la Armada es el espíritu de cuerpo que tiene.[60]

Thus, in his evaluation of naval power *el líder* was a typical Army officer.

As we shall see in the next chapter, General Perón got this crucial assessment completely wrong.

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59 ibid., p.191.

60 Interview with Admiral Mayorga, op.cit.

CHAPTER FIVE

TIDAL WAVE, JUNE-SEPTEMBER 1955: OVERTHROWING PERON

In 1955, Juan Domingo Perón, widely perceived as one of the most secure political leaders in Latin America at that time, and the complex socio-political movement that he led in Argentina, were overthrown by a military *coup* that came to be known as the Liberating Revolution. The Argentine Navy was at the very epicentre of this earthquake in the Argentine political landscape. The part played by the Navy in the downfall of Perón is the focus of this chapter. Such an analysis is of importance to our study of Argentina's naval institution, because the "Revolución Libertadora" was enacted as much at sea as on the land, and it established the Navy as an important political actor in Argentina *in its own right*.

The omnipresence of Peronism in Argentina by the early 1950s was perceived by most observers as apparent evidence of the strength and durability of the Peronist system; the inherent weaknesses in the elaborate edifice were revealed only when the entire structure was ultimately pulled down with ease. Potash attributes the erosion of power to the "highly politicized and emotional atmosphere that Perón, through acts of commission and omission, allowed to develop", and describes the process of political breakdown thus:

> In the ten months that passed between November 1954 and September 1955, the political structure that had kept Juan Perón in power for almost ten years came unstuck; the manipulative skills and forceful rhetoric he had used so often to rally his supporters, while keeping his opponents divided and off balance, no longer proved effective. Disaffection with Perón and his entourage was growing steadily with each passing month as onetime passive observers turned into political activists and former supporters joined with diehard opponents in a

> common search for a means of terminating the Perón experience.[1]

By the end of 1954, the political situation in Argentina had changed a great deal from the early years of the decade. The Peronist regime had evolved into a curious hybrid: a popularly-based government which relied for its security on a police state apparatus rather than the overwhelming majority it could spontaneously have enjoyed. Partly, this paranoia had a real basis, as we have seen in the previous chapter: discontent with Peronism had remained rampant in certain sections of the Armed Forces, and had even extended to an assassination attempt in 1951. However, it is also true that the very popularity of the Peronist movement made it intolerant of other political beliefs and groups: any institution that had succeeded in maintaining its autonomy *vis-à-vis* Peronism came to be viewed as a direct threat to the survival of the system itself. As the Peronist system slowly encompassed more and more of Argentina's traditional institutions, and as the totalitarian potential of the Peronist state became more and more evident, political pressure increased on those institutions that had managed to keep Peronism at bay. The two most important institutions that had not been subverted by Peronism were the Argentine Navy and the Roman Catholic Church. Though there had never been a great identity of interest between these two institutions,[2] Perón's attack on the latter would provide the former with an opportunity to bring about the downfall of Peronism.

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1 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1945-1962 Perón to Frondizi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p.170.

2 The relationship between the Argentine Navy and the Catholic Church is the subject of Chapter Sixteen.

The Most Terrible Day:[3] Bombs and Burning Churches

The reasons for the breakdown of relations between the Peronist government and the Church in November 1954, and the process by which the conflict escalated in just a few months to intolerable levels have been extensively analysed and need not detain us at this juncture.[4] From the point of view of our study of the Argentine Navy, what is important to note is that amidst the increasingly violent clash between the Church and the Peronists, a group of junior naval officers stationed near Buenos Aires initiated a new conspiracy to overthrow Perón.[5] The two motors behind this rebellion were Commanders Francisco Manrique and Néstor Noriega.[6] Manrique was responsible for planning the uprising in Puerto Belgrano and Noreiga at the Punta Indio naval airbase. In case the uprising was successful, the naval rebels intended to hand over power to three distinguished opposition politicians, the Radical leader Miguel Angel Zavala Ortiz, the Democrat Adolfo Vicchi, and the exiled Socialist Américo Ghioldi.[7] They selected Admiral Samuel Toranzo Calderón, a senior officer in the Infantería de Marina as their leader when they were unable to detect any interest in a naval revolt among any of the surface fleet admirals on active service.[8] Admiral Toranzo Calderón was unusual in that he was not a graduate of the naval academy, but had transferred to the Navy from the Army in the 1930s when a permanent corps of officers for the Naval Infantry was being

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3 Looking back on "el bombardeo a Plaza de Mayo" and "la quema de las iglesias" thirty years later, the popular Argentine periodical Gente presented 16 June 1955 as "El día mas terrible de la Argentina". Gente, 11 April 1985. The accompanying photographs testify that this is no journalistic hyperbole. As Potash remarks, "[t]he events of June 16, 1955, constitute a bloody chapter in Argentina's domestic history." Potash, op.cit., p.188.

4 For an excellent summary of Perón's relations with the Church, and a useful analysis of the rupture of the Church-Peronist entente, see José Oscar Frigerio, 'Perón y la Iglesia: Historia de un conflicto inútil', Todo es Historia, No.210, October 1984, pp.10-64.

5 I am indebted to Capitán de Fragata (R.E.) Jorge Imas for his detailed description of the coup preparations within the Aviación Naval. Interview, 8 August 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

6 Nuestro Tiempo, 17 June 1984, p.3.

7 Panorama, 15 June 1971, p.39.

8 Potash, op.cit., p.183.

created. For support on the land, which the naval conspirators deemed vital, they depended upon General León Bengoa, commander of the Third Army Division in Entre Ríos province. However, the conspiracy was exposed prematurely: the Servicio de Informaciones y Seguridad de Aeronáutica, the intelligence agency of the Air Force, had photographed the conspirators at Toranzo Calderón's house.[9] The admiral was convinced by his co-conspirators, particularly Commanders Manrique, Rivolta, Castiñeiras Falcón, Bassi and Molinari to strike on 16 June 1955,[10] even though the naval rebels were unable to inform General Bengoa. At nightfall on 15 June, Commanders Rivolta and Antonini met Captain José Bavio, the officer-on-duty at the Communications Centre in Naval Headquarters, and attempted to persuade him to release the news of the impending naval uprising to all naval bases and units. While Bavio refused to comply, it is significant that he did not report this conversation to anyone.[11] Likewise, it is revealing that in the ten days prior to the uprising the Chief of the Naval General Staff, Admiral Piva, had twice received intelligence reports about the impending rebellion but had suppressed this information.[12] It is therefore correct to say that even those naval officers who refused to participate actively in the uprising nevertheless supported the naval conspirators.

The naval rebels had at their command naval aviation units at Punta Indio, Air Force aircraft based at Morón, and Infantería de Marina units

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9 Confirmado, 20 July 1967, p.33.

10 Confirmado, 20 July 1967, p.32.

11 Confirmado, 20 July 1967, p.33.

12 ibid. Narrating these incidents, the author of the Confirmado article remarks: "Puede parecer extraño, pero entre oficiales de Marina no lo era tanto. Más que en ninguna otra institución armada, en las unidades navales el concepto de la lealtad se ve a menudo arrebatado por pasiones encontradas. Existe entre sus hombres un espíritu de cuerpo, similar al de una logia o religión, que puede sobreponerse a contigencias triviales como la política. El caso de Bavio no fue excepcional. Otros oficiales y jefes, de mayor jerarquía y responsabilidad, también silenciaron su conocimiento del golpe que se avecinaba." In the context of institutional cohesion, which we will analyse in Chapter Fourteen, this incident is worth remembering.

stationed in the Buenos Aires port area. They had 28 naval aircraft at their disposal: 9 Beechcraft for light bombardment under Lieutenant-Commander Jorge Imas, 16 North American training aircraft commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Santiago Sabarots, and 3 Catalinas under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Enrique García Mansilla.[13] While the aircraft were supposed to attack the Casa Rosada and kill Perón, the Marines were to attack the Casa Rosada using the Navy Headquarters building as their base.

Virtually nothing went according to plan. A thick cloud cover delayed the take-off of the rebel naval aircraft by over two hours, and when they finally took off it was more as a matter of honour since the Naval Infantry depended on them, rather than with any conviction of success.[14] Perón, forewarned about the *coup* attempt, was escorted by the Army into the safety of the basement of the War Ministry, and when the rebel naval aircraft dropped the first bombs to ever fall on Buenos Aires, they hit only innocent bystanders. The Marines, similarly, could not achieve their military objective, and had to retreat to the cover of the Naval Ministry. The Minister of the Navy, Admiral Aníbal Olivieri, and the Commandant of the Infantería de Marina, Admiral Benjamín Gargiulo, "although not parties to the original conspiracy, associated themselves with the doomed rebellion in an act of moral identification."[15] Admiral Olivieri had in fact been in hospital that morning but had rushed to the Ministry on being informed by his adjutant officers about the uprising.[16] When armed and angry CGT supporters moved forward to take the surrender of the rebels in the Navy Ministry, they were machine-gunned by class-

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13 Confirmado, 20 July 1967, p.33.

14 Confirmado, 27 July 1967, p.32.

15 Potash, op.cit., p.189.

16 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Horacio Alberto Mayorga, 11 September 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires. As a teniente de navío Mayorga had been one of Olivieri's ayudantes, the other one being Emilio Massera..

conscious naval officers who insisted on surrendering only to the Army.[17] In a message to his Army counterpart, General Sosa Molina, Admiral Olivieri offered to surrender, but on one condition:

> General, no estoy en condiciones de imponer condiciones... [N]o entregaré el Ministerio a la turba que lo asalta. Sólo lo rendiré ante las tropas del Ejército...[18]

While the Army took the surrender of the Naval Ministry, the rebel naval aircraft, having nowhere to land, flew across the River Plate to Uruguay; 39 aircraft in all landed there after the unsuccessful rebellion.[19] In Puerto Belgrano the rebellion did not even take off from the ground. When Manrique heard that the uprising had failed, he ordered his conspirators not to reveal anything and took all the responsibility himself. The captain of the *Veinticinco de Mayo*, Captain Agustín Penas, was the only other officer to be detained in Puerto Belgrano.[20] Meanwhile, at the Navy Ministry in Buenos Aires the three admirals, Olivieri, Gargiulo and Toranzo Calderón, were detained *incomunicado* in their respective offices.[21] Since the Menéndez coup of 1951, military officers rising in rebellion against the Peronist regime knew that they faced the possibility of a death sentence should their uprising fail. Olivieri describes how the Peronists gave the admirals an opportunity to take their own lives; while Olivieri called Perón's bluff, Gargiulo did not:

> Fui incomunicado en mi dormitorio del Ministerio del Marina. A las tres de la mañana me visitó el mayor Vicente para comunicarme que sería juzgado dentro de la vigencia de la ley marcial y me ofreció un arma. Decliné aceptarla invocando mi condición de católico. Enfrentaría

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17 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p.129.

18 Aníbal O. Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde: Memorias del Contraalmirante Aníbal O. Olivieri: Julio 1945-Abril 1957 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sigla, 1958). Quoted in Gente, 25 April 1985.

19 Arthur P. Whitaker, Argentine Upheaval: Peron's fall and the new regime (London: Atlantic Press, 1956), p.9.

20 Confirmado, 3 August 1967, p.38.

21 Confirmado, 3 August 1967, p.38.

> mi destino hasta el fin. El almirante Garguilo, el gran amigo de toda la vida, optó por el trágico desenlace.[22]

The figure for the number of casualties from the bombing has varied between three hundred and a thousand;[23] little wonder then that the naval revolt of 16 June is still highly controversial. What the anti-Peronist opposition regarded as a "desesperada y heroica revuelta de nuestra marina de guerra"[24] is seen by other observers as a *putsch* and a "farsa demasiado burda".[25] Floria and García Belsunce are accurate when they remark:

> Cada sector social, político, economico y cultural de la Argentina de entonces tenia una especial manera de **percibir** el proceso, y eso explica que las descripciones del mismo dependen, aun hoy, de una suerte de selección perceptiva no siempre deliberada sino espontánea.[26]

Were the naval rebels seeking anything apart from the overthrow of Perón? Most students of this event think not. However, Admiral Arguindeguy, the eminent, though unofficial, historian of the Argentine Navy, makes the interesting but uncorroborated suggestion that the motives of the naval rebels might not have been totally "pure":

> Claramente prevaleció en [la "revolución apresurada" de junio de 1955], junto el objetivo principal de voltear al gobierno peronista, un claro espíritu escalafonario, en la busqueda de lo que los ingleses llaman muy gráficamente "a quick promotion".[27]

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22 Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde, op.cit. Quoted in Gente, 25 April 1985.

23 One reason why the casualty figures were so high was that a public transport bus was hit by one of the bombs. However, there were more people in the Plaza de Mayo than usual. The reason for this was that the Air Force Minister Brigadier San Martín had ordered a flypast over the Plaza that morning: "un vuelo de testimonio en adhesión al presidente de la República y también con el objeto de desagraviar la memoria del Libertador." The purpose of the "parada aérea" was to "contrarrestar los efectos de la manifestación católica" of the past few days. Panorama, 15 June 1971, p.39.

24 Leo Loge, El camino de la muerte: Perón a través de sus palabras (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Constancia, December 1955), p.3.

25 Felíx Luna, Golpes militares y salidas electorales (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1983), p.73.

26 Carlos Alberto Floria and César A. García Belsunce, Historia de los Argentinos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapelusz, 1971).

27 Pablo E. Arguindeguy, 'El Pertubador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.76.

A number of people within the naval institution, in retrospect, regret the bombing of the Casa Rosada and the Plaza de Mayo. Admiral Milia voiced his feelings thus:

> It was not a good thing. Today, the people remember the time [when] naval aviation bombed Plaza de Mayo ... It was a real mistake ... it was a way to shock the country, but in the long term ... it was a mistake, a serious mistake ... it was a mistake of the worst kind, an ethic[al] mistake.[28]

It is noteworthy that the aerial bombardment of the Plaza de Mayo was only the first act in the violent drama enacted in Buenos Aires on 16 June 1955. That evening, well-organised Peronist mobs systematically sacked and set alight all but one of Buenos Aires' many historic churches. Although this inflamatory action was officially attributed to "Masonic" activity, an investigation by the Army found the Vice-President, Admiral Alberto Teisaire, and the Health Minister primarily responsible for the events. The burning of the churches finally pushed many fence-sitters into the opposition camp. The control of information by the Peronist authorities was evident to most observers. As Horacio de Dios recalled many years later:

> Los diarios traían mucha información del bombardeo y críticas por el hecho "Monstruoso e Inhumano". Pero nada de la quema de las iglesias... Habría que esperar los panfletos para enterarse. El país, como la información, estaba partido por el medio.[29]

The Church Connection: Catalyst or Causal Factor?

The issue of an *entendimiento* between certain members of the Church hierarchy and the rebelling officers of the Infantería de Marina and the

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28 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Fernando A. Milia, 27 August 1987, office of the Bolet n del Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

29 Gente, Buenos Aires, 11 April 1985.

Aviación Naval arises because both the Church and the Navy were deeply involved in a number of coincidential events. The naval revolt was set in motion only a few hours after the Vatican, reacting to the expulsion of two senior Church authorities from Argentina, pronounced the excommunication of all those Peronist official s who bore responsibility for that action, including, presumably, Perón himself. Clearly, the Peronist crowds who set the various churches in Buenos Aires on fire in retaliation for the aerial bombardment perceived a connection between the Catholic Church and the naval rebels. Matthews, while asserting in the *New York Times* that the naval action on the day of Perón's excommunication "could have been no more than a coincidence", nevertheless speculated that "[s]omewhere along the line, obviously, the two streams of discontent - the secular and the religious - must have met in the minds of those who plotted the revolt."[30] The naval aviators who fled to Uruguay after the failure of the *coup* attempt insisted that they had not made any attempt to contact the Church prior to the rebellion. In an interview to Juan Silva Vila, the editor of Montevideo's *El País*, the rebels pointed out that their movement had "no connection with political parties or with the Church, but took advantage of the special climate of opinion created by the excommunication of Perón by the Pope."[31] The Vatican, likewise, was quick to disclaim any responsibility for the rebellion, as was only to be expected, but it is significant that the Holy See did not condemn the naval rebels; indeed, the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano* was uncompromising in its analysis of the Argentine situation:

> If weariness caused by a long series of violence and injustice were really at the root of the tragic convulsion, those responsible for such a state of mind would be the ones who, without reason, stubbornly

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30 Herbert L. Matthews, 'Revolt in Argentina - The Factors Behind it: Discontent With Dictator Peron Has Long Been Building Up', The New York Times, 19 June 1955.

31 'Revolution By No Means Over', The Observer, London, 19 June 1955.

> persisted in fostering and aggravating it. The Church, the Catholics, would not be responsible.[32]

By taking on the Church so openly, Perón had made his own situation untenable. As a journalist covering the revolt of 16 June caustically remarked, "Juan Perón has been a power for about twelve years; the Roman Catholic Church has been a power for nearly 2,000 years."[33] As Félix Luna points out, the confrontation between the Peronists and the Church "significó una honda división de los argentinos y un angustioso conflicto de consciencia para muchos peronistas, embretados entre el compromiso espiritual de su fe religiosa y las exigencias políticas de su partido."[34] Admiral Olivieri attributed Perón's attack on the Church as the reason for his own defection from the Peronist cause: "He sido peronista pero después de los ataques contra la Iglesia me es imposible seguir siéndolo."[35] Thus, while Perón's frontal attack on the Church resulted in the alienation of many of his supporters, and therefore played a major *rôle* in his ultimate downfall, it is important that we do not perceive it as the central cause of the naval revolt of 16 June.

From June to September

The immediate reactions to the bombing of the Plaza de Mayo were varied, depending upon the point of view of the commentator. From the point of view of the Peronists, the bombing of the Plaza de Mayo was a criminal act by desperate men. Perón addressed the nation on radio on the evening of the 16th of July, and it is interesting to note the difference in his attitude towards the Army and the Navy:

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32 Quoted in The Observer, London, 19 June 1955.

33 Matthews, 'Revolt in Argentina', op.cit., The New York Times, 19 June 1955.

34 Todo es Historia, Año XVII, No.210, October 1984, p.3.

35 Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde, op.cit., p.139.

> Deseo que mis primeras palabras sean para encomiar la acción maravillosa que ha desarrollado el ejército, cuyos componentes han demostrado ser verdaderos soldados, ya que ni un solo cabo ni soldado ha faltado a su deber. No hablemos ya de los oficiales y de los jefes, que se han comportado como valientes y leales.
>
> Desgraciadamente, no puedo decir lo mismo de la Marina de Guerra, que es la culpable de la cantidad de muertos y heridos que hoy debemos lamentar los argentinos.[36]

It might be argued that Perón, by praising the Army, and condemning the Navy in the same breath, was merely trying to create rifts between the two military institutions, thereby ensuring that the former stood by the president who had risen from within its ranks. That might well be true. Nonetheless, the bitterness that the *líder* felt towards the latter institution, which he had been unable to bend to his political will, is self-evident.

As far as "neutral" outside observers were concerned, the suppression of the naval revolt meant that Perón was "stronger than ever". As Matthews remarked, "Juan Domingo Perón has shown himself to be one of the shrewdest, most resourceful and intelligent demagogues of modern times, and last week he gave proof of his properties...Once again he finds himself unchallenged by any element except one - the church...The real power in Argentina is the police, not the military."[37] For the anti-Peronist opposition, on the other hand, the ferocity of the naval attack signalled the beginning of the end: "La valiente decisión de la aviación naval, rubricando la resistencia de la ciudadania democrática, señaló el principio del fin de un régimen oprobioso, dilapidador y amoral que humillaba a la República."[38] The intense polarisation of opinion provoked by the Peronist regime, and the

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36 Quoted in Julio Godio, La Ca da de Per n : de junio a setiembre de 1955 (Buenos Aires: Granica Editor, 1973), p.38.

37 Matthews, 'Revolt in Argentina', op.cit., The New York Times, 19 June 1955.

38 Juan Antonio Solari, Examen y responsabilidades de la situación argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Bases, 1959), p.143.

lack of space for any political opposition to it, can be guaged from the fact that the opposition parties such as the Radicals supported the action of the naval aviators (*"...marinos y aviadores que han expuesto su vida, su carrera, su tranquilidad y la de sus familias para asumir las responsabilidad de terminar con un gobierno de fuerza."*)[39] and were unwilling even to lament the deaths of innocent bystanders (*"El Radicalismo y el país quieren que la sangre argentina sirva, como en horas gloriosas, a la causa de la democracia y de la libertad."*)[40] The official statement of the Unión Civica Radical was uncompromising in its criticism of the government: it argued that "[l]a responsabilidad de los trágicos sucesos del 16 de junio de 1955 es enteramente del gobierno," and expressed "su solidaridad con cuantos sufren cárcel, persecución o destierro por defender las libertades argentinas."[41]

From contemporary accounts it is clear that the suddenness and violence of the naval revolt took everyone, and in particular the regime, by surprise. *The New York Times* accurately described the revolt as "a volcano - a sudden eruption - but the pent-up forces had been gathering for a long time."[42] Rouquié, analysing the event many years later, also emphasised the violence: "El golpe no había tenido nada de los clásicos pronunciamientos, de los paseos militares pacíficos y declamatorios, sino que había presentado las características sangrientas y odiosas de la guerra civil..."[43] The naval revolt was a big shock for Perón, and it led to his police state relaxing its grip on, and providing some latitude to, his many political opponents, giving them time to take a deep breath before

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39 Unión Civica Radical, Comité Nacional, 'La Unión Civica Radical y el 16 de junio', mimeographed statement, Buenos Aires, 29 June 1955. President: Arturo Frondizi. Secretary: Federico F. Monjardín. p.1.

40 ibid., p.2.

41 ibid., p.3.

42 Matthews, 'Revolt in Argentina', op.cit., The New York Times, 19 June 1955.

43 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina II. 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), p.109.

launching the last assault. As Godio puts it, "El rumbo de hacer valer el levantamiento golpista para obligar al gobierno a hacer concesiones que lo debilitasen progresivamente hasta poder darle el gran golpe final."[44] The initial reaction of the Peronists was conciliatory in nature. Perón announced that he would henceforth be the President of all Argentines rather than the head of the Peronist movement. In order to "separar la función partidaria de la función de gobierno", Admiral Alberto Teisaire resigned from the chairmanship of the Consejo Superior of the Peronist Party while retaining the Vice-Presidency of the Republic.[45]

Despite their conciliatory pronouncements and gestures, Perón and his followers moved systematically to deal with the naval rebels. Officers suspected of participation in the rebellion were immediately placed in the status of *"en disponibilidad"* (unassigned) or *"en pasiva"* (passive). The first officers to be made passive were, unsurprisingly, Admirals Olivieri and Toranzo Calderón; the suicide of Admiral Garguilo was announced at the same time as a *"fallecimiento"*.[46] To replace the naval avaitors who had fled to Uruguay, officers were immediately transfered from other units to the Punta Indio naval airbase.[47] In the last week of June a steady stream of naval officers, predominantly marines, were placed in a status of *"disponabilidad"* or *"pasiva"*.[48] It is clear that while the naval aviators involved in the revolt of 16 June were able to fly across the River Plate to exile, marine infantry officers similarly involved did not have an escape route from Argentina and found themselves subjected to the rigours of the military disciplinary process. This process of purging the

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44 Godio, op.cit., p.42.

45 La Nación, 23 July 1955.

46 Ministerio de Marina, Boletín Naval Publico No. 119 of 1955 (BNP 119/55), Buenos Aires, 22 June 1955.

47 BNP 206/55, Buenos Aires, 27 June 1955.

48 BNP 206/55 (27 June 1955), 207/55 (27 June), 209/55 (29 June), 211/55 (30 June) and 212/55 (1 July), all released in Buenos Aires.

ranks of the naval officer corps stretched out over three months: on 12 September, less than a week before the September *coup*, eight junior officers, including three midshipmen of the naval infantry, were placed *"en disponibilidad"*.[49]

As was only to be expected, immediate changes were made in the political, operational and administrative heads of the naval institution, the Ministro de Marina, the Comandante de Operaciones Navales and the Jefe del Estado Mayor General Naval, respectively. Within the Navy the three newly-appointed admirals were widely regarded as "pro-Perón". At any rate, they were about the only admirals who still retained the trust of the Peronists. Of the changes made in the naval leadership, the urgent necessity of replacing Admiral Olivieri as the Navy Minister was obvious; Perón appointed Admiral Luis Juan Cornes to what was easily the most difficult portfolio in his cabinet. Admiral Carlos Rivero de Olazábal replaced Admiral Ramón Brunet as the Chief of Naval Operations, while the Chief of the Naval General Staff, Admiral Héctor Gabrielli, was replaced by Admiral Carlos Hollmann.[50]

The military justice system was rapidly activated to deal with the naval rebels. On 16 June itself, Perón signed Presidential Decree No. 9409 to this effect, the second article of which clearly states that the decree "será refrendado por los Ministros Secretarios de Estado de Ejército y Aeronáutica y rubricado por el Secretario de Defensa Nacional."[51] It is significant that there is no reference to the naval leadership in this decree; unsurprisingly, Admiral Olivieri's signature is missing from this proclamation. The Navy was thus completely isolated from the Peronist

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49 BNP 297/55, Buenos Aires, 12 September 1955.

50 La Nación, 23 June 1955.

51 BNP 213/55, Buenos Aires, 4 July 1955.

system; it is clear that the Peronist distrust of the Navy extended to the entire institution, not just to a section of its personnel. This does not imply that charges against specific individuals were ignored. In the same notification as the presidential decree, the Director General of Naval Personnel published a large list of naval personnel who were required to report to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which had been specially constituted for this purpose at the headquarters of the First Motorized Division under the presidentship of a retired *general de división* (major general).[52] Of the 79 naval personnel so ordered, only two, a *suboficial* (petty officer) and a *cabo* (sergeant), were not officers. The 77 naval officers who were listed in this edict ranged in rank from *capitán de fragata* (commander) to *guardiamarina* (midshipman), the overwhelming majority of whom were naval aviators (49 from the Escalafón General, seven from the Escalafón de Pilotos Aviadores) and aeronautical engineers (eight from the Escalafón de Ingeneria Especializada, one from the Escalafón de Aerotécnicos). The remaining officers were a truly mixed bunch: two marines, five supply officers, one doctor, one dentist and one pharmacist. It is clear that these officers were aboard the naval aircraft which had fled to Montevideo after bombing the Plaza de Mayo; taken together they comprised most of the officer corps of the Punta Indio naval airbase. Unlike the naval aviators, other naval personnel involved in the 16 June revolt could not escape to Uruguay and were soon arrested and tried by the Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas, which was composed of nine senior retired officers: four from the Army, three from the Navy, and two from the Air Force. The three naval members of the Supreme Council, Rear Admirals Gastón Vincendeau and Silvano Harriague, and Captain Blas de Achával, had reputations within the naval institution of fairness and non-partisanship. The sentences handed down by the Supreme Council varied in severity.[53]

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52 ibid.

53 La Nación, 18August 1955.

Admiral Toranzo Calderón was sentenced to indefinite confinement *(reclusión por tiempo indeterminado)*, and was formally stripped off his rank and military status in a "ceremonia de degradación" at the Navy Mechanics School. Admiral Olivieri was divested of his military rank *(destitución)* and sentenced to a year and a half of simple imprisonment *(prisión menor)*. Seven naval officers of the rank of *capitán de fragata* (commander), and two *capitanes de corbeta* (lieutenant-commanders), were sentenced to *"reclusión por tiempo indeterminado y destitución"*; one lieutenant-commander and two midshipmen were found guilty of *"no poner los medios a su alcance para evitar una rebelión"* and sentenced to two years of simple imprisonment and dismissal from service. The condemned naval officers were transferred to the Santa Rosa prison, as were seven Air Force officers who had also received the prison sentence. The case against the late Admiral Garguilo and a lieutenant of the Air Force who had been killed in the rebellion were dropped. The judicial trial process itself was proper and fair: as Admiral Olivieri admitted later, "fuí legalmente condenado, debo reconocerlo."[54] The Supreme Council also directed the Oficina de Asuntos Fiscales of the Treasury to initiate judicial action for "daños materiales y morales" against the condemned men and the other cashiered officers exiled in Uruguay.[55]

The changes in the Navy went beyond disciplinary action against specific personnel and affected the institution and its internal organisation as well. In the aftermath of the June revolt the Navy was regarded by the Peronists, with good reason, as their number one enemy. Immediate steps were therefore taken to diffuse the perpetual naval threat that existed to the Peronist regime. Three days after the 16 June naval

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54 Aníbal O. Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde: Memorias del Contraalmirante Aníbal O. Olivieri: Julio 1945-Abril 1957 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sigla, 1958), p.10.

55 La Nación, 10 September 1955.

revolt, a thorough reorganisation of the Navy was ordered by Presidential Decree No. 9415: since the marines and naval aviators had demonstrated their total unreliability, the Comando General de Infantería de Marina and the Comando de la Aviación Naval were abolished with immediate effect and all marine and naval aviation units were placed under the command of the various Zonas Navales.[56] Presidential Decree No. 9802 of 24 June dissolved the Batallón de Infantería de Marina No.4 and the Escuadra Aeronaval No.3, which were the two naval units primarily responsible for the *coup* attempt of 16 June.[57] The naval airbase of Punto Indio, from where the rebel naval aircraft had taken off, was converted into an ammunition depot, and on 22 July even its name was changed from "Base Aeronaval Punto Indio" to "Arsenal Naval Comandante Rosales".[58]

The newly appointed leadership of the Navy was faced with the difficult task of removing all sources of dissent that could lead to a future naval revolt, while simultaneously protecting the institution from punitive policy attacks by the Peronist authorities. The new admirals were acutely aware of the depth of anti-Peronist sentiment within the Navy: clearly, the tension that had built up over the years had been greatly exacerbated by the failed *coup* attempt of 16 June, with the surface sailors in particular conscious of the fact that they had neither risked nor sacrificed their lives and careers in the manner of their naval aviation and marine infantry colleagues. Bringing about a reconciliation between the Peronists and the Navy was well nigh impossible, but some attempts were made to improve the image of the latter in the eyes of the former. The Subsecretario de Marina even went to the extent of soliciting one day's pay

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56 BNP 237/55, Buenos Aires, 19 July 1955.

57 BNP 214/55, Buenos Aires, 4 July 1955.

58 BNP 252/55, Buenos Aires, 2 August 1955.

from all naval personnel "para las víctimas de los sucesos ocurridos el 16 de junio del corriente año."[59]

When Perón was asked after his overthrow in September if the Navy had been in a state of rebellion from June onwards, he replied: "si la marina fue rebelde desde el 16 de junio, lo supo disimular muy bien, pues nada lo hacía entender así."[60] In fact, there is some evidence to indicate that deep dissatisfaction persisted in the Navy. In twos and threes, naval officers, and in particular naval aviators, started making their way to exile in Uruguay, placing their lives and their families at grave risk. For example, on 4 August 1955, two naval aviators, Lieutenants Jorge Emilio Collet and Ramón Amadeo Corvera, stole a transport aircraft from the Espora naval airbase near Bahía Blanca and fled to Montevideo with their families; the oldest of their five children was only four years old.[61] Events such as this should have alerted the Peronist authorities to the fact that the Navy, far from being pacified, was merely biding its time for the final showdown with the regime. Indeed, there were clear signs that discontent had spread to the other military institutions as well. On 10 August the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires was confidentially instructed by Secretary of State Dulles to gather information on "dissatisfaction among younger, intermediate level Army officers", and asked to advise the Department of State on the "identity of dissident leaders; reasons for their dissatisfaction; evidence of their cooperation with anti-Perón forces in the other Services, with retired military officers, and other civilian elements; and evidence of ties with any top-level Army leader who could provide prestige and leadership to this group."[62] On 14 September, only a

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59 BNP 214/55, Buenos Aires, 4 July 1955.

60 Juan Domingo Perón, La fuerza es el derecho de las bestias (Bogota: Litografía Villegas, 1956), pp.26-27.

61 La Nación, 5 August 1955.

62 Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Argentina 1955-1959, document no. 735.551/8-1055.

couple of days before the September uprising, the U.S. State Department was confidentially informed by the Embassy in Buenos Aires that the Peronist government had moved troops into Pistarini Airport, with the suggestion that this government show of force might be in view of renewed rumours of revolutionary activity.[63] Thus, the Peronist government was conscious of the smell of revolt in the air. However, the nature and extent of naval involvement in the uprising, rather than the fact of naval participation *per se*, took the Peronist authorities by complete surprise. A mere three months after the June 1955 *coup* attempt had been suppressed, the Navy was participating in another uprising, except that this time it involved the entire institution, not just a few conspirators, with surface sailors rather than marines or aviators forming the vanguard of the revolutionary forces.

The Fleet in Rebellion: September's "Liberating Revolution"[64]

Unlike the *coup* attempt of 16 June, the revolt of 16 September did not take on the character of an inter-force conflict. It was supported, from the very beginning, by most of the Army units in Córboba, by a good part of the Air Force, and by the naval institution, both aviation and warships. Important army elements joined in with the revolt when it was not promptly suppressed. Nevertheless, the forces facing the rebels on land appeared to be far more powerful. There was little civilian

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63 Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Argentina 1955-1959, document no. 735.54/9-1455.

64 A number of sources exist on the movements of the Sea Fleet and the River Fleet in September 1955, and so it is felt that these movements do not need to be described in detail here. For details, the following sources are worth consulting: Comisión de Afirmación de la Revolución Libertadora, A 30 Años de la Revolución Libertadora (Buenos Aires: 1985), pp.104-149; Miguel Angel Cavallo, Puerto Belgrano Hora Cero: La Marina se Subleva, third edition (Buenos Aires: Fundamental Editores, 1955); Diez Periodistas Argentinos, Así cayó Perón: Crónica del movimiento revolucionario triunfante (Buenos Aires: Editorial Lamas, 1955), chapter V, pp.71-86; Arturo J. Zabala, La revolución del 16 de setiembre: antecedentes, gestación y victoria del movimiento de liberación nacional (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Debate, 1955); Carlos A. Sanchez Sañudo, 'La Revolución Libertadora', La República, Year II, No.11, September 1955, pp.5-12; and Siete Dias, 10 September 1980, pp.108-113.

participation in the revolt, and loyalist forces controlled Rosario, the second largest city in the country, most of the provinces, and, most important, metropolitan Buenos Aires, which contained a quarter of the country's total population of 19 million inhabitants.

Given this geographical distribution of forces on the land, it is interesting to note that while the revolt of 16 June was suppressed in a matter of hours, the revolt of 16 September, a mere three months later, succeeded in overthrowing Perón in only four days. Two things had changed in the three months between the first and second revolt. The first change was attitudinal. Perón had always used *descamisado* demonstrations to demonstrate that a civil war would result should the military attempt to overthrow his regime. This political tactic had worked perfectly since 1945. On 7 September 1955, the governing council of the CGT announced that it was "offering" its entire membership, which it claimed was six million strong, to the army as a civil militia, a clear reminder to the armed forces that the CGT contained a large number of fighters on the side of Perón. By this time, however, there were sufficiently disaffected elements in the military that were willing to risk a national bloodbath if there was no other way of removing the Peronists from power. The other factor, which is perhaps more relevant to our study, and which completely altered the power configuration in Argentine politics, was the Argentine fleet, capable and willing to cause serious damage to the national capital, by bombardment and blockade, in order to bring about the downfall of the Peronist regime.

An important *rôle* in the uprising was played by the rebel radio station, *Voz de la Libertad*, set up in the Base Naval Puerto Belgrano.[65] The effect of these transmissions, "[d]espués de más de una década de

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65 Interview with Capitán de Fragata (R.E.) Ciro A. Scotti, 13 September 1990, at his office in Buenos Aires. Capitán Scotti was the naval officer in charge of the Radio Base Naval Puerto Belgrano.

transmisiones censuradas, coartadas, medidas, dosificadas",[66] was electric. As Cavallo points out, "las palabras repetidas en todos los tonos más vibrantes, y sobre los temas más palpitantes, llegan a millones de hogares. También la escuchan los soldados del Ejército..."[67] The naval rebel radio station transmitted some extremely effective propaganda. For instance, one transmission warned listeners that the Sea Fleet was steaming towards Buenos Aires, and in order to emphasise the offensive capacity of the Fleet, proceeded to describe in some detail the weaponry carried by just one of its battle cruisers.[68] One of the broadcasts even attempted to put the blame for the casualties of the 16 June bombing of the Plaza de Mayo by naval aircraft on the shoulders of Perón:

> El presidente, desde su segura guarida, ordenó la concentración del pueblo indefenso en la Plaza de Mayo, sabiendo de antemano que iba a bombardearse la Casa de Gobierno, si no se rendia.
>
> ...
>
> ¡CIUDADANO! ¡Sepa quién es el verdadero culpabale de la masacre del 16 de junio! ¡La Marina de Guerra nunca ha matado a nadie! El asesino es el propio Presidente.[69]

Cavallo uses some purple prose to describe this weapon in the arsenal of the naval rebels:

> Esta arma va a tener efectos tremendos sobre el campo rival. Arma invencible, que no herirá la carne, ni provocará a la sangre. Pero que penetrará en lo más profundo de la consciencia y de la mente. El proyectil es antiguo como el mundo: la verdad. El arma con que se ha de disparar es moderna: la radiotelefonía.[70]

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66 Diez Periodistas Argentinas, op.cit., p.45.

67 Cavallo, op.cit., p.79.

68 Radio Base Naval Puerto Belgrano: 16-23 setiembre 1955: A voz de la libertad (Buenos Aires: 1957), p.97.

69 ibid., p.89.

70 Cavallo, op.cit., p.13.

The naval revolt was sparked off in the Escuela Naval Militar at Río Santiago. On being seriously attacked by Air Force aircraft, the entire academy was evacuated to the River Fleet by Admiral Isaac Rojas, and soon afterwards the High Seas Fleet took to sea under his command. Admiral Rojas was bitter when he talked about the Air Force strikes on the Escuela Naval Militar:

> The Air Force remain nothing - *El Menos* - but they attack[ed] us the first day ... Río Santiago, the Naval School, and we suffered ... casualties. Two cadets died, one officer, and twenty men, by the Gloucester Meteor. But then I decide[d] to abandon the Naval School, and I went with my ships - my *little* ships, not the Sea Fleet, and I went out during the night, and when the Army entered the Naval School, [they] discovered it empty![71]

The naval blockade of Buenos Aires allowed General Lonardi in Córboba and General Aramburu in Corrientes to proclaim the "Revolución Libertadora" on the 16th of September, though they were heavily outnumbered by loyalist troops. General Aramburu's attempt at rebellion was crushed at the Curuzú Cuatiá armoured troop base, forcing him to go into hiding in Corrientes, but General Lonardi's men continued to fight, despite overwhelming odds, in Córdoba. Encouraged by the successful holding action of the rebels in Córdoba, crucially important defections started taking place within the Army from loyalist to rebel ranks on the 18th of September. All army units in the San Juan-Mendoza area of western Argentina along the Andean border with Chile joined in the fight against Perón, thus effectively cutting off Peronist Argentina, already blockaded along the Atlantic coast, from any contact with the outside world. Lonardi's situation was getting increasingly untenable in Córdoba, however, and late on the 18th of September, he sent the following radiogram message to Rojas:

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71 Interview with Almirante Isaac Rojas. op.cit.

> Mi situación es muy comprometida. Sírvase efectuar alguna demostración para aliviarla.[72]

In response to this plea for help, Admiral Rojas ordered the bombardment of the large oil tanks at the resort city of Mar del Plata and threatened to destroy the newly-built oil refinery at Ciudad Eva Perón (La Plata) and to bombard the exposed national capital of Buenos Aires. He sent the following message to Perón, informing him that the bombardment of the oil tanks at Mar del Plata

> ...demonstraba la determinación revolucionaria. Que si no dejaba el poder, se procedería en la misma forma con los tanques de combustibles de la destilería de La Plata, y luego con los de Dock Sur de Buenos Aires.[73]

Perón claims that it was this naval threat that made him decide to renounce power:

> El día 18 de septiembre a la noche la escuadra sublevada amenaza con el bombardeo de la ciudad de Buenos Aires y la Destilería de Eva Perón. Lo primero, de una monstruosidad sin precedentes, y lo segundo, la destrucción de diez años de trabajo y la pérdida de cuatrocientos millones de dólares.
>
> ...
>
> Sin embargo, me preocupaba la amenaza de bombardeo de la población civil, en la que seguramente perderían la vida miles de inocentes que nada tenían que ver con la contienda. Ya había Buenos Aires presenciado la masacre de 16 de junio de 1955, cuando la aviación naval bombardeó la Plaza de Mayo... Era de pensar lo que ocurriría en un bombardeo indiscriminado, sobre una ciudad abierta, sometida a la acción combinada de los cañones navales y las bombas aéreas...
>
> Me preocupaba también la destrucción de la destilería de petróleo de Eva Perón, una obra de extraordinario valor para la economía nacional y que yo la consideraba como a un hijo mío... Es indudable que, para los demás, no podía tener el mismo valor que para mí.[74]

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72 Quoted in A 30 Años de la Revolución Libertadora, op.cit., p.132.

73 ibid., p.134.

74 Perón, La fuerza, op.cit., pp.202-204.

He even raises the spectre of the Spanish Civil War:

> Influenciaba también mi espíritu la idea de una posible guerra civil de amplia destrucción y recordaba el panorama de una pobre España desvastada que presencié en 1939.[75]

To an extent, it does seem as if Perón was attempting to justify his decision to renounce power and to seek asylum abroad, even though the forces loyal to his regime were far more powerful than the rebel forces. Nonetheless, it is clear that the naval threat, coupled with the memory of the naval bombing of the Plaza de Mayo and the naval action against the oil tanks at Mar del Plata, played a crucial role in forcing Perón to offer his resignation on 19 September, handing over power to a military *junta* of four loyalist generals of his choice, and taking refuge on a Paraguayan gunboat in Buenos Aires harbour. After three days of confused negotiations with Admiral Rojas on his flagship, the loyalist *junta* turned over the government to the rebel forces.

The Attitude in the Lower Deck

When Admiral Rojas was asked to explain the reason why the Navy took part in the events that led to the overthrow of Perón in 1955, had this to say:

> Why did the Navy enter into the Revolución Libertadora? Because in the Navy the spirit, the soul, of the officers was absolutely, absolutely liberal, and the government, the Peronist system, were anti-liberal. It was very easy ... for me and for my friends to organise the Revolution of the Navy; we had no enemies in the water in front of us.[76]

While it is certainly true that the Navy presented far more unity and political consensus within its ranks in 1955 than did the Army, it is

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75 ibid., p.204.

76 Interview with Almirante (R.E.) Issac Francisco Rojas, 25 August 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

possible to exaggerate that level of consensus. Particularly significant was the disaffection within the ranks of the *suboficiales*, many of whom, unlike their officers, regarded Perón as *their* leader. Admiral Olivieri notes that on at least two earlier occasions, Perón's election in 1946 and the attempted *coup* led by General Menéndez in 1951, the *suboficiales* had planned counterconspiracies against their officers: "el personal de suboficiales conocía y desaprobaba íntimamente las actividades contrarias al gobierno por parte de algunos oficiales."[77] Likewise, there was some disaffection on the lower deck in 1955 as well, although naval discipline was maintained and there were no open signs of mutiny. A number of naval officers who were participants in the Revolución Libertadora talked about their personal experiences with the *suboficiales* and *marineros*. Captain Imas recalled the deep unhappiness of the ground crew and mechanics who had to fuel and arm the naval aircraft on 16 June, but who obeyed his orders because he used to play football with them regularly: "we were on the same team."[78] Captain Scotti, the "voice of liberty" on the Radio Base Naval Puerto Belgrano, described how he personally singled out petty officers with known Peronist sympathies and gave them the opportunity of being conscientious objectors, but who turned down the option and insisted that their primary loyalty was to their *compañeros*.[79] Admiral Milia, likewise, recalled how naval discipline did not crack even under such severe strain:

> The ranks - petty officers, warrant officers, troops too - love[d] Perón more than any another government. But [they were] surrounded by the culture and comradeship, the naval comradeship. It was not the same in the Army. In the Army, there was no comrade[ship] between the ranks and the officers. In the Navy, we had, and I believe we still do, strong comradeship. I have seen a warrant officer taking up his rifle against the Peronist troops and cry[ing] ... Because his heart belong[ed] to Perón,

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77 Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde, op.cit., p.15.

78 Interview with Capitán de Fragata (R.E.) Jorge Imas, 8 August 1990, at the Centro Naval in Buenos Aires.

79 Interview with Capitán Scotti, op.cit.

> but his duty belong[ed] to the Navy... putting [it] in the balance to select, they select[ed] the Navy.[80]

The Role of the Admirals

Despite the strong institution unity exhibited by the Navy during the crisis of September 1955, it is important to remember, as one of the participants pointed out, that "it was a revolution of... lieutenant-commanders and commanders, very few captains, [certainly not even a single] admiral."[81] Bonifacio del Carril makes a similar point:

> [E]s evidente que Perón sólo permitió el ascenso a los más altos cargos de los hombres que respondieron a su tendencia política o la toleraron. En la Marina el hecho estaba atenuado porque como casi toda la oficialidad era en general opositora, los nombramientos no podían hacerse sino dentro del plantel existente, fuera más o menos peronista. Pero aún dentro de la Marina, todos los Almirantes en actividad eran peronistas, al punto de que ninguno participó en la Revolución Libertadora. Por eso la sublevación de la Marina hubo de ser ejecutada por oficiales de capitán de navío para abajo, con la única excepción del contralmirante Isaac F. Rojas, que había sido peronista, pero que decidió intervenir en la Revolución y que - por ser el único jefe de mayor jerarquía - enarboló su insignia en el "17 de Octubre", hoy "General Belgrano".[82]

Admiral Isaac Rojas joined the naval rebels late in the day. But what, indeed, was the position of senior naval officers such as Admiral Olivieri, who had served in the highest ranks of Perón's government? Olivieri was, after all, Perón's Minister of the Navy. Olivieri himself is extremely honest about his relationship to the Peronists in his memoirs. As we have seen in the last chapter, he admitted that he had been "a sincere and enthusiastic partisan in the initial plan of General Perón" but nonetheless insisted that:

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80 Interview with Almirante Fernando Milia, op.cit.

81 Interview with Almirante Fernando Milia, op.cit.

82 Bonifacio del Carril, Crónica interna de la Revolución Libertadora (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1959), p.154.

> Not even as a [cabinet] minister was I affiliated with the Peronist Party. I have never been acquainted with a basic party unit nor have I ever entered the headquarters of the presidency of the Peronist Party. Although it may be difficult to believe, I do not even know where it was located.[83]

Perón regarded both Olivieri and Rojas as traitors and was particulary vituperative when he talked about Olivieri's "betrayal":

> Aníbal O. Olivieri... ha declarado a I.N.S. cosas que arrojan sobre sí el deshonor, la ignominia bajo el estigma infamante de la traición. La mentalidad de pajarito de este felón no alcanzará jamás a comprender el daño que se ha inferido.[84]

Perón had this to say about Rojas in the late 1960s, during the former's years of exile in Spain:

> [Admiral Isaac Rojas] was a furious *peronista*. He held receptions for the CGT and gave medals to the secretary-general, Espejo. He presented jewels to the wife of the governor of Buenos Aires. When he was naval attaché in Brasil he wanted to teach Ambassador Cooke *peronista* doctrine, which is why they quarrelled constantly. This Rojas was a man who pretended to be a *peronista* [but was] a traitor to the movement; an individual who was lying in ambush within the movement. They paid him, they gave him money ...[85]

Admiral Rojas was indeed regarded by most of the junior naval conspirators as one of the few pro-Perón elements within the Navy. Admiral Milia, a lieutenant at the time of the Revolution, remarks:

> In the June 16 [*coup*], three months before [the Revolución Libertadora], Admiral Rojas [was] not in the movement. He was a good friend of the Minist[er] of the Navy [Admiral Aníbal Olivieri]... He was one of the best

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83 Aníbal O. Olivieri, 'Why I Followed Perón', in Joseph R. Barager (ed.), Why Perón Came to Power : The Background to Peronism in Argentina (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), pp. 225-226. Translated from Aníbal O. Olivieri, Dos veces rebelde (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sigla, 1958), pp.23-27.

84 Perón, La fuerza, op.cit., p.183.

85 Quoted in Eduardo Crawley, op.cit., p.163. Admiral Rojas, when asked about these accusations, insisted that both he and Admiral Olivieri were anti-peronista from the very beginning, and that they had prevented the teaching of peronista doctrine within the Navy, although it was being taught within the Army. Interview, op.cit.

> friends of Perón. Three months before the Revolución Libertadora, we put Admiral Rojas [on] the side of Perón. He change[d] perhaps about July 1955.[86]

According to Crawley, when Admiral Rojas was asked to define his position during the *coup* of June 1955, he had replied with the equivocal statement, "One must be with *el Hombre*."[87] What, then, made him alter his political allegience? In Potash's opinion, "Rojas ... had no prior involvement in anti-Perón conspiracies, but as a result of his experiences in serving as defence counsel for ex-Minister Olivieri in his military trial, he came to the attention of the conspirators [of the September 1955 naval revolt], whose offer of leadership he accepted."[88] Likewise, Admiral Milia is of the opinion that "... the close friendship between Admirals Olivieri and Rojas explains ... why Rojas changed his mind."[89]

Immediately after his overthrow, Perón levelled upon the person of Admiral Rojas the charge of corruption, charges that are most likely fabricated since no evidence has ever been unearthed to substantiate them:

> La Dirección de Aduanas denunció en su oportunidad la existencia de una cadena de negocios para la venta de heladeras, aparatos de televisión, lavarropas, medias de nylon, etc., que era surtida por oficiales de la marina, dirigidos por el Contra-almirante Rojas... [90]

"Libertadora": A Naval Revolution?

It is clear from our study of the course of events during the revolutionary process that Perón could not have been overthrown without the active participation of the naval institution. Certainly, it was the Navy

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86 Interview with Almirante Fernando Milia, op.cit.

87 Crawley, op.cit., p.160.

88 Potash, op.cit., p.196.

89 Interview with Almirante Fernando Milia, op.cit.

90 Perón, La fuerza, op.cit., p.191.

that tipped the balance of forces against the Peronists during the events of September 1955. Is it, then, correct to assert that the Revolución Libertadora was, essentially, a naval operation? Perón himself, it is clear, regarded the naval role as instrumental in his loss of power. Seven years after his downfall, he claimed from his exile in Spain, "Cuando el Peronismo en 1955 evitó al país la destrucción de una lucha fratrícida, lo hizo confiando en que el Ejército defendería patrióticamente la nacionalidad, pero a poco andar sucedió todo lo contrario: la Marina al servicio de la Gran Bretaña y la Masonería infiltrada en el Ejército, con similar designio, consumaron la más inícua traición a la Patria."[91] Later, in the famous recollections that Perón taped for posterity in Madrid in the late 1960s, he would once again accuse the Navy of being an agent of Freemasonry and Britain, the popular whipping boys in that generation of Argentine politics:

> The revolution against me was pulled off by the English for economic reasons.[...] Argentina used to be an English colony. Consequently, our economic independence consisted in breaking the ties of dependence on England. It so happened that when in 1816 we became independent from the political power of Spain, we fell under the economic power of England. Ours was the second independence, to free us from England. The Navy played its role in this revolution. The Navy is formed by chiefs and officers who are also all Freemasons of the Scottish Celestial Rite, which is a very special rite. The English Navy belongs to the same rite. All this gave their people [the Argentine Navy] certain leanings, although it was not enough to turn all the chiefs and officers. That called for money, and the English bought them out and turned them into mere instruments of their designs. We knew that England was directing and financing all this, and that is why we removed the Navy's munitions. We didn't even leave them with detonators for their cannons. But the English, from their bases in the Malvinas [Falklands], not only gave them the munitions but also provided them with fuels and food from Montevideo. The Navy, as a body, was alien to the other services...[92]

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91 Juan Domingo Perón, Tres Revoluciones Militares (Buenos Aires: Escorpión Ediciones, 1963), pp.185-186.

92 Quoted in Eduardo Crawley, op.cit., pp.162-163.

Most students of these events have contrasted the revolutionary naval establishment with a largely apathetic army. As Felix Luna puts it:

> La Marina, con la sangre en el ojo desde el 16 de junio, estaba unánimemente por la revolución. Pero en el Ejército, la posición legalista era mayoritaria, aunque muchos jefes y oficiales resentían la persecución anticatólica y absorbían silenciosamente la intensa propaganda antiperonista que florecía clandestinamente.[93]

Goldwert, on the other hand, is far less charitable towards the Army while making the same point about the Navy:

> ... the Army officers proved reluctant rebels. They were, to a large extent, "fat cats", bound to the Perón regime by many ties. Most of the senior officers owed their positions to the dictator...
>
> Amidst the vacillation in the armed forces, the navy stood out as an unwavering revolutionary force against the regime.[94]

The Navy, however, has always prefered to project the Revolución Libertadora as a combined military operation, and has tended to see the crucial role played by the fleet in the estuary of the River Plate as being merely supportive of the efforts of the revolutionary army forces in Córdoba and Corrientes. Admiral Rojas insisted that

> General Lonardi fought [hard] in Córdoba, but with very very few men, two thousand men. He had in front of him more than twenty thousand men, with artillery, tanks, and everything - all the Argentine Army! On the 18th, one day before the bombardment of Mar del Plata, I received a dramatic telegram from General Lonardi that [said] - Admiral Rojas, my situation is very serious. I ask you to do something to ... alleviate my situation. Then I proceed[ed with] ... the bombardment of Mar del Plata ... [Perón] sent a telegram to the commander-in-chief of the loyal troops who [were fighting] against Lonardi - stop! And then he began to talk with Lonardi. So we see an operation very very very well [coordinated]. Without documents ... nothing - only words. I [did] not know

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93 Félix Luna, op.cit., p.75.

94 Goldwert, op.cit., p.126.

> General Lonardi. General Aramburu, yes, but General Lonardi, no. But I know General Lonardi was a gentleman, like General Aramburu. So the role of the [revolutionary] Army was to fix the mass of the [loyalist] Army around Córdoba. The role of Aramburu in Corrientes was to fix a very important part of the Army, *and the role of the Navy was to help the Army, but not on shore - at sea!*[95]

Page, too, is of the opinion that participation by a substantial part of the army was an essential prerequisite to any naval role in the Revolución Libertadora. He remarks:

> ... only the army could rid Argentina of the *conductor*. If there had been any doubts, the failure of the navy revolt [of June 1955] dissolved them. [...] Naval conspirators were ready to try again [in September 1955], but this time insisted on army participation.[96]

From the point of view of this study, the Revolución Libertadora is important not only because of the crucial role played by the Navy in the entire process, but also because it ended up placing the naval institution in at center of the political stage. It is true, as Whitaker points out, that "[the] circumstances of the revolution of September 1955 brought the Navy to the fore ... by making sea power decisive, but the new provisional government ... [was] headed successfully by two Army men, whereas the Navy ... had to be content with second place in the person of Admiral and Vice President Isaac Rojas."[97] The fact that an admiral did not become President of the Argentine Republic after the Revolution should not, however, prevent us from taking note of the exponential increase in the power of the naval institution in all spheres of government and society after 1955. Florit, quite accurately, remarks:

> Desde el punto de vista de la participación militar en la política nacional, la Revolución Libertadora cambia la

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95 Interview with Almirante Isaac Rojas, op.cit.

96 Page, op.cit., p.316.

97 Whitaker, op.cit., p.66.

> prioridad que tradicionalmente ponía al Ejército en primer lugar. El antiperonismo orgánico de la Marina la convierte en el principal grupo de presión postrevolucionario.[98]

One final word must be said about the Liberating Revolution. Just as the Peronist government was *both* populist and authoritarian, so too the uprising that overthrew it had a dual character. Lieuwen describes the two sides of the Revolución Libertadora better than most:

> Politically, the September 1955 revolution, inasmuch as it toppled a dictatorial regime, was a liberating action. Socially, however, inasmuch as a heretofore labour-oriented government was now replaced by one supported by the middle and upper income groups in the society, it could be described as a counter-revolution.[99]

In Triumph, Disaster

The overthrow of Perón might well have been the Navy's "finest hour", but it also marked the full-blooded insertion of the naval institution as an active actor in national politics. An institution that had been hitherto shielded from politics was now to feel the full glare of the political spotlight. Inevitably this was to lead to a loosening of institutional cohesion and naval discipline. Even in the immediate aftermath of the victory of the naval revolutionary forces, perceptive naval officers were thinking about the turbulent future and its effect on their institution. In lucid and moving prose Admiral (then Captain) Perren describes his concerns regarding the future health of the Navy. In order to draw this chapter to a close, and as an introduction to the chapters that follow, it is appropriate to quote Admiral Perren's memories of the evening the Navy triumphed over the Peronists:

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98 Carlos A. Florit, Las fuerzas armadas y la guerra psicológica (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Arayú, 1963), p.41.

99 Lieuwen, op.cit., p.73.

[La] tarea que ahora debía afrontar la Armada además de pasada, difícil e ingrata, llevaba en sí misma el germen de una amenaza a lo que constituía su mayor fuerza: su unidad espiritual. Y dudé que estuviera en buenas condiciones para afrontarla. La remoción inevitable de Almirantazgo llevaría a los más altos escalones del mando a hombres demasiados jóvenes, aún poco maduros para este ascenso prematuro a los cargos de mayor responsabilidad, y sobre todo huérfanos casi por completo de preparación para participar en problemas políticos y de gobierno, tan ajenos a sus tareas habituales y en cierta medida a su mentalidad y formación moral.

La conspiración había acercado excesiva aunque necesariamente a oficiales de muy distintas jerarquías, rompiendo las barreras habituales de la disciplina y la tradición militar; y los oficiales jóvenes tenían clara consciencia de habersido en su conjunto el motor de la revolución. ¿Tendrían ahora la sensatez suficiente para retomar sin demoras peligrosas ni pretensiones inconvenientes el lugar que les correspondía en la jerarquía militar? ¿Seríamos capaces los más antiguos de restablecer la disciplina sin mayores daños? Y todos, sin distinción de jerarquías, ¿podríamos evitar la tentación de incursionar en el terreno político, de asumir el papel de críticos del Gobierno Provisional, en materias de su indiscutida competencia?

La politización del Ejército y en cierta medida de la Armada después de las revoluciones de 1930 y 1943 no autorizaba a forjarse excesivas ilusiones. Temí por el futuro que aguardaba a la Armada y me sentí triste y aposadumbrado.

No sé cuanto tiempo permanecí a solas, rumiando mis preocupaciones. Debió ser bastante largo, porque la pipa estaba apagada y fría en mi mano cuando entraron varios oficiales, entre ellos los Capitanes Musis y Scotti y mi ayudante el Teniente de Navío Castro Madero. Se quedaron mirándome sorprendidos y éste último exclamó: "Discúlpeme, señor, ¿que le pasa? Todos estamos festejando el triunfo de la revolución y usted se encuentra aquí como si hubiéramos perdido y estuviera esperando que lo fusilaran." Sentía un gusto amargo en la boca y contesté lentamente: "Ustedes creen estar tocando el cielo con las manos y no se dan cuenta que sólo hemos hecho la primera parte de nuestra tarea, la más importante sin duda, pero también la más fácil. Ahora viene el trabajo sucio y difícil de la revolución. Pronto nos dividiremos y enfrentamos entre nosotros. Toda revolución devora a sus autores y nosotros no tenemos porqué ser la excepción." Se quedaron mirándome sin contestar. Al ver sus rostros juveniles, radiantes de entusiasmo y de euforia, me sentí Matusalén. Podía leer sus pensamientos como si los expresaran de viva voz: "El viejo está cansado y deprimido. En cuanto duerma como es debido se le pasará." Cierto, hacía ocho noches que no me acostaba, dormitando de a ratos, cuando podía, en un

sillón. Me sentía horriblemente cansado, pero mi mente se encontraba lúcida y fresca. Estaba seguro de no equivocarme en mi sombría apreciación del futuro inmediato que debíamos afrontar. Y desgraciadamente no me equivoqué.[100]

100 Jorge Enrique Perren, 'Memoirs', typewritten manuscript, pp. 309-310.

CHAPTER SIX

High Tide, 1955-1958: The Possession of Power

In this chapter we will study the military regime that ruled Argentina after the fall of Perón. Although this military regime lasted for only 33 months, it constitutes an important chapter in the political history of the Argentine Navy. As Rouquié points out, after the Revolución Libertadora the naval institution visibly entered the Argentine political scene as a major actor:

> [G]racias a su intervención decisiva en el levantamiento de septiembre, los marinos habían logrado un peso político sin precedentes... Por lo demás, la marina consiguió la parte del león en la distribución de los despojos.[1]

This was a period which witnessed a great deal of political confusion, since the successful insurgent forces had not made any plans for the post-Perón period. Potash describes the political task facing the military government:

> [T]he self-styled government of the Liberating Revolution had to confront the problems that arose from the very nature of its origin. It had to define its own orientation, domestic and foreign, in the absence of any prerevolutionary understandings and to develop policies amid the competing pressures of rival groups, each seeking to fill the vacuum left by the departure of Perón. But it was not only with civilian groups that it had to be concerned. As a government that derived its power from the exercise of force, it had to be sure of its control over a military establishment that was itself severely affected by the events of September.[2]

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1 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina II. 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), p.126.

2 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1945-1962 Perón to Frondizi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p.214.

Enhancing Institutional Power and Influence

Due to its fundamental *rôle* in the Revolución Libertadora the Navy gained enormous prestige. The Vice-Presidency was merely the most visible of the many positions the Navy acquired in the aftermath of Perón's defeat. The custom began of appointing a Naval officer as Police Chief of Buenos Aires, and Navy men filled numerous federal jobs for the first time. The Infantería de Marina (Marine Corps), only 2,000 strong before the Revolución Libertadora, was more than quadrupled in strength,[3] and became a major force to reckon with during military uprisings against the established government. The Navy acquired its first aircraft carrier in 1956, and despite strong opposition from the Air Force, established a fleet air arm. Arguing that it had to make up for the time lost under the Peronists, when the naval budget was severely curtailed, the naval leadership was successful in pushing through a $265-million ship and aircraft purchasing programme.[4] Some of the changes were symbolic rather than substantial. For instance, the military guard of honour at the official presidential residence at Olivos, which had traditionally been the task of the prestigious Patricios and Granaderos a Caballo regiments of the Army, was assigned to the Infantería de Marina as a mark of its *rôle* in steadfastly opposing Perón.

In the opinion of Admiral Rojas, naval liberalism made the institution a considerable force in the Provisional Government:

> [D]ebido a la cohesion y coincidencia de convicciones republicanas y liberales predominantes en la Armada con que se realizó la Revolución... fué posible que durante el Gobierno Provisional emergente, los principios que abrazaba la Armada - muy considerados por la ciudadanía -

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3 Edwin Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents: Neomilitarism in Latin America (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.15.

4 Lieuwen, op.cit., p.15.

> otorgaran a nuestra Institución una mayor dosis de confiabilidad de acción y de objetivos permitiendo proponer y adoptar medidas coincidentes con aquellos fines muy esperados, por otra parte, por el pueblo democrático y antitotalitario.[5]

Rojas also attributes the political weight of the navy during these years to its unquestionable anti-Peronism:

> Indudablemente las firmes convicciones de la Armada opuestas al sistema peronista y a sus empeños totalitarios, antirepublicanos y anticonstitucionales son los factores que no sólo impulsaron la crucial campaña de la Armada durante el Movimiento Revolucionario Cívico-Militar sino que, luego posibilitaron una coherente acción de gobierno para cumplir los objetivos fundamentales constitucionales que quedaron establecidos en la Directivas Básicas del 7 de Diciembre de 1955...[6]

Purges and Restitution

One of the first tasks facing the military institutions after the downfall of Perón was to purge their ranks of Peronists. In the Navy this was obviously far less of a problem than in the other two Armed Forces. On 7 October 1955 a Junta Asesora Revolucionaria was formed consisting of Rear Admiral Rojas and Captains Rial, Vago, Perren and Robbio, who set about restoring the rank, pensions, and in some cases, active status, of naval officers who had lost their careers due to political reasons since 1943. Thus, the verdicts of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces of October 1951 and November 1952 were overturned. The sanctions imposed by the Special Tribunal of 1955 were naturally declared as null and void. Among the senior officers reincorporated into active service were Captains Estevez and Kolungia, both of whom were to play an important *rôle* in the years that followed. As Admiral Perren points out, "[e]stos actos de reparadora justicia fueron cumplidos sin demora y por supuesto sin

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5 Written statement from Almirante (R.E.) Isaac F. Rojas, 29 September 1990, Buenos Aires.

6 ibid.

dificultades."[7] Difficulties arose from the policy of eliminating from active service "no sólo a los muy contados oficiales que habían refirmado en forma inequívoca su lealtad al gobierno depuesto sino a aquellos que no habían definido claramente su posición, manteniendo una actitud pasiva, incompatible en las circunstancias del momento con la responsabilidad inherente a su jerarquía militar."[8] On 22 November 1955 the Junta Asesora Revolucionaria released four lists of names. The first list consisted of "[p]ersonal que tuvo participación política activa a favor del régimen peronista", and included 17 captains, 13 commanders, 8 lieutenant-commanders and 5 lieutenants, a total of 43 officers. List No. 2 had fifteen officers on it (6 captains, 6 commanders, 2 lieutenant-commanders and one lieutenant), all of whom were categorised as "[p]ersonal que sin tener participación política activa defendió al régimen peronista o simpatizaba con él." The third list was of "[p]ersonal indiferente a las inquietudes revolucionarias y personal que por falta de condiciones o prestigio (independientemente de cuestiones políticas) era conveniente eliminar enseguida". On this list were 22 captains, 6 commanders, 1 lieutenant-commander, and 4 lieutenants and 2 midshipmen (ex-*suboficiales*). The officers named on these three lists were removed from the active list. The fourth list consisted of 85 officers who were ordered to face the Tribunal de Calificaciones when it next met.[9] All the admirals with the exception of Rojas resigned. Perren further states that less than 2% of the non-commissioned ranks of the Navy were dismissed from service.[10]

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7 Jorge Enrique Perren, 'Memoirs', typewritten manuscript, p.312.

8 ibid.

9 ibid., p.314.

10 ibid., p.316.

The Lonardi Period: "Neither Victors Nor Vanquished"

While the entire military leadership of the Revolución Libertadora was anti-Peronist, it was divided into two distinct political tendencies, with the Navy occupying one pole. Potash's description of these two political tendencies cannot be surpassed, and merits being quoted here at some length:

> At one extreme were self-styled democrats, men who identified with Argentina's liberal traditions, most of whom had been pro-Allied during World War II, and who had opposed Perón's rise from the very beginning. From moderate to conservative in their socio-economic views, they wanted to dismantle the Peronist political apparatus, reduce the power of the CGT, and reconstruct Argentine political life on the basis of the anti-Peronist political parties.
>
> At the other extreme were Catholic nationalists, men who viewed both Argentine liberalism and the traditional parties as betrayers of true national values. Neutralist if not clearly pro-Axis during the war, they had welcomed Perón's election in 1946 and found much that was praiseworthy in his first administration. It was only later that they turned against him... Now with Perón gone, they hoped to attract his supporters by maintaining the structure of the Peronist Party ...[11]

General Lonardi began his Presidency with the words *"ni vencedores ni vencidos"*, words which had been used by Urquiza after the Provinces had triumphed over Buenos Aires in the last century. This attitude of reconciliation coincided with the nationalist position but was rejected by the liberals. It is unclear whether Lonardi was playing the nationalst game or whether he was genuinely seeking reconciliation as a form of national pacification. Rouquié argues that there was never any ambiguity in Lonardi's support for the nationalist position:

> El nuevo presidente puso en guardia a los antiperonistas contra sus deseos de borrar sin apelación diez años de

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11 Potash, op.cit., pp.216-217.

> historia argentina. Dejando de lado toda veleidad de perseguir a los grupos sociales beneficiados en la era de Perón, Lonardi rechazó igualmente una eventual "restauración liberal". Para él y sus asesores, se imponía una simple rectificación histórica: había que volver al período 1943-1946, restablecer la política de Ramírez y Farrell, pero esta vez con el apoyo de los trabajadores organizados a quienes se propondría la enmienda, y no la destrucción del régimen peronista.[12]

Bonifacio del Carril describes the configuration of forces in the early days of the Revolución Libertadora under General Lonardi's leadership:

> En el Ministerio del Interior se atrincheraron los grupos minoritarios, los famosos *plantavotos* de Perón, encabezados por los democrátas progresistas...
>
> En el Ministerio de Marina actuaron diversos grupos, pero especialmente los socialistas, con Américo Ghioldi. Orientaba la política del Ministerio el capitán de navío Arturo H. Rial, enérgica personalidad que desempeñaba la Subsecretaría. El capitán Rial había dirigido la Revolución dentro de la Marina, y consideraba, con bastante dosis de verdad, que esta era su Revolución, y no la del Ejército. Escuchaba no sólo a los socialistas, sino, paradójicamente, tambien a algunos conservadores...
>
> La tercera fortaleza era la Secretaría Privada del Presidente, donde actuaba el doctor Clemente Achával, de antigua tendencia nacionalista, que había organizado el Partido Unión Federal.
>
> El cuarto reducto estaba también dentro de la Presidencia misma, en la Casa Militar, a cargo del coronel Bernardino Labayru. Éste representaba un sector del Ejército cuya actuación vino a tener fundamental importancia en los acontecimientos ulteriores: los revolucionarios de 1951.
>
> Finalmente, el quinto puesto de combate era el Ministerio de Guerra, desempeñado por el general Bengoa, en el que actuaba además el coronel Eduardo Señorans, el antiguo eje de la conspiración contra el dictator...[13]

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12 Rouquié, op.cit., p.123.

13 Bonifacio del Carril, Crónica interna de la Revolución Libertadora (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1959), pp.152-153. An explanation of the influence of the socialists on the Navy is important here. Despite the liberal orientation of most naval officers, warm personal ties between them and socialist politicians were not unusual. This can partly be explained by the profound anti-Peronism in both groups. The moderate nature of the Argentine Socialist Party, its quasi-liberal leanings, and the cosmopolitan attitude of many socialist politicians probably contributed to this affinity as well.

Del Carril goes on to describe the many political and ideological antagonisms amongst these five clusters of power in the Lonardi administration:

> La lucha se hizo despiadada especialmente entre el Ministerio del Interior y la Secretaría Privada del Presidente... Por otra parte luchaban el coronel Labayru, Jefe de la Casa Militar contra el Ministro de Guerra, general Bengoa. Terciaba la Marina con el capitán Rial, aconsejado por los socialistas, que era de hecho, rival del doctor Busso, y enemigo por razones ideológicas y políticas del doctor Villada Achával. Las acusaciones eran recíprocas.[14]

Potash characterises the attitude of the naval leadership to Lonardi thus:

> [T]he Navy had been responsible for Perón's overthrow... [Naval leaders] were determined that their institution should have a strong voice in government appointments and policy decisions. Traditionally suspicious of the nationalists in the Army, whom they regarded as little better than Perón, the Navy leaders were sensitive to any moves that would strengthen nationalist influence within the government.[15]

Rouquié likewise feels that the naval opposition to Lonardi was ideological:

> Los oficiales liberales y laicos, mayoritarios en la marina, desconfiaban de los allegados al presidente y de su política...Los marinos, por tradición ideológica, rechazaban tanto el integrismo ultramontano, como el nacionalismo de la nueva administración.[16]

The naval leadership was deeply concerned with many of Lonardi's appointments. As we have just seen, naval opposition was primarily aimed at Lonardi's brother-in-law, Clement Villada Achával, who was the

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14 del Carril, op.cit., pp.160-161.

15 Potash, op.cit., p.218.

16 Rouquié, op.cit., p.126.

President's special aide. Thus, when Lonardi appointed a prominent ultranationalist writer, Juan Goyeneche, to head the press secretariat, he was strongly opposed by liberals both within and outside the Navy who pointed to the appointee's pro-Axis war record. Goyeneche was forced to resign. Liberals within the Army then forced the resignation of Army Minister General Bengoa, but were unable to have him replaced by the Army Chief, General Aramburu. Instead, Lonardi elevated Colonel Ossorio Arana to general rank and appointed him as the Army Minister. As far as liberals within the Army were concerned, General Arana's record during the Army uprising in Córdoba made him an acceptable political head of the Army. However, when the nationalists tried to recoup lost ground by bifurcating the Ministry of Interior and Justice and appointing a well known nationalist, Luis María de Pablo Pardo, as Interior Minister, it was the last straw for the liberals. Despite Pablo Pardo's collaboration with many naval officers during the revolution, the naval leaders found this appointment unacceptable. On 13 November 1955, on the strong prompting of the Navy, the three senior Commanders demanded, and eventually secured, Lonardi's departure. Lonardi was succeeded by the Army Chief General Pedro Aramburu.

The Persecution of Peronism and the Execution of Valle

Far more than the leaders of the other two armed forces, the admirals and senior captains who comprised the naval leadership advocated the total elimination of Peronism in all its manifestations. Significantly, Decree Law 3032 designated a naval officer, Captain Alberto Patrón Laplacette, as the *interventor militar* in the Confederación General de Trabajo,[17] the massive trade union that was the *"columna vertebral"* of the Peronist

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17 Daniel Rodríguez Lamas, La Revolución Libertadora (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1985), p.119.

movement. Peronism was regarded by the Navy leadership as a quasi-totalitarian movement. Admiral Carlos Sánchez Sañudo, who was on the personal staff of Admiral Rojas during the Revolución Libertadora, exemplifies this naval attitude when he likens Peronism to Nazism, and draws attention to Article 21 of the post-War Constitution of the German Federal Republic that excludes all political parties having any affiliation to Nazi ideology.[18] Rouquié is certainly not overstating the case when he remarks that "el almirante Rojas encarnaba la más absoluta intransigencia respecto del "totalitarianismo peronista"."[19]

The most dramatic evidence of the Navy's hostility to Peronism came on 9 June 1956. In order to suppress an ill-planned uprising by officers and *suboficiales* cashiered from the Army after the Revolución Libertadora for their Peronist loyalties, a number of rebels, including their leader, General Juan José Valle, were executed on the orders of the Acting-President, Admiral Rojas, *the only time this century when a government in Argentina has resorted to this draconian measure to put down a rebellion.*[20] When General Aramburu left Buenos Aires on 8 June 1956 for an official visit to Santa Fe and Rosario, he left signed but undated decrees with Admiral Rojas in case fast action needed to be taken by the latter in a contingency. In order to suppress the Peronist uprising on 9 June, Rojas ordered a few executions on the night of 9-10 June. However, the executions carried out on 11 and 12 June were carried out after full deliberation by Aramburu, Rojas and the three military ministers. It was felt that the senior officers who had led the rebellion should not escape the punishment meted out to their followers. Despite much public revulsion, the sentences were summarily carried out. In this context it is

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18 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Carlos A. Sánchez Sañudo, 10 September 1987. at his residence in Buenos Aires.

19 Rouquié, op.cit., p.126.

20 For an excellent account of the June 9 uprising, see Potash, op.cit., pp.230-235.

important to note that the executed General Valle was a *compañero de promoción* of General Aramburu.

Potash makes the important point that only four months before the executions the military government had removed the death penalty from the military justice code, since it was the product of Peronist legislation after the Menéndez coup of 1951.[21] Despite the repeal of this provision, "the military government paid greater heed to the demand for blood than had Perón."[22]

The execution of General Valle was "perceived as being viciously aggressive"[23] by the Peronists, who came to regard the naval institution as their sworn enemy. Guido di Tella puts the Peronist perspective thus:

> We thought it was a shocking thing to do. And [the executions were] associated with the Navy... In the early years after the downfall [of Perón in 1955] the Navy was obviously considered by the *peronistas* as the *bête noire* really, the beastly people... The *peronistas* always made a differentiation between the perception of the Army and the Navy, very strongly so.[24]

Rouquié remarks about the executions of June 1956:

> La severidad de la represión habla a las claras del ambiente que se vivía en aquel entonces... La Revolución Libertadora tuvo la audacia de actuar con un rigor que Perón nunca aplicó a sus enemigos.[25]

In this context Rouquié asks an important question: "¿Por qué se produjo esta alteración sangrienta a las reglas de juego?"[26] He speculates that this brutal decision could have been motivated by fears that the Peronist

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21 Potash, op.cit., p.230.

22 ibid., p.234.

23 Interview with Diputado Guido di Tella, 26 January 1988, Oxford.

24 ibid.

25 Rouquié, op.cit., p.137.

26 Rouquié, op.cit., p.137.

insurrectionists were conspiring with military supporters of Lonardi, and to forestall these two disgruntled groups from collaborating:

> [L]as ejecuciones contribuyeron a ensanchar el abismo que seraraba a peronistas y revolucionarios, a vencidos y vencedores. Para el gobierno era una forma de quemar las naves, de llegar a un punto de no retorno. Haría imposible una reconciliación por largo tiempo.[27]

Years later, Rojas stated, somewhat implausibly, that the military regime had feared that a counterrevolutionary movement was in motion, and that these "lamentable sentences" were carried out to stop this movement in its tracks.[28]

Relations with the Army

Following the overthrow of Perón there were significantly different moods within the Army and the Navy. As del Carril perceptively notes:

> En octubre de 1955 todas las cabezas responsables en el Comando del Ejército querían, pues, apartarse de la política y volver a las Fuerzas Armadas a sus funciones específicas. Fué una actitud similar a la que tenía en ese momento el Clero, sobre cuya conciencia pesaba también el apoyo que había prestado a Perón...
>
> No fué esta... la actitud de la Marina, que vivía su primera revolución y que quería hacer su propia experiencia...[29]

The buoyant mood within the Navy led many naval officers to assume for their institution a *rôle* as overseer of the revolution. Perren remarks in this context are illustrative:

> En Ejército y Aeronáutica los oficiales democráticos tendrían sin duda por delante, desde ahora, una dificil tarea que cumplir, pero hasta tanto tomaran firmemente en

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27 Rouquié, op.cit., pp.137-138.

28 Potash, op.cit., fn. 41, pp.233-234.

29 del Carril, op.cit., p.159.

> sus manos el control de esas Fuerzas Armadas e hicieran la necesaria depuración, la Armada tendría que asumir la mayor responsabilidad por la protección y defensa no sólo del Gobierno Provisional sino de los ideales y objetivos por los que se había hecho la revolución.[30]

The constant naval claim that it was "the only service uncorrupted by Peronism",[31] and its hardline attitude *vis-à-vis* Peronism was to bring it in conflict with the other two military institutions on a number of occasions. When labour agitation mounted in 1957, for example, the naval leadership opposed General Aramburu's soft policy of granting wage increases, arguing that wage increases not based on productivity increases were inflationary, and advocating instead the arrest of the "Peronist and Communist agitators" causing the labour unrest.[32] Within the Army, this consolidation of naval power was viewed with concern, there being "... a reluctance to accept the Navy as anything but a junior partner."[33] Navy leaders, on the other hand, merely "saw themselves in a defensive posture trying to retain a hard-won share in the decision-making process."[34]

Initially, both the Army and the Naval leaderships made an attempt to keep inter-force competition within bounds. Thus, when the question of replacing General Lonardi as President arose in November 1955, the Army officers plotting the President's ouster were unclear whether the Navy saw Admiral Rojas, in his capacity as Vice-President, as the obvious successor agreed to Lonardi. The Navy, however, was realistic about the limits to its power, and accepted the formula of "Army-Navy" that the conspirators against Lonardi were proposing for the next presidential team. This acceptance by the Navy opened the way for General Pedro Aramburu to be

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30 Perren, op.cit., p.308.

31 Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents, op.cit., p.15.

32 Potash, op.cit., p.257.

33 ibid., p.238.

34 ibid., p.239.

appointed as Lonardi's successor. In return, the Navy demanded and got a Revolutionary Military Council consisting of the Vice-President and the Ministers of the three Armed Forces, established with the power to veto all Presidential measures. By giving the Navy half the membership of the new body, the political influence of the Navy in the Junta Militar was significantly advanced.[35] As Lieuwen points out:

> The Navy's unified, hard-line position with respect to "de-Peronization" gave it a strength out of all proportion to its numbers. The Army had 80,000 men, the Navy less than 20,000, yet on the five-man junta that ruled Argentina from 1955-1958, the Navy had two men ..., the Army had two, and the Air Force one.[36]

These arrangements were set out in an accord signed by the notables of the three Armed Forces on 13 November 1955. Clause c) of the accord constituted a Consejo Militar Revolucionario, clause f) reestablished the Junta Consultiva Nacional of the various non-Peronist parties, and clause h) dissolved the Peronist Party. Simultaneously, decree no. 2908 was promulgated to comply with clause c) of the accord; article 2 of this decree stated that

> Todos los integrantes del Consejo Militar Revolucionario refrendarán los Decretos-Leyes, sean dictados en ejercicio de las funciones legislativas, o de las privativas de cada rama del Congreso Nacional, prestarán acuerdo a las designaciones de Ministerios Nacionales e Intervaciones en las Provincias y acordarán conjuntamente con el Poder Ejecutivo, los planes, declaraciones y medidas de importancia tendientes al cumplimiento de los fines perseguidos por la Revolución Libertadora.[37]

Aramburu soon set about whittling down the powers of the Revolutionary Military Council. An opportunity presented itself when the veteran Socialist leader Alfredo Palacios, a politician with impeccable

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35 ibid., pp.224-226.

36 Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents, op.cit., p.15.

37 Quoted in del Carril, op.cit., pp.259-261.

anti-Peronist credentials, threatened to resign as Ambassador to Uruguay if Decree No. 2908 was not withdrawn. Aramburu succeeded in convincing a deeply unhappy Rojas to accept his proposal to change the Revolutionary Military Council into a Junta Militar Consultiva, with the express understanding that this change was only for the sake of appearances.

In November 1956 Aramburu finally overcame repeated dissidence from certain sections of the Army with his appointment of General Ossorio Arana as Army Chief and retired General Víctor Majó as Army Minister.[38] Certain of his control over the Army, Aramburu became more confident of taking on the Navy. In January 1957 he carried out sweeping changes in his cabinet without discussing them with the Junta first, although he did inform Admirals Rojas and Hartung beforehand.[39] Likewise, after the Constituent Assembly had replaced the 1949 Peronist Constitution, abolished by decree in 1956, with the Constitution of 1853, the question of the juridical basis of the military regime arose. Aramburu advanced the view that since the old Constitution was in force again a "state of law" *("estado de derecho")* now prevailed in the country. Rojas, on the other hand, emphasised the de-facto character of the Provisional Government and insisted that it owed its existence to the September 1955 Revolution and not to a vote in the Constituent Assembly. Potash reasons that Rojas was concerned that the Navy would lose its power if the accord of 13 November 1955 no longer had validity.[40]

In the context of Army-Navy relations in Argentina during the Provisional Government of the Revolución Libertadora, a fascinating document, long classified "secret", is now in the public domain.[41] This is a U.S. State Department memorandum, dated 2 December 1955, of conversations

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38 Potash, op.cit., p.245.

39 Potash, op.cit., p.247.

40 Potash, op.cit., p.259.

41 U.S. State Department Classified Files, 735.5/12-255.

with General Aramburu, Admiral Rojas and Admiral Hartung during the state visit of the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State in November-December 1955. According to this memorandum, Rojas made these statements in a private conversation with the Assistant Secretary of State:

> The Argentine Navy is a very democratic institution. Its cadets are trained to feel that they are professional men and that they have no political aspirations. On the other hand the Argentine Army follows a Prussian pattern established some fifty years ago; it is not as democratic as the Navy and its young soldiers are taught that they should aspire to political position. Under these circumstances it is in the interest of those who seek to defend democracy in Argentina that the Navy should be strengthened as much as possible. In order to accomplish this he is fortifying a small island that lies just outside of Buenos Aires. He is installing an airstrip there and intends to make the island impregnable against ground forces. Thus the Navy will always have a base of operations in the event that it is attacked by the Army; will be in a position to pressure the Army.[42]

According to this memorandum, Admiral Rojas went on to say that Argentina placed particular importance on the purchase of an aircraft carrier, and that this had "the sure approval of the President and all sectors of the Government."[43] A little later the Assistant Secretary of State had a conversation with General Aramburu:

> The President immediately said that he thought it would be unfortunate for Argentina to utilize any of its resources to acquire an aircraft carrier. The nation's resources and borrowing capacity are needed for such things as the steel plant, power plants and other things required to rehabilitate the economy. He felt if there were any immediate danger this situation would be different, and that sometime in the future Argentina might look forward to acquiring new naval vessels.[44]

When President Aramburu was asked if his comments extended to Argentine naval requests for aircraft and equipment for the Naval Infantry as well, he asked the US diplomat to assign "third or fourth priority" to the naval

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42 ibid.

43 ibid.

44 ibid.

applications.[45] In a separate conversation, Admiral Hartung told his US counterpart that the Argentine Navy needed an aircraft carrier to "keep the Army in line".[46] The US diplomat's assessment of the situation was:

> It was rather obvious from the conversation that the Navy is trying to arm in order to be able to present effective opposition to the Army. The split within the government was rather apparent.[47]

Despite the fairly obvious drift of these conversations, the memorandum also notes that Admiral Rojas "went on to insist that relations between the representatives of the two forces in the Government are most cordial."[48]

What, then, can one make of Army-Navy relations during this period? It is certain that the Navy was in a mood of power and jurisdiction expansion during the Provisional Government of the Revolución Libertadora. The Army response was divided, as was the institution itself. For the nationalists within the Army it was important to oppose the political aspirations of the naval institution. For the liberals within the Army, the situation was more complicated. On the one hand, they needed the Navy to keep the nationalists at bay, while on the other they were concerned that a major naval *rôle* would further strengthen the Navy *vis-à-vis* the Army. Aramburu's fluctuating relationship with Rojas can best be explained in this context.

The Holding of Elections

The senior ranks of the Armed Forces were divided into three factions *vis-à-vis* the question of holding elections to return Argentina to

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45 ibid.
46 ibid.
47 ibid.
48 ibid.

constitutional rule, and the connected issue of Peronist participation in them. There were the *quedantistas*, who demanded a continuation of direct military rule until the last vestiges of Peronism were eliminated; the *continuistas*, who wanted to hold elections but retain military control; and the *juegolimpistas*, who wanted to hold elections without the Peronists and hand over power to the victor.[49] The top naval leadership, consisting of Vice-President Admiral Isaac Francisco Rojas, Navy Minister Admiral Teodoro Hartung, and Navy Undersecretary Captain Arturo Rial, were firmly in the *quedantista* camp.

In the National Consultative Board consisting of the non-Peronist parties, the Navy did its utmost to force the two factions of the Radical party, the UCRI under Arturo Frondizi and the UCRP under Ricardo Balbín, to unite. Admiral Rial went to the extent of producing a draft statute that wold force the Radical Party to unify. However, the Army and the Air Force joined forces against the Navy on this issue, and in October 1956 the government promulgated decree law 19,004 which made it possible for rival factions in any party to present separate candidates for the elections.[50]

As del Carril points out, three options were available to the military regime by the end of 1956:" 1) formar una nuevo partido político con los elementos civiles revolucionarios, o sea, un partido de gobiero oficialista; 2) formar una coalición con los partidos minoritarios, llamados democráticos; 3) apoyar al Partido Radical."[51] About the disposition among the various groups in government to pursue one of these options, del Carril has this to say:

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49 Carlos A. Florit, Las Fuerzas Armadas y la Guerra Psicológica (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Arayú, 1963), p.48. The Peronists had different names for these three tendencies within the Armed Forces: gorilas, semigorilas and filogorilas. See Juan Domingo Perón, Tres revoluciones militares (Buenos Aires: Escorpión Ediciones, 1963), p.137.

50 Potash, op.cit., pp.237-238.

51 del Carril, op.cit., p.188.

Las dos primeras contaban con partidarios en el seno del gobierno, especialmente la segunda, en algunos sectores de la Marina. Pero el grupo de militares revolucionarios de 1951... se decidió por la ultima solucion.

...

El general Aramburu rechazó las dos primeras fórmulas que eran, sin duda, arriesgadas aventuras políticas y eligió, en cambio, el camino... que parecía más seguro: apoyar al Partido Radical que supuestamente era mayoritaria en la República.[52]

In line with his plan to support the Radicals, Aramburu appointed a number of prominent anti-Frondizi politicians to ministries where they had ample scope for patronage and control. This resulted in a great deal of tension between Aramburu and Rojas. In a meeting on 6 October 1957, the admiral accused the general of relying on civilian ministers who were openly advancing the cause of the UCRP to the detriment of Frondizi. Aramburu, in turn, complained that the arrest of union leaders ordered by Rojas was nothing more than a pretext to create disturbances that would force the abandonment of the electoral timetable.[53]

Other divisions were to appear between the Army and the Navy over this issue of the 1958 elections. While the Army and Air Force leadership were willing to allow the so-called neo-Peronist parties to contest the elections scheduled for July 1958, on the pragmatic grounds that doing so would split the Peronist vote, the "Navy position ... was based on a consistent principle: No Peronists under any label should be allowed to run."[54]

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52 del Carril, op.cit., pp.188-189.

53 Potash, op.cit., p.258.

54 ibid., p.263.

Politicisation of the Navy

As we have seen in this chapter, the Navy was deeply enmeshed in politics during the Provisional Government of the Revolución Libertadora. It is therefore not surprising that the officer corps of the Navy became steadily politicised. Junior and middle-ranking naval officers had played a crucial *rôle* in the events that led to Perón's overthrow, and they now felt that they had to act as watchdogs against any return of Peronism. As we shall see in the next few chapters, this infusion of politics within the naval institution was to have a major impact on its unity and discipline. Not only had the Navy entered politics, politics had entered the Navy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ebb Tide, 1958-1962: The Retention of Power

In February 1958 the Provisional Government of the Revolución Libertadora fulfilled its promise of transfering power to a civilian government by holding elections. Control was handed over in May. As we have seen, the Argentine Navy was instrumental in ensuring that Peronism as a political force was not only legally proscribed but brutally suppressed and violently persecuted as well. The election of Dr. Arturo Frondizi came as an unpleasant shock to most naval officers, particularly as he had got elected on "borrowed" Peronist votes. As a hard-line anti-Peronist put it years later: "Lo mejor que hizo la Revolución Libertadora fue echar a Perón, lo peor, entregar el poder al candidato de Perón en 1958."[1] The Frondizi period is extremely important to our study of the political *rôle* of the Argentine Navy, because it reveals the extent to which naval political behaviour was profoundly affected by the participation of the naval institution in the overthrow of Perón, and the subsequent establishment of the military government of the Revolución Libertadora. We will see in this chapter that the prominent naval *rôle* in Argentine political life from 1955 to 1958 not only politicised the institution and gave rise to pretorian ideas in many of its leading personnel, it also divided the institution into those who were inclined to obey the new civilian authorities and those who reserved for themselves the right to review and veto government policy in virtually all spheres of national life. As far as the Navy was concerned, the unprecedented internal disunity and lack of cohesion of this period was a direct result of naval predominance during the nearly-three years of anti-Peronist military rule. But apart from revealing the political consequences of the Revolución

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1 Roberto Aizcorbe, 'Azules y Colorados (1962-1963)', typed conference paper. (Buenos Aires: Escuela de Educación Economica y Filosofía de la Libertad, 8 August 1977), p.2.

Libertadora, the Frondizi years were also characterised by continuous civilian-military tensions on a number of issues relating to economic development, foreign relations and domestic politics. This chapter analyses naval politics in the light of the interaction of these various factors.

The Election of Frondizi

During the military government of General Aramburu, the faction of the Radical Party led by Ricardo Balbín, the UCRP, became virtually the party of government, occupying as it did the most important positions in the cabinet. Since Peronism was proscribed, the biggest challenge that Balbín faced in the presidential elections of 1958 was from Arturo Frondizi, the leader and candidate of the other Radical Party faction, the UCRI. It was clear that Balbín was the candidate who represented *continuismo*, and he therefore had the support of a distinct majority of military officers, who were keen to "preserve the achievements" of the Revolución Libertadora. Thus, Frondizi's clear victory in the polls was an unwelcome development as far as most sectors within the Armed Forces were concerned. This sentiment of opposition to Frondizi was felt particularly acutely within the Navy because of the massive Peronist support for his candidacy in the elections. Indeed, much was made then and later of a "secret pact" between Perón and Frondizi, the existence of which the latter has always denied despite frequent Peronist assertions to the contrary. In the eyes of most naval officers, particularly those within the *quedantista* and *continuista* camps, Frondizi's victory was "tainted" due to his association with the deposed dictator, and they never reconciled themselves to the new government. The *juegolimpistas* within the Navy, on the other hand, saw in Frondizi's election an excellent opportunity not only for the reemergence of democratic civilian politics but also for the

reincorporation of the disenfranchised Peronists into the civic and political life of the nation. Frondizi, they argued, would win over the massive support base of Peronism. Thus, while Frondizi did have to face substantial discontent within the Navy from the very beginning, he nonetheless had the support of *some* important naval officers. Within the Navy, and within the Admiralty, the battle lines were drawn. Years of politicisation had definitely had an effect on the internal cohesion of this hitherto impressively united institution.

The Appointment of Estevez

The massive changes that the military regime had tried to impose upon Argentine society and polity from 1955 to 1958 meant that Frondizi had his work cut out for him in all spheres of government activity, and in no area more so than the "military question" itself. Civil-military relations and the policy towards Peronism would have been the main topics on the domestic political agenda of the new government even if Frondizi had not been an activist President. For instance, Frondizi had to reassure the military authorities that he would not reincorporate officers cashiered for their Peronist affiliation during the Revolución Libertadora. However, unmindful of the many complications that already existed in his relations with the Armed Forces, Frondizi was determined to reorganise Argentina's military machine radically. Eager to assign only one of the eight cabinet posts permitted him by the Constitution to the military, rather than the customary three, Frondizi mooted the idea of a new Ministry of National Defence uniting the three separate ministries that had existed till then for the Armed Forces. Convinced that this would lead to Army control over their institution, the naval leadership refused to even consider the proposal, despite Frondizi's assurances that he was considering a

distinguished civilian for the post.[2] After much naval opposition, and a good deal of bitterness within the institution, the naval authorities conceded the President-Elect's right to organise the federal government as he saw fit. However, Frondizi's plans went beyond simply uniting the three Armed Forces under one ministry and creating three separate secretariats for the individual forces. He also decided that he would appoint a single serving officer rather than a retired one to *both* the secretariat in his government and the top post within the force *simultaneously*. In the context of the Navy, this meant that the senior admiral would be the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations at the same time. This decision was opposed by most senior officers, partly on the grounds that it would remove a very prestigious post that other admirals could aspire to, but more significantly because the holder of the dual posts would have the contradictory tasks of simultaneously representing both the government's and the Navy's point of view on a number of contentious issues. The latter concern was to prove to be a prophetic one.

A decision linked to the one above was the selection of the senior admiral. For the dual appointment Frondizi selected an outstanding naval officer, Admiral Adolfo Estevez, who was widely considered the sharpest intellect in the Almirantazgo since Admiral Segundo Storni a generation earlier. Estevez had graduated as the valedictorian of his Promoción from the Escuela Naval Militar, and had earned his anti-Peronist credentials the hard way when he was sentenced to rigourous imprisonment after the failed "Suárez conspiracy" of 1952. While admiring his intellectual ability, many of Estevez's contemporaries privately doubted his leadership qualities: the new Navy Secretary and Chief of Naval Operations was the first (and only) valedictorian in the history of the Escuela Naval Militar who was *not*

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2 Robert A. Potash, The Army & politics in Argentina, 1945-1962: Perón to Frondizi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp.275-276.

appointed to the office of Brigadier Primero, the most senior position in the corps of cadets. Despite these private reservations, Frondizi's selection of his senior admiral was widely welcomed at the time of his appointment.

The Dismissal of Rial

The events leading to the resignation of Admiral Arturo Rial clearly demonstrate the nature of the "military problem" facing Frondizi. Rial, along with Admirals Isaac Rojas and Teodoro Harturg, formed the *troika* of navy strongmen during the Provisional Government of the Revolución Libertadora. While Rojas and Hartung retired with the election of Frondizi, Rial remained in active service although he was implacably opposed to the new president. In 1958 Rial was elected as the sole candidate for the presidency of the social club of Argentine naval officers, the Centro Naval in Buenos Aires, with the largest plurality of votes in the history of the institution. From this important non-official position, Rial launched an unremitting campaign against Frondizi within the Navy. The final showdown came a few days before the annual ceremonial dinner at which the President is the chief guest. Rial sent Frondizi an advance copy of his speech, which was extremely critical of the President. Reacting decisively, Frondizi placed Rial under house arrest in March 1958. In October of the same year, on the occasion of Estevez's official visit to the US, Rial would have taken over temporary charge of the Navy as its ranking admiral, but he made clear his intention to start a movement to depose Frondizi as soon as he had command of the naval institution. After this, there was no scope for compromise and Rial was forced to retire. While no damage was done to the civilian government on this occasion, this episode revealed the extent to which praetorian notions had taken hold amongst important naval officers since 1955.

The Resignation of Estevez

Frondizi faced a near-mutiny of his admirals in July 1959, when he refused, till the very last moment, to accede to their demand that he replace Admiral Adolfo Estévez, his right-hand man in the institution who held the dual posts of Navy Secretary and Chief of Naval Operations. The other admirals demanded Estevez's resignation because they had lost faith in his ability and willingness to represent the institutional point of view to the government. Their objection to Estevez was simple: *"falta de conducción"*, or leadership faults. The question-mark that had dogged the intellectual admiral throughout his career had re-emerged once more. Initially, Frondizi tried to brazen his way out of the crisis by refusing to comply with the demands of his admirals. He then bifurcated the top posts in the Navy by retaining Estevez as Navy Secretary and freeing the post of Chief of Naval Operations for another admiral. It was only when the admirals advised him that they would withdraw recognition from his government unless Estevez resigned that Frondizi finally succumbed to the pressure and asked for the resignation of his Navy Secretary.

In retrospect, Frondizi has no regrets about his decision to entrust the Navy to Estevez. When asked if he had any second thoughts about the appointment of Estevez to the two top posts in the Navy *simultaneously*, Frondizi insisted that it was "un gran acierto... el Almirante Estevez era un hombre de gran prestigio dentro y fuera del arma."[3] He attributed the opposition within the Almirantazgo to Estevez thus:

> La situation del Almirante Estevez se hizo muy difícil dentro del arma, por sus ideas industrialistas y de desarrollo, no aceptadas por sus camaradas.[4]

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3 Written statement from Dr. Arturo Frondizi, 26 September 1990, Buenos Aires.

4 ibid.

From the perspective of our study of the political behaviour of the Argentine Navy, the "Estevez Affair" must necessarily be seen as being more than the mere sidelining of a brilliant but flawed naval career. This episode represents the complete breakdown of the naval hierarchy, an event unparalleled in Argentine naval history. To an extent this breakdown in naval discipline at the very top can be attributed to unsound dual-post leadership imposed upon the institution by Frondizi. More significantly, it represents the extent to which the institution as a whole, and the Admiralty in particular, had been politicised during the Revolución Libertadora.

The Overthrow of Frondizi

The insubordination of Rial and the involuntary resignation of Estevez were the two major crises regarding personnel that Frondizi faced in his relations with the Navy. These were, however, merely two of the many points of friction between the Frondizi administration and the naval authorities. There was, for instance, a marked divergence in the economic philosophies the two institutions embraced: while the government had formulated a nationalist and developmentalist economic policy, the majority of naval officers were firm believers in economic liberalism. The naval high command also found much to object in Frondizi's activist foreign policy, with its emphasis on *tercermundismo*. The secret visit in late 1960 of Ernesto "Che" Guevara to the country of his birth after the Cuban Revolution and his decoration by Frondizi was seen by the Navy as tantamount to selling the national soul to the devil of communism. Frondizi's offer to mediate between the United States and revolutionary Cuba was seen within the Almirantazgo as a return to the notorious "Third Position" of Peronism. But the most important policy question related to the position of Peronism in national life. After varied experiments at

creating a "Peronism without Perón", Frondizi decided to go ahead with unrestricted congressional and gubernatorial elections in March 1962. For the Armed Forces, the final straw was the election of an important Peronist union leader, Andrés Framini, to the governorship of Buenos Aires Province. Even though the electoral results were annulled by Frondizi, this spelled the end of his regime.

Until the election of Framini, which they found intolerable, the naval leadership had remained supportive of Frondizi, perhaps because of the realisation that if the government were to be overthrown in a military *coup*, the resulting regime would, most certainly, be dominated by the Army, and that would then lead to a marked decline in the political influence of the naval institution. Although the Navy played a major role in the eventual overthrow of the constitutional government in March 1962, it is significant to note that Frondizi regarded the naval institution as having contributed significantly to the preservation of his government.[5] An important indication of Frondizi's faith in the credentials of the Navy was his insistence that he be held in the naval island prison of Martín García.

Arturo Frondizi regards his policies towards industrial development and the reintegration of Peronism as the critical points of friction that led ultimately to the overthrow of his administration:

> El factor más importante de fricción entre nuestro gobierno y las Fuerzas Armadas, con un sector de ellas no con todas, fueron las medidas industrialistas, que rompían la filosofía de la producción existente. No diferenciaron industrialización de Peronismo, con el cual el encono era muy profundo. No entendieron la imperiosa necesidad de pacificar internamente el país para que creciera, y la imposibilidad de conseguir esa pacificación sin la incorporación del Peronismo, mayoritario sin ninguna duda, al quehacer nacional.[6]

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5 Potash, Vol.2, op.cit., p.313, n.96.

6 Written statement by Dr. Arturo Frondizi, op.cit.

Arturo Frondizi analyses the naval attitude towards his government thus:

> Un sector [de la Armada] no aceptó la política aplicada durante mi gobierno, 1958-1962, y la combatió encarnizadamente. Fueron verdaderos enemigos del gobierno. Pero dentro de la Marina, había un grupo dirigido por el Almirante Adolfo Estevez, que gozaba de gran prestigio en el Arma, que acompañaron mi gestión. A pesar del apoyo de este grupo, podría decir que a la Marina le cabe responsabilidad en mi derrocamiento producido el 29 de Marzo de 1962.[7]

As we shall see in the next chapter, the overthrow of Frondizi created more problems for the Armed Forces than it solved. Major fault lines had already emerged within the Armed Forces around the single most important issue facing the country as a whole: what was to be done about Peronism?

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7 ibid.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Low Tide, April 1963: The Loss of Power

Frondizi was replaced in the Presidency by Senate President Dr. José María Guido, who was sworn in on 29 March 1962. By the time this legal subterfuge, aimed at maintaining the pretence of constitutional government, was enacted, it was clear that the Peronist movement, despite the different strategies adopted by the Aramburu administration and Dr. Frondizi's government to eliminate it, remained the most important electoral and social force on the Argentine political scene. The question of determining how to deal with this political phenomenon therefore became the most important item on the political agenda of the military institutions.

The Two Military Camps

At a superficial level, the Army was divided into two factions, the first a group of "hardline *antiperonista* generals who believed that only a harsh, unflinching military dictatorship could rid the country permanently of all vestiges of *peronismo*",[1] and the second those generals who "avowed their support of civilian rule, the ultimate removal of the army from politics, and the gradual integration of the Peronist masses into political life by a process subject to electoral restraints."[2] Since there was little to distinguish them by, they soon started identifying each other by the peacetime war game colours of *colorado* (red) and *azul* (blue), the hardline anti-Peronists being identified with the former colour and the moderate legalists by the latter.[3] Admiral Milia, who at the time was

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1 Eduardo Crawley, A House Divided : Argentina 1880-1980 (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1984), p.232.

2 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p.143.

3 The use of war game colours to distinguish the two political groupings was first resorted to by cavalry officers who made up the ranks of the moderate legalists. In war games, "blue" stands for "our side" and "red" for "the enemy".

President Guido's Chief of the Military Household, describes these factions thus:

> The Red ... [were] strongly anti-Peronist. The Azules were not Peronists, but [they] want[ed] to be the heirs of the Peronist movement. The Red want[ed] to erase the Peronists, the Blues ... [wanted] to swallow the Peronists.[4]

The Azules were opposed to the Army "dictating the everyday conduct of government", and were advocating in its stead "an institutional political role for the Army (as the ultimate defender of the national integrity and the Constitution)."[5] We will attempt to analyse the differences between these two groups later in the chapter. Let us first study the manner in which the conflict between the two groups developed in 1962 and 1963.

The Events of 1962

Since the dynamics of the Azul-Colorado struggle were worked out exclusively within the Army during the course of 1962, we do not need to analyse them in detail. For the purposes of our study, a general understanding of the developments will suffice.[6] The Army was divided into two camps on the question of the future of Peronism. In the perpetually divided Argentine Army, it was not surprising that these two divergent views came to be clustered around pre-existing divisions, the most important of which was the functional division of the Army into Arms. Thus, the Cavalry came to adopt a more moderate attitude towards Peronism than the Infantry. There were exceptions to this scheme, of course: General Toranzo Montero, for example, although a Cavalry general, was a

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4 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Fernando A. Milia, 27 August 1987, at the office of the Boletín del Centro Naval in Buenos Aires.

5 Crawley, op.cit., pp.233-234.

6 This synthesis of the process by which the Azul-Colorado struggle worked itself out within the Army has benefitted a great deal from a short but stimulating interview with Dr. Mariano Grondona. Interview with Dr. Mariano Grondona, 5 September 1990, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

hardline anti-Peronist. Internal Army politics in 1962 was a constant battle for position between these two groups, resulting in great instability at the top of the Army. A succession of generals were appointed to the top offices of Army Secretary and Army Chief, as the caretaker government of José María Guido would succumb to pressure put on it, first from one faction, and then the other. It was a Cavalry general who first named the opposite faction *Colorados* (in military jargon, "the other side"); the Cavalry then became the *Azules*. Although the Colorados occupied most of the senior positions in the Army, the Azules controlled the crucial Campo de Mayo barracks outside Buenos Aires. Through most of 1962 the two factions fought battles by communique, but in September 1962 General Juan Carlos Ongania led the Azul Cavalry forces to a total victory over the Colorado forces. After taking over as Army Chief, Ongania issued the famous Communique No. 150, which was notable for its emphasis on democracy for the country and professionalism for the Army:

> Nuestro objetivo en lo nacional es mantener el actual Poder Ejecutivo...
>
> En lo militar, se persigue el restablecimiento de la justicia y de la disciplina, el respeto a las leyes y reglamentos, sin discriminaciones en su aplicación.
>
> Sostenemos que el principio rector de la vida constitucional es la soberanía del pueblo. Sólo la voluntad popular puede dar autoridad legítima al gobierno y majestad a la investidura presidencial.
>
> Propiciamos, por lo tanto, la realización de elecciones mediante un régimen que asegure a todos los sectores la participación en la vida nacional, que impida que alguno de ellos obtenga, por medio de métodos electorales que no responden a la realidad del país, el monopolio artificial de la vida política, que exija a todos los partidos organización y principios democráticos y que asegure la imposibilidad del retorno a épocas ya superadas.
>
> ...
>
> Creemos que las fuerzas armadas no deben gobernar. Deben, por el contrario, estar sometidas al poder civil.
>
> ...

Confiamos en el poder civil, creemos en nuestro pueblo.[7]

With the defeat of the Colorados within the Army the Navy faced the danger of an open confrontation with the Army. As Admiral Perren puts it, "Frente a un Ejército, ahora predominante Azul, la Armada, en su mayor proporción alienada en el bando opuesto, se encontró dividida y debilitada internamente, en grave riesgo de ser llevada a un enfrentamiento con el primero en el que tendría todas las posibilidades de perder."[8] The designation of Admiral Kolungia, personal friend of Admiral Estevez, as Secretary of the Navy threatened the institution with another "Estevez Affair",[9] since most of the serving admirals were opposed to the new secretary of state. However, another internal naval crisis was averted with the resignation of Admiral Kolungia in November 1962 and his replacement by Admiral Garzoni.[10]

The Little Revolution: 2 April 1963

The release of three communiques on 2 April 1963 indicated that a substantial part of the Navy was in a state of rebellion, and that the naval rebels could count on some Army and Air Force support. These communiques were issued by the retired General Benjamín Menendez, Commodore Osvaldo Raúl Lentino, and an unnamed "Comandante de Operaciones Navales".[11] A little before noon Puerto Belgrano announced that it was in rebellion, and the Fifth Infantry Regiment announced that it was going to resist the naval rebels.[12] President Guido immediately called the three military

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7 Quoted in La Nación, 24 September 1962. It was revealed years later that this communique had been written by Dr. Mariano Grondona.

8 Jorge Enrique Perren, 'Memoirs', typewritten manuscript, p.446.

9 The "Estevez Affair" is covered in Chapter Seven.

10 Perren, 'Memoirs', op.cit., p.446.

11 La Nación, 3 April 1963.

12 ibid.

secretaries of state, General Benjamin Rattenbach, Admiral Carlos Garzoni, and Brigadier Eduardo McLoughlin, to a meeting, at which, significantly, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Juan Carlos Onganía, was also present. In the late morning the Air Force declared its neutrality, announcing that its policy towards both sides was "no reprimian ni apoyaban".[13] A further Air Force communique stated that only a few of its personnel rebelled, but without any institutional backing.[14] After sitting on the fence for a few more hours, the Air Force issued a third communique in the afternoon, in which it threatened to intervene against the naval rebels "si las fuerzas rebeldes no deponen su actitud."[15] President Guido assigned the Army and Air Force high commands with the task of suppressing the rebellion,[16] and met Admiral Carlos Garzoni and the Chief of Naval General Staff, Admiral Enrique Grunwaldt, for a brief period.[17] From the provinces of Corrientes and Misiones it was announced that the Seventh Infantry Division was not supporting the rebels.[18] The airborne troops in Córdoba, on the other hand, joined the fighting on the side of the naval rebel forces.[19] In the early evening President Guido issued Presidential Communique No.4, directing the rebel naval forces to cease fighting and to return to their respective units.[20] Late in the evening of 2 April the Commander of the Sea Fleet, Rear Admiral Eladio Vazquez, got in touch with the President's office, and simultaneously reprimanded the rebel naval forces.[21] The rebel forces totally dominated the situation in Mar del Plata, but the submarines were not in the naval base but on exercises in the south at the time.[22] In and around City Bell a serious battle raged

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13 ibid.
14 ibid.
15 ibid.
16 ibid.
17 ibid.
18 ibid.
19 ibid.
20 ibid.
21 ibid.
22 ibid.

between the Naval Infantry and the Seventh Infantry Regiment, while naval aircraft attacked the Second Communications Battalion.[23] The last action of the naval aircraft from Punta Indio, under the command of Captain Santiago Sabarots, was to attack the Army camps at Magdalena and Campo de Mayo, the former very heavily.[24]

The next day the Army and Air Force hit back, with awesome results. The Punta Indio naval airbase was heavily bombed by the Air Force before falling to the tanks from Campo de Mayo, the Tenth Cavalry Regiment Hussars of Pueyrredón, and commanded by Colonel Sánchez de Bustamante.[25] The tanks of the Eighth Armoured Regiment, commanded by Colonel López Aufranc, which had suffered major casualties at Magdalena at the hands of naval aircraft from Punta Indio, also occupied the destroyed naval airbase.[26] Everywhere, from Bahía Blanca to Mar del Plata, the naval rebels were in retreat, and rebel naval aircraft started flying to Uruguay. At noon, the Minister of National Defence announced that "[l]a Armada, por intermedio del Contralmirante Eladio Vázquez, ha comunicado al secretario de Marina que han cesado sus operaciones."[27]

The naval rebels had clearly expected to repeat the events of 1955. In an imitation of the events of June 1955, a naval C-47 aircraft landed in Uruguay with ten naval officers on board, including Rear Admirals Sampietro and Bassi and Captains Martín, Bassi and Giliberti.[28] The difference between 1955 and 1963 was apparent though: unlike on the last occasion, these officers were immediately detained by the Uruguayan authorities and held incomunicado. Meanwhile, around 3,000 soldiers from Palermo, Campo de

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23 ibid.

24 ibid.

25 La Nación, 4 April 1963.

26 ibid.

27 ibid.

28 La Nación, 6 April 1963.

Mayo, Tandíl, Azul and Olavarría gathered in the city of Balcarce under the command of General Pistarini and Colonel Mosquera, who were later joined by Colonel Nevares.[29] These troops took the surrender of the local naval base and then headed towards the naval base of Bahía Blanca. In the naval airbase of Punta Indio the complete control of the Cavalry forces over Naval Aviation was epitomised by a *"misa de campaña"* celebrated by Regimiento 8 de Caballería Blindada of Magdalena under the command of Colonel López Aufranc.[30] Finally, around midnight another aircraft of Naval Aviation, a Catalina with eleven junior naval officers on board, landed at the Carrasco air base in Uruguay.[31] But the act that finalised the fate of the Navy took place earlier in the day, when an agreement was signed between José Manuel Astigueta, the Minister of National Defence and interim Navy Secretary, General Benjamín Rattenbach, the Army Secretary of State, Brigadier Eduardo McLoughlin, the Air Force Secretary of State, and Rear Admiral Eladio Vazquez. This agreement was the result of Azul Communique No. 188, which talked about the permanent and indestructible unity of the three Armed Forces and affirmed that "el ejército no tiene como objetivo la destrucción de la marina."[32] General Onganía had desired an unconditional surrender by the rebel forces, but was convinced by General Rattenbach and Brigadier McLoughlin to impose mutually-acceptable conditiones instead.[33] The agreement set three conditions on the Navy: (1) the entry of the ships of the Fleet into their respective bases, (2) the individual surrender of the naval authorities and senior naval officers responsible for the uprising to the Commanding Officer of the Army's Fifth Division, prior to their transfer to Buenos Aires to await the military justice system, and (3) the cessation of operations by rebel terrestrial

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29 ibid.

30 ibid.

31 ibid.

32 Quoted in Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina II. 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), pp.218-219.

33 ibid., p.219.

units. On the fulfillment of these conditions the Army undertook to evacuate the various naval bases occupied by it, with the specific exception of the Punta Indio naval airbase, in which the Regimiento 8 de Tanques General Necochea were authorised to remain until the repair of its permanent quarters in Magdalena was accomplished. Also, while no conditions were imposed on the Flota de Mar and the Aviación Naval, the Infantería de Marina was ordered to immediately release both classes of its conscripts, with the exception of 2,500 men from its last class who were to be "organically" formed into a single regiment which would then be split up and assigned to the various bases. The military justice system was to immediately proceed with the trial of senior personnel, both serving and retired, who were responsible for the rebellion.[34]

On 6 April it was all over. Admiral Vazquez, in his capacity as Comandante de la Flota de Mar, took over the command of the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base on a temporary basis as soon as the naval rebellion came to an end.[35] The naval base of Bahía Blanca was taken over by the Regimiento 4 de Caballería from San Martín de los Andes.[36] In recognition of the compliance of the agreement by the Navy, General Onganía issued Communiques No. 197 and 198, the former halting the various Army columns in their tracks and the latter listing the deployment of each of the Five Corps of the Army.[37] All over the country naval officers were giving themselves up: for instance, the entire senior command of the naval base at Mar del Plata surrendered. A shortage of places of detention was soon perceived by the arresting authorities. Twelve officers of the Servicio de Informaciones Navales, five officers from the Arsenal Naval Buenos Aires, ten from the Dirección General de Administración Naval, 45 from the Subárea Naval Mar

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34 La Nación, 6 April 1963.

35 La Nación, 7 April 1963.

36 ibid.

37 ibid.

del Plata, and 14 from the base aeronaval Ezeiza were detained in the Liceo Militar General San Martín.[38] Towards the end of the day the Department of Public Relations of the Secretaría de Marina released a communique listing the state of affairs within the institution. The rebels had vacated the Naval Mechanical School and the Naval Arsenal in Buenos Aires, as well as the Naval Sub-areas of Río Santiago and Mar del Plata. The Naval Sub-area of Punta Indio had surrendered. The Naval Area of Puerto Belgrano had ceased its actions, and the Sea Fleet was at its usual docking area. On behalf of the Navy the negotiations had been carried out "exclusively and personally" by Rear Admiral Eladio Vazquez. The communique went on to list the admirals, captains and commanders who had given themselves up to authorities. It also listed those naval personnel who had fled to Uruguay, and named the two sergeants, one sailor and one conscript who had died in the operations. It announced the release of conscripts in the Naval Infantry in accordance with the agreement between the Navy and the National Government. Finally, the communique announced that the Escuela Naval Militar and the Liceo Naval Militar were continuing their normal activities.[39] Later that day, the Army released Communique No.200, which *La Nación* aptly called an "[e]nérgico documento contra al peronismo."[40] It was a hard-hitting statement, which defined Peronism as a "plan sistemático ejecutado por el dictador depuesto y sus personeros para provocar la deformación del estilo de vida tradicional de nuestro pueblo, manifestada por: la corrupción moral e intelectual, el desprestigio y la disolución de las instituciones básicas del país, la eliminación de los adversarios mediante la extorsión y la violencia física, el cercenamiento de las libertades fundamentales acordadas por la Constitución argentina," a

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38 ibid.

39 ibid.

40 ibid.

definition that even the most die-hard Colorados could not have found wanting.

Commenting on the fiasco of 2 April, Admiral Perren remarks that the admirals "lanzaron la Armada a la revolución en forma por demás desordenada y confusa, aparentemente sin planes de ninguna especie, sin jefes reconocidos con responsabilidades claramente asignadas, y ante el desconcierto de sectores de Oficiales que no sabían en realidad que estaba ocurriendo."[41] The contrast with the Revolución Libertadora could not be more dramatic. Furthermore, the implication of Communique No. 200 was that the Navy had rebelled in vain. As Perren rightly notes, "Surge con claridad que el proceso electoral se hubiera desarrollado en la misma forma aunque la sublevación del 2 de abril no hubiera tenido lugar, y por tanto que ésta fue total y absolutamente inútil, excepto para destrozar la disciplina y la unidad de la Armada."[42]

The clashes between these two military groups took place in full view of the country, but civilians had absolutely no say in the matter. As Rouquié points out:

> Cada arma defendía su posición sin preocuparse por el poder ejecutivo. Las Fuerzas Armadas formaban un estado dentro del Estado. La obedencia era consentida, y, en los hechos, el gobierno se sometía a la voluntad del sector militar predominante.[43]

It is remarkable to observe the unanimity with which the various participants in these events regret the entire conflict in retrospect. Both General López Aufranc and General Sanchez de Bustamante described

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41 Perren, 'Memoirs', op.cit., p.439.

42 ibid., p.440.

43 Rouquié, Poder militar II. 1943-1973, op.cit., p.218.

these events as "episodios lamentables".[44] General Lanusse remarked that "el bombardeo de las fuerzas aeronavales de Punta Indio al Regimiento 8, eso elegante no fue, como tampoco fue elegante dijo que cuando nosotros llegáramos a Punta Indio ocapábamos... no habia ninguna autoridad..."[45] As Admiral Arguindeguy remarks: "Se usaron las armas de la Nación entre hermanos, se cometieron actos de destrucción incalificables, se usó napalm y el bombardeo aéreo por ambas fracciones en lucha, inclusivo luego de finalizadas las hostilidades, y la ocupación posterior y el latrocinio como "botin de guerra" de la propiedad privada y estatal por los "vencedores" fueron hechos no ocultos pero tambien no investigados ni penados."[46]

Shades and Colours

For the purposes of our analysis it is important to determine just how fundamental the differences between the Azules and the Colorados really were. Was the Azul-Colorado divide merely the result of tactical disagreement between two groups of military officers about the so-called Peronist Problem, or did it also spring from a strategic dispute over ideology and allegiances that transcended and superceded the immediate crisis? Was this clash over long-term or short-term issues? Indeed, one can go a step further and ask if this ugly episode in Argentina's political history had anything to do with issues *per se*: was this quarrel merely a struggle for power between two groups of politically ambitious military officers, whose appetite for high office had only been whetted by the events since 1955? Few consensual opinions emerged in interviews about these questions. A substantial majority of the interviewees repudiated the

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44 Interview with General de División (R.E.) Alcides López Aufranc, 1 August 1990, at his office in Buenos Aires. Interview with General de División (R.E.) Tómas A. Sanchez de Bustamante, 6 August 1990, at his office in Buenos Aires.

45 Interview with Teniente General (R.E.) Alejandro A. Lanusse, 3 September 1990, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

46 Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.86.

notion that the two factions had more at stake than their declared objectives, or that there were any hidden agendas. General Sanchez de Bustamante insists that "el fondo de la cosa, causa causarum, la causa de las causas" for the Azul-Colorado struggle "era el peronismo."[47]

Nonetheless, commentators have tended to see this struggle as more than just two brands of anti-Peronism jostling for position. Rouquié, for instance, characterises the Azules as the "*desarrollista* wing that was opposed to economic liberalism."[48] In particular, is it correct to say that the Colorados were economic liberals and the Azules economic nationalists? While insisting that the main difference between the two groups was their attitude towards Peronism, General Sanchez de Bustamante conceded the possibility that "en algunos sectores, algunos grupos, algunas individuales entre los Azules estuvieran hombres identificados con el nacionalismo y con la economía liberal...la Marina en particular tiene hombres como el Almirante Sanchez Sañudo que es un divulgador de todas las teorías liberales..."[49] General López Aufranc disagrees: "No era una tema de interes en ese momento para las Fuerzas Armadas."[50]

An extreme Colorado view is presented by Aizcorbe. He opines that "el conflicto entre Azules y Colorados no fue, como habitualmente se lo describe, un infortunado enfrentamiento entre dos bandos militares antiperonistas, sino el comienzo de la contrarevolución libertadora, que comenzó en 1963 y que culminó en 1973 con la entrega del País al caos."[51] He asserts that "los azules se proponían establecer un régimen socialista,

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47 Interview with General Sanchez de Bustamante, op.cit.

48 Alain Rouquié, The Military and the State in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.274.

49 Interview with General Sanchez de Bustamante, op.cit.

50 Interview with General López Aufranc, op.cit.

51 Roberto Aizcorbe, 'Azules y Colorados (1962-1963)', typed conference paper, (Buenos Aires: Escuela de Educación Economica y Filosofía de la Libertad, 8 August 1977), p.1.

sobre la base del temor generalizado que despertaba el avance mundial de comunismo,"[52] which is a fairly untenable opinion. More interestingly, he argues that "los colorados no existieron, como grupo homogéneo con definida intención política."[53] in his perception the Azules are also a heterogeneous group:

> Los Azules, por su parte, mostraban de entrada su heterogeneidad: los había profesionalistas, alarmados por la anarquía militar de los años previos, que querían el retorno a los cuarteles y un funcionamiento regular del sistema de promoción. También habían legalistas, peronistas vergonzantes, nasseristas dispuestos a profundizar la aventura en combinación con la CGT, y ultramontanos como Guevara o Alsina.[54]

According to Admiral Milia, however, there is another dimension to the Colorado-Azul clashes that was, perhaps, more fundamental:

> ... [The] Red [were] under the command of the Masonry, the Scottish Rite. The Azules [were] under the command of Opus Dei ... not one hundred percent Opus Dei but forty percent Opus Dei, and they [were] all [of the] Catholic Right.[55]

When asked about this dimension, General Sanchez de Bustamante was dismissive: "No, no, absolutamente no. No, no. Esas son fantasías."[56] Nearly all the interviewees agreed with this view, although some did add qualifications. General Lanusse, for instance, said that "[p]uede haberse dado la coincidió con que algunos, de los que teniamos ya la jerarquia en general, estuvimos participando en actividades de tipo confesional," but he added that "eso nada tiene que ver con la política."[57]

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52 ibid., p.13.

53 ibid., p.16.

54 ibid., p.21.

55 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit.

56 Interview with General Sanchez de Bustamante, op.cit.

57 Interview with General Lanusse, op.cit.

Milia also mentions an international dimension to this power struggle:

> In general the Reds [were] closer to the United States, ... [while] the "Azules" were, perhaps not against the United States, but definitely not in favour of the United States.[58]

Notwithstanding the above, Admiral Milia insists that in the final analysis

> [t]here was a struggle between these two groups for power. There was not an ideological difference. The best demonstration is that it was a necessity, it was a must, to use colours to be differentiated. The only ideology was to get power.[59]

How Red Was The Navy?

For our purposes, the crucial question is: to what extent was the Navy "Colorado"? It is clear that senior naval officers, conscious of the institution's legacy in the struggle to overthrow Perón, were firmly Colorado in their beliefs and loyalties. However, as an important naval actor in those events points out, although the "Colorados were commanding the Navy, ... they were not the Navy."[60] At the junior ranks, there was a great deal of confusion as far as factional identities were concerned, both at the individual and at the collective level. For instance, while "the top of Naval Aviation were Red, ... a good percentage of junior ranks, commander and below, were not Red - they were Violet",[61] that being the description of "the majority of [naval] officers who were neither Blue nor Red."[62] Junior naval officers tended to identify with the military faction

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58 ibid.

59 ibid.

60 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit.

61 ibid.

62 ibid.

that their *compañeros* were loyal to. Thus, the surface fleet officers of the 72nd Promotion were Blue simply because a few officers who exercised leadership among them were Blue. Interestingly enough, the naval aviation officers of the 72nd Promotion were Red. In the 73rd Promotion that followed, the sequence was reversed, with the surface sailors Red and the naval aviators Blue.[63] Thus, in the junior ranks of the naval officer corps, this Azul-Colorado divide took the form of an inter-Promotion and an inter-Wing rivalry, which, by its very nature, was trivial in political terms. Not surprisingly, therefore, the naval institution participated in this factional warfare with none of the enthusiasm or determination that it had displayed during the Revolución Libertadora in 1955; the entire fleet remained in the main naval base of Puerto Belgrano.[64]

It is important to consider the opinion of observers outside the Navy. General Sanchez de Bustamante was of the opinion that "la Armada evidentemente era colorada, estaba ligada y comprometida a una posición antiperonista... [L]a Marina estuvo en una posición coherente, siempre coherente, y no estuvo tan dividida como en el Ejército."[65] General López Aufranc concurs with this assessment.[66] General Lanusse agrees that the Navy "[e]videnciaba una coherencia viable, una unanimidad de criterios." However, he argued that it was incorrect to assign a particular political colouration to an entire institution:

> [E]s una incorrección, es un error... asignar a una Fuerza Armada, ya sea el Ejército, la Marina o la Fuerza Aérea, un agrupamiento determinado político. No es tal, quienes tienen ese color político podrían adquirir... son los dirigentes, la jerarquía de las Fuerzas Armadas en un momento determinado.[67]

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63 ibid.

64 ibid.

65 Interview with General Sanchez de Bustamante, op.cit.

66 Interview with General López Aufranc, op.cit.

67 Interview with General Lanusse, op.cit.

Despite this qualification, it is clear that Lanusse considers the entire naval institution to be involved in the events of April 1963. As he remarks in his memoirs, "Casi la totalidad de mandos de la Marina de Guerra, con los elementos que le estaban subordinados, se manifestaron comprometidos en la rebelión."[68]

Defeat and Destitution

For die-hard Colorados, defeat meant more than a loss of career. As Aizcorbe remarks, "[l]a derrota final de los colorados abrió el espacio político necesario para la contrarevolución libertadora, que se consumó en 1973, con Perón presidente fumando un cigarrillo sobre la cubierta del buque que había contribuído a derribarlo en 1955."[69] However, the more immediate impact of the defeat of the Colorados was on the careers of numerous naval officers. The purge that followed truncated many a promising career. An immediate search of diehard Colorados was instituted within the Navy: as Admiral Arguindeguy puts it, "[f]ueron largas las purgas y las detenciones subsiguientes."[70] Corbett, a U.S. Army officer who was in Argentina during this period, points out that "[s]enior officers with known Colorado sentiments were rounded up from outlying garrisons, confined on ships or on Martín García island."[71] All officers suspected of involvement in the Little Revolution of 2 April were removed from their posts immediately: the admirals were transfered to the Subsecretaría de Marina, while officers of the rank of captain and below were ordered to report to the Dirección General del Personal Naval (DGPN). Rear Admirals

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68 Alejandro A. Lanusse, Protagonista y testigo (Reflexiones sobre 70 años de nuestra historia) (Buenos Aires: Marcelo Lugones, 1989), p.180.

69 Aizcorbe, op.cit., p.26.

70 Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.86.

71 Charles D. Corbett, The Latin American Military as a Sociopolitical Force: Case Studies of Bolivia and Argentina (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, 1972), p.108.

Lopez, Ques, Sampietro, Bassi, Grunwaldt, Palma, Perez and Lanzarini were removed from their posts,[72] and among the twenty five or more senior naval captains ordered to report to the DGPN were such names as Noriega, Bassi, Rivolta, Molinari, Nielsen Enemark, Santucci, Lockhart, Lava, Speranza, Berardo and Pucci:[73] a virtual who's who of officers who had been prominent and influential both within and outside the Navy since the Revolución Libertadora. The purge of senior officers extended beyond the Comando Naval to include engineers (Rear Admirals Rondina and Hachard), doctors (Rear Admiral Maloberti) and accountants (Rear Admiral Cárdenas) as well.[74] Even senior officers posted overseas, who could not have possibly been personally involved in the events of 2 April 1963, were ordered back to Buenos Aires. Rear Admiral Sanchez Moreno, head of the Argentine Naval Commission in Europe and Naval Attaché to Great Britain, and Rear Admiral Garrahan, Naval Attaché to the U.S.A. and Canada, were transfered to the Subsecretaría de Marina.[75] Thus, of the three admirals serving overseas in 1963, only the Naval Attaché to Chile, Rear Admiral Varela, escaped the purge.

The change in personnel at the highest reaches of the naval hierarchy was truly dramatic. According to Lieuwen, all nineteen admirals were forced to retire,[76] but this statement is inaccurate on two counts: not only was the actual number of admirals forced off the active duty list *more* than nineteen but, even more importantly, the entire Almirantazgo did *not* resign. Goldwert is more accurate when he points out that "the number of

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72 BNP 91/63 (15 May 1963), BNP 93/63 (17 May), BNP 98/63 (27 May), BNP 101/63 (30 May), BNP 128/63 (8 July).

73 BNP 75/63 (22 April 1963), BNP 81/63 (30 April), BNP 91/63 (15 May), BNP 95/63 (21 May), BNP 97/63 (24 May), BNP 99/63 (28 May), BNP 104/63 (4 June), BNP 111/63 (14 June), BNP 126/63 (5 July)

74 BNP 87/63, Buenos Aires, 9 May 1963.

75 BNP 122/63 (1 July 1963), BNP 135/63 (18 July 1963).

76 Edwin Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents: Neomilitarism in Latin America (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.22.

admirals was reduced from twenty-seven to two."[77] Over the next six months, nearly all the admirals and other senior naval officers who were not implicated in the events of 2 April 1963 requested voluntary retirement. Among the first to go was Admiral Agustín Ricardo Penas, who had been unable to prevent the fiasco that had befallen the institution he commanded.[78] On 27 May 1963, four admirals resigned in the space of a few hours: Rear Admirals Morell, Rondina, Hachard and Maloberti.[79] With the important exceptions of Rear Admirals Varela and Vazquez, each and every member of the Almirantazgo not already under arrest solicited his retirement from active service in this troubled period: Rear Admirals Cuenca, Questa, Cárdenas, Ques, Garrahan and Sanchez Moreno.[80]

Significantly, admirals and senior captains implicated in the Little Revolution were not allowed to seek voluntary retirement, but were forced into retirement *("establecer haber de retiro")* instead. On 17 July four senior captains had their careers forcibly terminated by Decree No. 5813.[81] However, this was only a foretaste of what followed a day later. On 18 July Decree No. 5943 terminated the careers of Rear Admirals Palma, Sampietro, Bassi, Lopez and Perez, and forced Captains Bassi, Noriega, Santucci, Rivolta, Molinari, Lockhart, Berardo, Pintos, Marguery, Lava, Speranza and Nielsen Enemark into retirement.[82] These Argentine naval officers, among the best and brightest of their generation, became civilians in a single afternoon. At the very least they escaped the indignity of dismissal from service *("baja")*; not all their colleagues were as fortunate. On 7 June nine naval officers who had been deeply involved

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77 Goldwert, op.cit., p.194.

78 BNP 84/63, Buenos Aires, 6 May 1963.

79 BNP 106/63, Buenos Aires, 6 June 1963.

80 BNP 84/63 (6 May 1963), BNP 102/63 (31 May), BNP 109/63 (11 June), BNP 143/63 (30 July), BNP 145/63 (1 August), BNP 149/63 (7 August),

81 BNP 143/63, Buenos Aires, 30 July 1963.

82 BNP 144/63, Buenos Aires, 31 July 1963.

in the Little Revolution and had subsequently fled to Uruguay were dismissed from the "cuadro permanente de la Armada Nacional" by Presidential Decree, including senior captains Martín, Sabarots and Giliberti.[83] What is noteworthy is that these retirements and dismissals were enforced despite the fact that the judicial process in the Consejo Supremo de la Fuerzas Armadas had yet to be concluded.

The military justice system went into action almost immediately. An edict for the arrest of naval officers who had not given themselves up was put out, listing officers who had flown to exile across the River Plate to Uruguay on 2 April. The prominent names in this edict were senior captains Bassi, Martín, Sabarots and Giliberti, in effect the entire high command of Argentine Naval Aviation.[84] On the seven-man Supreme Council of the Armed Forces were three retired rear admirals, Daniel García, Silvano Harriague and Blas de Achaval. The judicial process in the Supreme Council took over six months to be completed. On 4 April Rear Admiral Palma, the Comandante of Puerto Belgrano, and Rear Admiral Pérez, the Commandante of the Marine Infantry, presented themselves to the Commander of the Fifth Army Division.[85] Over the next few days a number of retired and serving admirals and senior captains presented themselves to the relevant military authorities. On 9 April three retired rear admirals, Robbio, Sanchez Sañudo and Favarón, were transfered to the naval island prison from the Navy Mechanical School. On the same day retired Rear Admiral Rial was also taken to the island after he had given himself up.[86] The Supreme Council began its work on 13 April by hearing defence arguments for retired Admiral Rojas and the other four retired admirals held at Martín García.[87] Two

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83 BNP 120/63, Buenos Aires, 27 June 1963.

84 BNP 84/63, Buenos Aires, 6 May 1963.

85 La Nación, 6 April 1963.

86 La Nación, 10 April 1963.

87 La Nación, 14 April 1963.

days later Rear Admirals Palma and Pérez, the two serving admirals most heavily implicated in the April Revolution, appeared before the Supreme Council.[88] On 18 April Rear Admirals Bassi and Sampietro returned to Argentina from Uruguay in order the face the proceedings of the Supreme Council and were detained at the Navy Mechanical School.[89] On 21 May Admiral Rojas and Rear Admirals López, Favarón, Sanchez Sañudo, and Robbio were released from *"detención rigurosa"* and placed under *"prisión preventiva atenuada"* instead.[90] In effect, the retired admirals were released from Martín García and placed under house arrest.[91]

On 30 July the military tribunal heard the depositions of seven admirals and twelve senior captains.[92] These statements demonstate the multitude of reasons that propelled the Colorado cause within the naval leadership. Admiral Rial analysed the events of 2 April as the product of two mutually-antagonistic groups within the Armed Forces:

> [L]as escaramuzas militares de abril, agosto y septiembre de 1962, hicieron público y notorio la existencia de dos grupos antagónicos, cuya diferencia fundamental constancia, precisamente, en las exigencias a imponer en el cumplimiento del compromiso.
>
> Los sucesos del 2 de abril no fueron más que otro choque entre las dos tendencias, algo más violento y costoso que las anteriores, cosa perfectamente explicable si se tiene en cuenta la vehemencia que en general ponen aquellos que sólo son guiados por ideales cuando se enfrentan con las obstáculos, a diferencia del frio y meditado cálculo de las que sólo defienden intereses.[93]

Admiral Sanchez Sañudo argued that the uprising of 2 April had to be viewed in its proper historical context:

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88 La Nación, 16 April 1963.
89 La Nación, 19 April 1963.
90 La Nación, 22 May 1963.
91 La Nación, 23 May 1963.
92 La Nación, 31 July 1963.
93 Quoted in ibid.

> [E]l 2 de abril no ha sido una fecha ni un acontecimiento aislado. Es parte de un proceso que comenzó en octubre de 1945 y ha culminado el 7 de julio en "elecciones sin totalitarianismos". Ha sido un jalón más en esa dura y permanente lucha contra la dictadura, primero; la demogogia irresponsable, luego; la corrupción organizada, más tarde y, por último, el intento de continuismo de las deformaciones anteriores...[94]

As far as Admiral Robbio was concerned, the naval institution was the vanguard of liberty in Argentina: "La actitud clara y firme, asumida, en todo momento por la Marina de Guerra... en defensa de los intereses nacionales, unidos a su espíritu democrático, siempre sustentado y jamás desmentido..."[95] Like Sanchez Sañudo, Robbio viewed the Little Revolution as merely one event in a historical process:

> [D]esde la anulación de las elecciones del 18 de marzo de 1962, se suceden una serie de acontecimientos militares, con implicancias en el orden político, que conducen a los hechos que se juzgan en estos momentos.
>
> En todo este proceso, cabe hacer resaltar que la institución naval sólo ha buscado, y lo hace públicamente, que imperen en el orden institucional los valores de la democracia representativa, y evitar además a todo trance, el retorno de teorías totalitarias, que tan nefastas fueron paar el país, y que en septiembre de 1955 contribuyera a terminar con ella.[96]

An interesting deposition was that of the Comandante of the Naval Infantry, Admiral Pérez Piton, portions of which deserve to be quoted at some length because they present a cogent argument of the Colorado position within the Navy. Pérez began his deposition with the claim that he was only obeying orders:

> El señor fiscal ha mostrado preocupación en su requisitorio por la disciplina militar, diciendo que «es necesario retornar a los viejos principios castrenses, siempre válidos y vigentes»; y que «la disciplina militar se nutre de dos grandes virtudes: la obedencia y la subordinación».

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94 ibid.

95 ibid.

96 ibid.

...

Ningún verdadero militar puede discrepar con esos conceptos; pero, principalmente en el grado de brigadier, general o almiarnte, no es suficiente con enunciarlos sino que hay que ponerlos en práctica en toda circunstancia.

El señor fiscal parece olvidarlos, ya que acusa a los jefes y oficiales de mi fuerza que, precisamente, demostraron poseer esas virtudes de obedencia y subordinación al cumplir en todo momento las órdenes impartidas por el suscripto, actuando en cumplimiento de los objetivos fijados para la institución.[97]

He went on to argue that the Navy had acted in the April rebellion as a united institution:

> En autos existe plena prueba de que la Marina ha actuado como institución; unida, puesta en movimiento por sus autoridades legales, y, comandada en el más alto escalón, sucesivamente, primero por el secretario de Marina y el comandante de Operaciones Navales, y luego por el que seguía en antegüedad a ambos, el comandante de la Flota de Mar que asumió el comando de la Marina en Operaciones.[98]

That being the case, Pérez argued that it was unjust to try subordinates while the three senior naval authorities went scot free:

> [E]sta probado en autos que, el suscripto y, por consiguiente, toda mi fuerza, fue puesta en movimiento y actuó cumpliendo órdenes de las tres más altas autoridades de la Marina: el secretario de Marina, el comandante de Operaciones Navales y el comandante de la Flota de Mar. Ellos tres no figuran en la acusación fiscal y uno de ellos es actualmente comandante de Operaciones Navales, cargo que asumió hace pocos días.
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> ...
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> Una sola interpretación de los hechos es imposible hacer con justicia: no acusar a dichas tres autoridades que dieron las órdenes y acusar en cambio a los que cumplieron las mismas...[99]

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97 ibid.

98 ibid.

99 ibid.

Of all the depositions by the various admirals, Pérez Piton's argument clearly had the most weight by successfully demonstrating that the arbitrary nature of the proceedings before the Supreme Council. An indication of this is an official statement that was hurriedly issued by the Ministerio de Defensa Nacional which quoted the entire statement of the fiscal general in an attempt to "clarify" the situation:

> El pretexto que algunos invocan fundado en disposiciones superiores o razones de ética y moral militar no tiene asidero alguno. Admitiendo que el militar está moralmente obligado a presentarse a la superioridad de su institución cuando se produce alguna conmoción del orden público, o una grave emergencia nacional, va de suyo que ha de hacerlo para aportar su colaboración en apoyo del orden, de la ley, de las autoridades legítimas, no para unirse a quienes, precisamente, atacan ese orden, infrinjen esa ley u obstaculizan la función de esas autoridades con actividades sediciosas o rebeldes.[100]

Admirals Rojas and Rial petitioned the Corte Suprema de Justicia to prevent the Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas from delivering a verdict, but their petition was turned down on 4 September.[101] The Supreme Council pronounced its verdict on the cases before it on 12 September.[102] Admiral Rojas was sentenced to six months of simple imprisonment and was stripped of his military status (*"destitución"*). The most severe sentences were to Rear Admirals Palma and Bassi, both of whom were sentenced to nine years of confinement (*"reclusión"*) and *destitución*. For similar offences, retired officers received much lighter sentences than serving officers. Among the lenient sentences was the thirty day arrest of three midshipmen for the offence of flying to Uruguay. Two commanders, five lieutenants and three midshipmen were absolved by the military tribunal. Corbett estimates that in all "[s]everal hundred officers were brought before military courts in April and May for their part in the "rebellion",

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100 ibid.

101 La Nación, 5 September 1963.

102 'Texto del Fallo del Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas', mimeographed manuscript, 12 September 1963, pp.46.

and as many as 400 were probably separated from the service."[103] This estimate appears to be somewhat on the higher side, although it is important to remember that Corbett includes Army and Air Force officers in his count as well.

An analysis of the rank distribution of the officers brought before the Supreme Council reveals the top-heavy nature of the April rebellion in the Navy, in sharp contrast to the other two Armed Forces. If we were to count the number of senior officers (Army colonels and above) brought before the Supreme Council, we would find the Navy disproportionately represented. Only one senior Air Force officer (retired Brigadier General Cayo Alsina) and nine senior Army officers (no generals, only colonels, of whom seven were retired) were tried by the military tribunal, in comparison to 23 senior naval officers (one retired admiral, six serving and four retired rear admirals, and twelve serving senior captains). What is particularly interesting is the corresponding figures for junior officers (Army captains and below) present a virtual mirror-image of the above. Only nine naval lieutenants and five midshipmen were brought to face the military justice system, in contrast to three Air Force captains and 82 Army officers (23 captains, 27 first lieutenants, 19 lieutenants and 13 sub-lieutenants). This is a good indication of the institutional nature of the uprising in the Navy. In the Army and the Air Force, on the other hand, the events of April 1963 took the form of subaltern insurrection.

While changes in the top leadership of the Navy were immediately made, they took some time to be finalised. To fill the vacuum created by the resignation of Admiral Garzoni, Rear Admiral Varela, who was the Naval Attaché in Chile, was initially designated by Presidential Decree 2586 as

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103 Corbett, op.cit., p.108.

the interim Subsecretario de Marina.[104] However, on 6 April retired Rear Admiral Kolungia was appointed Secretario de Estado de Marina by Presidential Decree No. 2634, thus taking over political control of the naval institution.[105] A few days later Admiral Varela was appointed as the Chief of Naval General Staff with simultaneous charge over the Comando de Operaciones Navales.[106] A single admiral was thus temporarily entrusted with both the administrative and operational command of the Navy. On 19 April Decree No. 2862 confirmed Admiral Varela as the Jefe del Estado Mayor General Naval,[107] but it was not until 1 July that Admiral Vazquez was appointed as the Comandante de Operaciones Navales by Decree No. 5345.[108] Thus, out of the flux Admirals Kolungia, Varela and Vazquez emerged, respectively, as the political, institutional and operational heads of the Navy. Varela and Vazquez, as we have noted, were the only two admirals on active duty to escape the fiasco of 2 April with their careers intact. Indeed, as a consequence of the purge they found themselves in command of the Navy, with their careers not only intact but significantly enhanced.

The consequences of the defeat of the Colorados for the political and institutional power of the Navy were severe. In Potash's words, the naval institution "lost what remained of the political leverage it had enjoyed since 1955."[109] The strength of the Infantería de Marina, symbol of naval power *vis-à-vis* the Army, was cut from 8,000 to 2,500.[110] However, some scholars have exaggerated the extent of naval losses. Lieuwen, for instance, notes that Naval Aviation, long-standing rival of the Air

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104 BNP 75/63, Buenos Aires, 22 April 1963.

105 BNP 71/63, Buenos Aires, 16 April 1963. Also, reported in La Nación, 7 April 1963.

106 BNP 80/63, Buenos Aires, 29 April 1963.

107 BNP 90/63, Buenos Aires, 14 May 1963.

108 BNP 130/63, Buenos Aires, 12 July 1963.

109 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1945-1962: Perón to Frondizi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p.378.

110 Goldwert, op.cit., p.194.

Force,[111] was virtually eliminated,[112] but as we have seen Naval Aviation escaped intact, apart from the losses sustained in actual fighting. Apart from the extensive purge of presumed Colorados from the ranks of the naval institution, the reduction in the strength of the Infantería de Marina was the most significant measure taken by the other two military institutions to bring an end to naval salience in Argentine politics. Admiral Pérez Piton, the Comandante of the Naval Infantry in April 1963, was bitter about the measures taken against his institution, comparing them with the dissolution imposed on it by Perón after the failed *coup* attempt of 16 June 1955:[113]

> [U]na de dichas condiciones imponen la destrucción parcial del cuerpo de Infantería de Marina, medida que, por rara casualidad, es exactamente o por igual mentalidad la misma que el dictador depuesto tomó con motivo de los sucesos del 16 de junio de 1955.[114]

Admiral Bustamante, on the other hand, is of the opinion that the Army and Air Force were magnanimous in victory, and that the Navy managed to escape with no permanent damage to its strength. He pointed out that the reduction in the strength of the Naval Infantry was only temporary: by 1965 the Naval Infantry was receiving its full complement of conscripts.[115] Some of the other changes were symbolic: the Naval Infantry was relieved from the honour guard at the Presidential Residence in Olivos, and this duty reverted back to the General San Martín Horse Grenadiers and the First Patricios Regiments.[116] Other changes were more significant. A naval officer, for instance, was no longer appointed as the head of the Federal Police. The control of this crucial office since 1955 had given the Navy

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111 The rivalry between the Air Force and Naval Aviation is studied in Chapter Seventeen.

112 Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents, op.cit., p.22.

113 This coup is covered in Chapter Five.

114 Quoted in La Nación, 31 July 1963.

115 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Gonzalo Demetrio Bustamante, 7 August 1990, Centro Naval Anexo, Buenos Aires.

116 Interview with Almirante Bustamante, op.cit.

an accurate picture of Army troop movements. This was a crucial advantage during *coup* attempts, as García Lupo points out:

> [L]as dificultades de comunicación entre los jefes de los regimientos que habían abandonado sus emplazamientos habituales eran subsanadas por las eficaces trasmisiones de las emisoras policiales. La jefatura de policía sabía, por ejemplo, el paso de cada unidad antes que la secretaría de Guerra, porque las comisarías reportaban los partes de los vigilantes; como se sabe, desde 1955 la marina de guerra retiene en su poder el control de la Policía.[117]

To fully appreciate the magnitude of the naval loss of power and influence in April 1963, it is instructive to note what a commentator had said about the Navy less than three months earlier:

> La Marina argentina, ¿es un mito? En solamente siete años, la Marina de Guerra derribó a dos presidentes constitucionales (*Juan Perón* y *Arturo Frondizi*), derrocó a un presidente de facto (*el general Lonardi*) y vetó por lo menos dos candidaturas (*la del general Aramburu y la del Rogelio Frigerio*).[118]

It is no wonder that Rowe characterises this dramatic turn in the political fortunes of the naval institution as "the nadir of post-Perón Navy influence,"[119] while in Goldwert's opinion the events of April 1963 "marked the end of the navy's significant role in postrevolutionary politics."[120] Guillermo O'Donnell is of the opinion that the Army, under the command of General Onganía, "emerged from the armed clashes of 1962-63 clearly dominant over the navy and the air force."[121]

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117 Rogelio García Lupo, La rebelión de los generales (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jamcana, 1963), p.142.

118 ibid., p.137.

119 James W. Rowe, 'Argentina's Restless Military', in Robert D. Tomasek, (ed.), Latin American Politics: Studies of the Contemporary Scene (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p.460.

120 Goldwert, op.cit., p.194.

121 Guillermo O'Donnell, Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.52.

Every bit as grievious, and considerably more longlasting, than the deprivation of naval institutional power was the deep rift these events caused in the social fabric of naval life. In the matter of a few days lifelong friends were lost and lifelong enemies made. Corbett talks about the "[m]any deep animosities among service families"[122] that were born during these events and which have lasted over the years. As Admiral Milia pointed out to me, there is an Azul and a Colorado *mesa* in the Centro Naval to this day, known informally as the *"medio dia de la chimenea"* and the *"serpentario"* respectively. Relations between the regular members of these *mesas* appears to be one of civility rather than cordiality. A perceptive outsider can sense a lingering bitterness just below the surface, a bitterness that has to do with betrayal and destroyed careers and which seems to have survived through nearly three decades. An extreme example of this bitterness was exhibited by one retired senior captain, who declined my request for an interview even though I had already talked to a number of his *compañeros de promoción*: he said these events were far too personal and painful for him to share with even his own family. In all my interviews and conversations I felt that only *one* of the many retired naval officers I talked to had truly made his peace with the past.[123] As Admiral Perren admits in his memoirs about his early retirement after the "Estevez Affair", the pain of the past lingers:

> Era natural que así lo hiciera pues la mayor parte de mi vida había transcurrido en el servicio naval, creando vínculos difíciles de romper, y además no abrigada sentimientos de rencor contra quienes permenecían en servicio, ni aún contra los responsables más directos del motín que cortó abruptamente mi carrera.[124]

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122 Corbett, op.cit., p.108.

123 Unrecorded conversation with Capitán de Fragata I.M. (R.E.) Fernando Suarez Rodriguez, 31 August 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

124 Perren, 'Memoirs', op.cit.

From the Colorado perspective, the two villains of the piece are General Lanusse and Admiral Vazquez: the former is portrayed as a schemer, the latter as a betrayer. What is particularly interesting is that no ill is said about Admiral Varela, although he was the other admiral to remain in the Navy after the purges. On the contrary, Varela is a figure of much estimation within the Navy, particularly for the six long years in which he commanded the naval institution and nursed it back to health. Vazquez, of course, considers that he saved the Navy from total destruction from the fiasco of April 1963. However, die-hard Colorados continue to regard his signing of an agreement with the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force as a selfish action for which he was elevated to the position of Comandante de Operaciones Navales. An indication of the depth of feeling in this regard can be gauged from the vitriolic tone of Captain Molinari's open letter to Admiral Vazquez. As an indicator of wounds that may still not be fully healed, this letter deserves to be quoted at some length:

> Con estupor y pena he leído en los periódicos que por decreto del Poder Ejecutivo Ud. fué designado Comandante de Operaciones Navales...
>
> Los que tenemos el honor de pertenecer a la Marina de Guerra sabemos que el cargo que se le ha conferido, es la máxima aspiración de todo oficial de marina. El mismo debe significar la culminación de una trayectoria naval sin sombras que la afecten ni episodios que no hayan sido suficientemente esclarecidos. Un análisis elemental le permitirá apreciar que estas exigencias son rigurosamente ciertas y que su situación personal está en colisión con las mismas...
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> ...
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> ... [L]os Jefes y Oficiales de las Fuerzas Armadas que comparecieron ante el Consejo Supremo están, algunos en prisión preventiva rigurosa, otros en prisión preventiva atenuada o a disposición del Poder Ejecutivo o exilados o cumpliendo arrestos; y casi todos, con la perspectiva de una frustración definitiva de su carrera profesional.
>
> ...
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> ...Hoy, mientra el país asiste con dolor al procesamiento de dignísimos Oficiales de las Fuerzas Armadas, Ud.

> acepta... la máxima designación dentro del arma, sin esperar la resolución del Consejo Supremo y sin compartir las responsibilidades, inherentes a su jerarquía.[125]

This sense of bitterness is significant on two counts. On the one hand, it is an indication that ruptures *do* exist below the surface, despite the much-vaunted institutional cohesiveness of the Navy. On the other hand, it also reveals the extent of institutional unity: whatever the nature of the grievances that a Navy man may harbour against his institution or his *compañeros*, a countervailing sense of solidarity will prevent him from making his dissatisfaction public.

The other important aspect of the events of April 1963 that must be highlighted is the limited extent of naval autonomy. As Goldwert quite rightly points out, the defeat of the Colorados proved that "the navy could not mount a successful revolt without the cooperation of another branch to furnish the land base."[126] In other words, the difference between 16 September 1955 and 2 April 1963, from the naval perspective, was the lack not of a Rojas but of a Lonardi.

While the defeat of April 1963 was a serious blow to the naval institution, it was not an unmitigated disaster. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the political marginalisation of the Navy was precisely what the institution most required, both from the perspective of internal cohesion and professional proficiency, after its many years at the heart of Argentine politics. Nor, in retrospect, was the loss of power and influence irretrievable. April 1963 was but one swing of the pendulum in

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125 Open letter from Capitán de Navío Aldo Luis Molinari to Contraalmirante Eladio Modesto Vazquez, Buenos Aires, 4 July 1963.

126 Goldwert, op.cit., p.194.

the complicated story of military politics in Argentina. To use a marine metaphor, this was the time of the low tide.

CHAPTER NINE

At High Sea (Adrift), 1963-1976: The Lack of Power

The fall of the naval institution from political grace in 1963 was to be a longlasting one. The Navy had to stay in the political wilderness for over a decade while Argentine politics were dominated, first by the Azules in the Army, then by the Peronists, groups which regarded any kind of naval participation in the political process with a distaste bordering on anathema. In other words, for the period covered by this chapter the Navy was a marginal political actor. It is for this reason that this chapter does not analyse the politics of these years at any significant depth. It is undeniable that these were important years in Argentine political history: the Radical administration of Arturo Illía, the *coup* of June 1966 leading to Argentina's first "bureaucratic-authoritarian" military regime, and the return of Peronism to government in 1973. These years also witnessed the rise of militant youth groups and their transformation into both rural and urban guerrilla formations proficient in the use of violence and terror. To refrain from putting these events under scrutiny is not to deny their importance, but merely reflects the fact that the naval institution had a negligible political *rôle* during these years.

The Dominance of the Cavalry

The Azules in the Arma de Caballería called the political shots within the Argentine Armed Forces since their victory over the Colorados in April 1963. As Rouquié points out:

> Desde 1962 hasta mayo de 1973, fecha de retorno de los peronistas al gobierno merced a elecciones generales libres, los sucesivos comandantes en jefe del ejército pertenecieron todos a la caballería que dominó indiscutiblemente al ejército. De los nueve generales de

> división con que contaba el ejército argentino en 1967, uno pertenecía a la artillería (...), uno a la infantería (...), y uno al cuerpo de comunicaciones (...); todos los demás eran oficiales de caballería, incluyendo por supuesto al comandante en jefe. En otras palabras, la caballería, que reagrupaba menos del 2% de los efectivos y oficiales del ejército, se adjudicaba más del 70% de los titulares del grado superior de la jerarquía.[1]

As a matter of fact, as Rouquié goes on to amplify, from 1955 till 1973, a period of 18 years, non-Cavalry generals headed the Army for only 30 months.[2] Observers within the Armed Forces concur with Rouquié's assessment of Cavalry predominance. For instance, Admiral Carlos Coda, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy from January 1972 to May 1973, indicated that it is not incorrect *("no es incorrecto")* to infer that the Cavalry predominated during this period.[3] He pointed out that "[e]l Comandante en Jefe [del Ejército] pertenecía a la Caballería."[4] From April 1963 onwards, this Cavalry dominance clearly implied an Azul dominance as well.

Open Opposition to Arturo Illía

The victory of Arturo Illía, the compromise candidate of the Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo (UCRP), in the elections of July 1963 was not a welcome development for the Army Azules. The UCRP was as clearly identified with the Colorados as the other wing of Radicalism, the Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (UCRI) of Arturo Frondizi, was allied to the Azul cause. The opposition of the Army hierarchy to the Illía administration was immediate and total. As Rouquié remarks: "El ejército azul experimentó la victoria de la UCRP como una derrota y, aunque hicieran una aparente ostentación de su legalismo, sus jefes no estaban dispuestos a

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1 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina II. 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), p.362.

2 ibid., p.362, fn.35.

3 Written statement received from Almirante (R.E.) Carlos G.N. Coda, Buenos Aires, 3 October 1990.

4 ibid.

obsequiar nada al nuevo gobierno."[5] Admiral Arguindeguy, likewise, is of the opinion that "[l]a caballería del Ejército (con sus tanques y blindados) fué la crítica mas aguda del gobierno de Illía..."[6]

One of the major decisions facing Illía in the area of military policy was the question of reincorporating prematurely retired and cashiered Colorado officers into the active list. At one level, it made sense for Illia to do so: the Colorados, after all, had been the allies of the UCRP within the Armed Forces. The three military secretaries of state, General Enrique Rauch, Admiral Raúl Lynch and Commodore Medardo Gallardo Valdez, although all Azul to one degree or another, were "dispuestos a una generosa amnistía para los vencidos de abril."[7] However, the new Minister of Defence, Leopoldo Suárez, considered this a risky policy and prevailed upon Illia to abandon it.[8] While there was some upheaval in the Army and Air Force, the situation in the Navy stabilised with the appointment of Vice Admiral Pita as the Naval Secretary and Admiral Benigno Héctor Varela as Chief of Naval Operations; the latter, in particular, was opposed to the reincorporation of Colorados into the Navy[9] for reasons of institutional discipline and cohesion. Admiral Varela wished to ensure that the naval institution escaped all further upheaval, and under his command the Navy settled down to a low public profile, focusing exclusively on professional matters.

Severe opposition to the Illía administration persisted in the top echelons of the Army, which remained entirely Azul and almost entirely Cavalry. As Rouquié puts it, the Army leadership exhibited "un

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5 Rouquié, op.cit., p.228.

6 Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.87.

7 Rouquié, op.cit., p.229.

8 ibid.

9 ibid.

profesionalismo muy atemperado, ... un legalismo puramente condicional."[10]

By the end of 1955, there was open talk of an impending *coup*:

> La eventualidad de un golpe de estado ya no era un tema reservado a oscuros conciliábulos o a los rumores de las gacetillas; la clase política y la prensa lo discutían abiertamente, serenamente incluso... [S]e presentaba al golpe como una especie de cataclismo natural sin responsables directos, y al mismo tiempo como un acto de justicia inmanente y automático dirigido a castigar los errores gubernamentales. Toda referencia a la subordinación constitucional de las Fuerzas Armadas al poder civil parecía haberse evaporado.[11]

On 29 May 1966, in a public speech in the President's presence, the Army Commander-in-Chief General Pascual Pistarini delivered the strongest warning yet to the constitutional government.[12] This was more than a shot across the bows, it was a sign that a *coup* was imminent. When the *coup* finally came on 28 June 1966, it was executed by the "legalists" in the Army. Despite the veneer of joint action, the Navy and the Air Force were marginal to the process. Rouquié's assertion is correct: "La posición de las otras dos armas era mucho más matizada y no constituía un compromiso demasiado firme."[13]

June 1966: "The Argentine Revolution"

On 29 June 1966 the three Commanders-in-Chief declared in a public statement that as the Junta Revolucionaria they were taking over the entire

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10 Rouquié, op.cit., p.231.

11 Rouquié, op.cit., p.244. In a conversation with a journalist many years later, Arturo Illía recalled that a senior Army officer in the Escuela de Apoyo Logístico General Lemos had carried out a survey of military officers to ascertain their opinion of the UCRP government in early 1966. The result of the survey was that an overwhelming majority of Army officers (85%) were against a coup, while 6% were for a coup to overthrow Illía and 9% had declined to express an opinion. This result was interpreted by the surveyer as indicating that a coup was evident. When the President remonstrated that this interpretation was in contradiction to the survey figure of 85% against a coup attempt, the officer told Illía: "Porque el seis por ciento que está en contra suya es la cúpula militar." La Semana, 7 July 1982, p.82.

12 The text of Teniente General Pascual Pistarini's speech can be found in Gente, 6 December 1984.

13 Rouquié, op.cit., p.249, fn.50.

apparatus of state, be it the executive, legislature or judiciary, at both the federal and provincial level. The President, Vice President, provincial governors and deputy governors, Supreme Court Judges and the Procurator General were removed from their posts, and the National Congess, provincial legislatures, and all political parties were dissolved. In their place Lieutenant General Juan Carlos Onganía was to take over and lead the march "hacia el destino de grandeza argentino."[14] This declaration was signed by the General Pistarini, Admiral Varela and Brigadier Alvarez, but this demonstration of joint action could not hide the fact that this was a takeover of state power by the Cavalry generals. A tripartite organ, the Junta de Comandantes en Jefe, was established, but as Admiral Arguindeguy points out, "tuvieran en realidad sus miembros peso interno muy disímil al pretendido treinta y tres por ciento por arma."[15] The candid memoirs of General Alejandro Lanusse provide further evidence of the peripheral *rôle* of the Navy during the Revolución Argentina.[16] It is extremely significant that there is not even a single mention of the naval institution in Lanusse's detailed discussion of this period. Indeed, a passing reference to the assassination of Admiral Berisso is the only mention of an individual naval officer in this important chapter of the Lanusse memoirs. Thus, it is clear that the Navy remained in the shadows during the Revolución Argentina. This is not surprising: apart from a few serving admirals, such as Varela, and a few retired admirals, such as Eladio Vazquez, the Cavalry generals simply did not trust anyone in the Navy. Admiral Vazquez, incidentally, was appointed as the Governor of the Province of Salta.

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14 The 'Mensaje de la Junta Revolucionaria' is quoted in Gente, 6 December 1984.

15 Arguindeguy, op.cit., p.89.

16 Alejandro A. Lanusse, Protagonista y testigo (Reflexiones sobre 70 años de nuestra historia) (Buenos Aires: Marcelo Lugones, 1989), chapter VI, pp.203-238.

The government of the Revolución Argentina had objectives that were never public ly defined, but did not have a timetable in which to attain these objectives. Instead of a timetable, the Revolution had "phases": an economic phase, followed by a social phase, and finally succeeded by a political phase. Only after the economic objectives had been attained would the economic phase come to an end and the social phase begin, and so on. In Guillermo O'Donnell's graphic and much-abused phrase, this was a "bureaucratic-authoritarian" regime.[17] Onganía had accepted the Presidency on the condition that the Armed Forces would "neither govern nor co-govern". Thus, in the eyes of the bureaucratic-authoritarian revolutionaries, this was not a military regime, despite the fact that it was the product of a military *coup* and was sustained by the Armed Forces. If anything, this was the personal dictatorship of General Onganía. Mariano Grondona went so far as to talk about the "three models" that Onganía could emulate: Franco, De Gaulle or Castelo Branco.[18] As rapidly became clear, Onganía was only interested in the Onganía model.

In 1967 the Defence Ministry was reorganised, the first major reorganisation of the military command structure since the changes made by Arturo Frondizi in 1958. The three military secretariats abolished: henceforth, the commanders-in-chief would report directly to the Defence Minister. A Consejo Nacional de Seguridad (CONASE), on the pattern of the Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo (CONADE), was established. In the CONASE, the three commanders-in-chief participated on an equal basis with five cabinet ministers, but they did not co-govern with Onganía.[19] On 23 August 1968, in his last show of independence *vis-à-vis* the commanders-in-chief, Onganía replaced General Julio Alsogaray, Admiral Benigno Varela and

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17 See Guillermo O'Donnell, Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

18 Mariano Grondona, 'Los tres modelos', Primera Plana, 1 November 1966.

19 Rouquié, op.cit., p.270.

Brigadier Teodoro Alvarez with General Alejandro Lanusse, Rear Admiral Pedro Gnavi and Brigadier Jorge Martínez Zuviría respectively.[20] While Onganía did not realise it, his days were numbered.

The Rise of Youth Militancy

In the late 1960s, a new breed of political actors in the form of militant youth organisations, which aimed at nothing less than the overthrow of the system through a programme of political violence, made their noisy entrance on the Argentine political stage. There were many causes for the radicalisation of Argentine youth from the mid-1960s onwards. External influences were clearly important: the vivid example of the Cuban Revolution had an enhanced impact on Argentina because of Ernesto "Ché" Guevara's Argentine nationality. The late 1960s were a period of youth nonconformism, student activism and the "romance of revolution" throughout the world: the anti-Vietnam War protests in the U.S.A., the anti-De Gaulle student movement in Paris, the anti-Olympics student protests in Mexico City. However, it is important to note that in Argentina an important factor for youth radicalisation was the *coup* of June 1966 itself. Antonio Tróccoli, a deputy of the UCRP in the dissolved Congress, recalled an incident on the morning of Illía's overthrow. The deposed UCRP deputies had gathered at the Confitería del Molino outside the Congress to discuss future tactics. A teenaged young man, the son of another UCRP deputy, interrupted them with the words "*¡La única forma de hacer política es ir a las armas...!*" Nor were these empty words: the young man in question joined the ERP guerrilla group and was killed by the security forces ten years later. Tróccoli vividly recalls, "Esa frase, esa actitud, era el signo de una de las mas grandes frustraciones que viviría

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20 ibid.

nuestra juventud con la interrupción del régimen constitucional."[21] The only real manifestation of hostility to the *coup* of April 1966 was in the University of Buenos Aires, further evidence of youth disenchantment with the assumption of state power by the military.[22] This new development was naturally viewed by the Armed Forces with alarm; Admiral Coda, when asked what the Navy viewed as the most significant threat to national security during his period of command, named the ERP and the Montoneros.[23]

In late May 1969 the university student and automobile industry workers of Córdoba took to the streets in a massive riot that lasted several days and came to be known as the *Cordobazo*. With Onganía showing no signs of recognising the extent of danger facing the government and the country, General Lanusse removed him from the Presidency on 8 June 1970.[24] Onganía was replaced by a junior and fairly unknown general on active duty, Roberto Levingston. The new President was a political lightweight because the commanders-in-chief had decided that they would not relinquish all power again as they had in the case of Onganía, but would co-govern. The locus of power shifted to the Junta de Comandantes en Jefe, but more specifically to General Lanusse. When Levingston attempted to exercise power independently of the Junta, he was overthrown on 22 March 1971.[25] Lanusse then decided that finding another politically lightweight general was not worth the trouble, and took over the Presidency himself. From the situation of "neither govern nor co-govern", the Armed Forces had moved to a position of governing directly. To be accurate, it was the Army that was governing: the assumption of the Presidency by Lanusse confirmed the continued dominance of the Cavalry within the Armed Forces. As Rouquié

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21 La Semana, 7 July 1982, p.89.

22 Rouquié, op.cit., p.254.

23 Written statement from Almirante Coda, op.cit.

24 Rouquié, op.cit., p.286.

25 Rouquié, op.cit., p.288.

points out, "en teoría, la presidencia de la Junta era rotativa y ninguno de los comandantes predominaba."[26] The reality of the distribution of power was very different.

With regard to the guerrilla threat, Admiral Coda insisted that there were no differences between the Navy and Army because both these institutions faced a common enemy: "No había diferencias entre las tres Fuerzas, aun cuando los asesinados por la guerrilla pertenecían al Ejército y la Armada."[27] The solution of the guerrilla problem and the pacification of the country was the primary problem facing General Lanusse. He attempted to solve this problem by promoting a Gran Acuerdo Nacional (GAN). The Navy had serious reservations about the GAN and disassociated itself from the government, as did the Air Force. General Lanusse came to the conclusion that only the holding of elections could provide the country with the required political solution to the increasing violence, even if this meant a return of Peronism to government. Admiral Coda said that the Navy agreed with Lanusse's assessment of the need to hold the March 1973 elections, even at the cost of the return of Peronism: "A esa altura no había mas remedio que llevar a cabo elecciones; aun sabiendo que vendría un pésimogobierno, las consecuencias en cuanto el costo eran mayores si no se realizaban."[28]

After announcing the elections the Armed Forces attempted, unsuccessfully, to place conditions on the future conduct of government. On 25 January 1973 the three commanders-in-chief issued a statement that, far from imposing conditions on a future Peronist government, were actually a set of provisions restricting the future powers of the Armed Forces.

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26 Rouquié, op.cit., p.288.

27 Written statement from Almirante Coda, op.cit.

28 Written statement from Almirante Coda, op.cit.

Only the generals actually signed this document; the admirals and brigadiers, from whose number the future Navy and Air Force chiefs would be selected, refused to endorse this document. As Guillermo O'Donnell perceptively remarks, the Navy and the Air Force had vastly different reasons for opposing this document:

> The navy, a bastion of anti-Peronism, took the opportunity to express its disgust at the way in which the army had handled the situation, while the air force, in which the nationalists predominated, seized the occasion to break publicly with the military liberals.[29]

The Return of Perón

The Peronist victory in the elections of March 1973 brought a loyal Peronist politician, Héctor Cámpora, to the Presidency. A month later, Perón returned to Argentina from exile, and was elected to the Presidency in the September 1973 elections. The Navy, the institution most opposed to Perón and his political movement, obviously remained at the periphery of power during Argentina's second experience at populist governance. In response to a question about the institutional attitude of the Navy with regard to the return of Peronism to government, Admiral Alvarez gave a detailed and frank account of the Navy's relations with a resurgent Peronism. This lucid account deserves to be quoted in full:

> Fuí el primer Comandante en Jefe de la Armada que debía convivir con un gobierno peronista desde el derrocamiento de Perón en 1955. Yo tenía serias dudas sobre el apoyo que podía recibir la ARA desde el punto de vista presupuestario y de las posibilidades que tendríamos de cooperar e influir en las decisiones de Gobierno relativas a problemas que afectaran la seguridad nacional. Cuando, con anticipación a asumir sus

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29 Guillermo O'Donnell, Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.318. The reference to "military liberals" is to General Lanusse. Not all former-Azules were nationalists like Onganía; on the contrary, a number of Cavalry (and Azul) generals, such as Alejandro Lanusse, Julio Alsogaray, and Alcides López Aufranc, were liberals.

> funciones, el Dr. Cámpora me invitó a conversar, preparé una lista de cuestiones que me preocupaban y que requerían un consenso previo si se me ofrecía el Comando de la Armada. El diálogo con el futuro presidente fue muy franco y abierto y el acuerdo no resultó dificil pese a que mi postura política y el sentimiento mayoritario de la Armada eran bien conocidos por el Dr. Cámpora. Mi impresión fue que se buscaba olvidar el pasado y mirar hacia adelante desde un nuevo punto de partida. Esto fue informado a los Almirantes y a través de ellos al personal en general, lo que creó una perspectiva favorable, con dudas sobre si los hechos respaldarían las palabras. Durante los meses de la Presidencia del Dr. Cámpora ambas partes cumplimos lo acordado y el Gobierno fue más allá, ya que nos llamaron a participar en discusiones sobre decisiones ajenas a los temas de seguridad nacional. Todo este proceso se repitío sin variantes durante el interinato del Dr. Lastiri.
>
> Cuando Perón ganó las elecciones que debieron convocarse llegué a la conclusión que mi continuidad en el cargo sería perjudicial para la Armada, yo habia sido dado de baja y enviado a prisión por mi participación en el fallido movimiento del 16JUN55, por lo que en una entrevista requerida por mi le manifesté mi intención de pedir el retiro, con el fin de que dispusiera de tiempo para decidir sobre mi reemplazante. Me encontré con un firme rechazo que nos llevóa un diálogo de casi dos horas en el que volví a plantear las reglas de juego que me permitirían continuar en el cargo, las que fueron aceptadas como las condiciones normales que deben existir entre una Fuerza Armada y el Gobierno del cual depende.
>
> Esto calmó las inquietudes que se habían producido en la Armada a raíz de este tercer cambio, en pocos meses, de al máxima autoridad política.
>
> Pero esta vez los hechos no acompañaron a las palabras y me alejé del cargo antes de que se cumplieran dos meses de la asunción de Perón.[30]

After Admiral Alvarez resigned as the Comandante General of the Navy on 6 December 1973, he was replaced by Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera. While Alvarez had been one of the naval rebels sentenced for his part in the June 1955 naval uprising against Perón, Massera had been the adjutant officer to Admiral Aníbal Olivieri, Perón Navy Minister, during the *Peronato*.[31]

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30 Written statement from Almirante Alvarez, op.cit. Perón's selection for the command of the Army was even more significant since it marked the end of an era: General Carcagno, like Perón, was an Infantry general. With this appointment the predominance of the Cavalry, which had been overwhelming since 1962, came to an end.

31 See Chapters Four and Five.

Massera was regarded by many as a Peronist; we will study his *rôle* as Comandante en Jefe in the next chapter.

As Admiral Alvarez points out, the issue of greatest concern for the naval institution was the amnesty of convicted guerrillas under any Peronist government:

> La Armada había sufrido en los meses anteriores a la llegada al Gobierno del peronismo el asesinato de dos Almirantes y un tercero estaba secuestrado en lugar desconocido.
>
> Sabíamos que la llegada al poder del peronismo traería una amnistía y la consecuente liberación de terroristas lo que era una seria preocupación. Pensábamos que como contrapartida se produciría una tregua que duraría el tiempo que el Gobierno pudiera evitar un nuevo enfrentamiento.
>
> Las cosas resultaron de acuerdo con lo previsto, se pudo lograr la libertad del Almirante secuestrado y la tregua se mantuvo hasta mi alejamiento.[32]

While insisting that the relations between the Army and the Navy were "[i]nstitucionalmente cordiales", Admiral Alvarez admitted that "[t]uvimos discrepancias y no acompañamos algunas actividades iniciadas por [el] Ejército, de acercamiento o grupos activistas de izquierda."[33] Admiral Alvarez went further and named the extremist group in question: "La Armada y la [Fuerza Aérea] discrepamos con Ejército, que intentó un acercamiento con Montoneros, que resultó un fiasco."[34]

Massera Takes Over

The guerrilla groups remained an unsolved problem. Perón died in 1974, before he could sort out the political chaos Argentina was in, and

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32 Written statement from Almirante Alvarez, op.cit.

33 Written statement from Almirante Alvarez, op.cit.

34 Written statement received from Almirante (R.E.) Carlos Alvarez, Buenos Aires, 1 October 1990.

the Presidency passed to his widow and Vice-President, Isabel Perón. Under the new President terrorism and violence only got worse. The government organised the vigilante right-wing Triple A death squads,[35] and in 1975 signed a decree ordering the Armed Forces to "aniquilar la subversión".

In March 1976, after three years of Peronist misrule, and three Peronist Presidents, the military reentered the political scene after a great deal of preparation and planning. It was with this *coup* that the Navy, under the leadership of Admiral Massera, at last had the opportunity to make a political comeback, and it did so with a vengeance. As we will see in the next chapter, it is in the context of extra-constitutional political terror that the Argentine Navy reemerged as a full actor in Argentina's political life.

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35 The Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (AAA) was organised by the infamous José López Rega, the "Rasputin" of the Isabel Perón administration.

CHAPTER TEN

In Home Port (Ashore), 1976-1983: The Recapture of Power

As we have seen in the last two chapters, the defeat inflicted by the tanks of the Cavalry upon the aircraft of the Naval Aviation during the *Azul-Colorado* clashes of April 1963 resulted in a significant loss of naval power and influence, thereby inaugurating a prolonged period of naval abstention from politics and concentration on the professional naval *rôle*. From 1963-1973 the Arma de Caballería was the undisputed power within the Argentine Armed Forces; all the way through the presidency of Arturo Illía (1963-1966), the military governments of the so-called Revolución Argentina period (1966-1973) and the return of Peronism to government (1973-1976), the Navy did not play an important role in Argentine politics.

However, the appointment of Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera to the office of Comandante General in December 1973 marked the end of the political reticence of the naval institution. In 1976, in response to a rapidly-deteriorating internal situation marked with terrorist violence from both right and left, the Argentine Armed Forces deposed the Peronist government and took over the reins of power. This *coup* marked the return of the Navy to power, and under the command of Admiral Massera the naval institution was in the forefront of the anti-subversive campaign that has come to be known as the "Dirty War" because of widespread human rights violations. In 1982, with Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya at the helm, the Navy led the country into war with Britain over the disputed Falkland/Malvinas islands in the South Atlantic, a war that resulted in defeat. Naval political power during the so-called "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional"

period is intertwined with these two "wars" to such an extent that our study of this period must necessarily focus upon them.[1]

Massera and the War Against Subversion

As has been mentioned above, the Argentine Armed Forces overthrew the rapidly-disintegrating administration of Isabel Perón in 1976 and assumed control of the national government for the fourth time this century. The military leadership was determined to crush the militant youth groups, whose guerrilla operations, it seemed, had resulted in the near collapse of the power of the state itself. What followed was the "Dirty War", which was, and still is, regarded within the Argentine Armed Forces as nothing less than a "War against Subversion". Under the command of Admiral Massera, the Navy entered the counter-insurgency operations enthusiastically. Even before the *coup* of 1976, when the government of Isabel Perón had created the National Security Council to give the Armed

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1 The problems encountered in researching the Proceso period are many and predictable. In the first place, the period is too recent, and therefore suffers from all the problems that arise when current affairs are treated as modern history. Frequently during my research, I had to assure potential interviewees that I was not a journalist but an academic historian researching on Argentina's naval history. The other problem faced by a student of military affairs studying the recent past is that many of the participants are still on active duty and therefore virtually impossible to contact or interview. Many of the senior commanders of this period are retired, but most of the junior officers, such as Lieutenant Commander Alfredo Astiz, are still in service. Also, while it was laudable that the wheels of justice had turned in Argentina to bring the senior-most commanders to book, it did mean that it was exceedingly difficult for a researcher to contact them! But apart from being too recent,-the Proceso period is also too controversial. By this one means that even two decades after the events of the Proceso years it is likely that the various participants will be reluctant to discuss them in public, or at least less so than, say, the participants in the Revolución Libertadora of 1955 are willing today to talk about the past. Documentary evidence for this period is non-existent, of course, but then that is something that any researcher of military affairs, and particularly of the Argentine Armed Forces, is used to in any case. There is no option but to rely on interviews and questionnaires - in general, retired naval officers, and army and air force officers as well, have been quite willing to be interviewed and have occasionally been astonishingly forthcoming in their revelations, which makes up somewhat for the fact that few Argentine military officers have written their memoirs. The problem of subject reliability is obviously the major issue facing any researcher who is heavily dependent upon interviews for data collection, and this problem is compounded when the events under investigation are recent and controversial. One also has to rely on the accounts of journalists for information - the paucity of information from other sources leaves the student of military matters with no option but to treat journalism as the first draft of history.

Forces control over the operations against the militant organisations, the project had been warmly supported by Admiral Massera, "who [had] moved into the breach when the Army high command, though approving of the idea in principle, refused to appoint an Army man for the task."[2] Soon the naval institution had won for itself the reputation of being the most ruthlessly efficient of the three forces. According to the Report of the National Commission on Disappeared People (CONDEP), set up by the constitutional government of President Raúl Alfonsín in 1983, Admiral Massera personally exhorted the special naval Task Force set up for these operations to "react to the enemy with the utmost violence and without hesitating over the means employed."[3] Naval units, such as the Naval Intelligence Service (SIN), secret detention centres, such as the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA), and personnel, such as Lieutenant Alfredo B. Astiz, became particularly notorious, both within the country and abroad.[4]

A matter of considerable interest in relation to naval participation in the suppression of the militant organisations is the system of operations and assignment. About the methods used in this so-called "war" - torture of the severest sort was routine - ample evidence already exists.[5] Just as important as the question of "tools and techniques" is the question of personnel. Was the "anti-subversive war" regarded as a routine operational assignment, or could non-operational personnel be assigned to it as well? For instance, could a dentist or a supply officer

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2 Eduardo Crawley, A House Divided: Argentina 1880-1980 (London: C. Hurst, 1984), p.416.

3 Republic of Argentina, Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas, Nunca Más (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.122.

4 A number of unofficial reports have emerged since 1983 containing testimonials of the victims of the "Dirty War". To give only one example, a statement by Víctor Melchor Basterra about the secret detention centre in the Escuela de Meçanica de la Armada provides substantial details about the various naval personnnel involved in the operation, ranging in rank from contraalmirante to cabo: Centro de Estudio Legales y Sociales, Testimonio sobre el centro clandestino de detención de la Escuela de Mecanica de la Armada (ESMA) (Buenos Aires: typewritten, unpublished but circulated in mimeograph form, 1984).

5 See, in particular, Nunca Más, op.cit., for details in this regard.

be assigned to one of the *fuerzas operativas*? Alternatively, could a top-notch combat pilot from the Aviación Naval be ordered to prosecute the anti-subversive war? During my research on this important issue a single viewpoint did not emerge. Some interviewees, particularly those who wanted to emphasise institutional unity on this issue, told me that no distinction was drawn between the various functional specialities, and that the war against subversion was waged by the institution as a whole. Others told me that distinctions were certainly drawn - since the war against subversion was a war on land the naval personnel who were involved in it were drawn largely from the Infantería de Marina. It would appear that the truth lies somewhere in the middle - while on paper any naval person could be assigned to the *fuerzas operativas*, in fact the process of assignment was highly selective rather than random. In other words, the dirty warriors were probably selected for their personal attibutes rather than any other factor; surface sailors participated every bit as much as the marines. Also, the period of assignment was limited to six months. This was not only because the torture sessions were regarded as arduous frontline combat duty, but also because a rapid turnover of personnel resulted in the involvement of more and more naval men in the repression. Even at the height of the dirty war, the senior admirals were clearly aware that they would one day be called to account for their orders, and there seems to have been a concerted effort in making as many of their subordinates personally culpable as possible. This can be seen in the following statement of Admiral Massera, in which he asserted that the Navy's total involvement in the "war against subversion" did not impair its operational effectiveness as a military force in any way:

> El rol profesional de la Armada no se vió afectado por su intervención en la guerra contra la subversión porque la institución siguió su adiestramiento normal sin perjuicio de la intervención de TODOS sus miembros en dicha guerra dado que también las fuerzas estrictamente operativas

> intervenían eventualmente o en funciones de apoyo para el logro del objetivo que como todos conocen fue el de ANIQUILAR la subversión, objetivo dictado por el Gobierno Constitucional.[6]

The other question that needs to be addressed is that of targetting. Was there an agreed demarcation of jurisdiction between the three Armed Forces and the other security agencies? Naval officers were again divided on this issue. One division of jurisdiction that has been suggested is that different groups were targetted by different security forces. According to this view, the Army took on the ERP, the Navy the Montoneros and the Air Force the Trotskyite groups. This scheme was usually suggested by those naval officers who wished to emphasise that the Navy had been coequal to the Army during the Proceso period. The other demarkation that has been suggested is geographical. According to this version, the Navy had responsibility for the areas around the main naval bases, particularly Puerto Belgrano and Bahia Blanca. The geographical basis of demarkation of spheres of influence is suggested by those naval officers who wish to underplay the Navy's *rôle* in the repression. Given the nature of the enquiry, the truth will probably never be known. In any case, it is part of the historical record that whatever the basis for the division of power and responsibility between the three Armed Forces during the Dirty War, the military repression in practice "degenerated" into a free-for-all between the various institutions. This might have had something to do with the method of interrogation. In all likelihood, when the torture victims revealed the names of others, there was considerable overlap, and so more than one agency had a particular individual on its list as a suspect. From

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6 Written statement received from Almirante (R.E.) Emilio Eduardo Massera on 10 September 1987. It is important to note that in this statement Massera is involving the entire naval institution ("TODOS sus miembros") in the anti-insurgency operations, while simultaneously insisting that only a part of the institution participated actively ("las fuerzas estrictamente operativas intervenían eventualmente").

the number of innocent casualties, we know that there was considerable chaos in the repressive operations.

It would seem, however, that under Massera's command the Navy's project was aimed at far more than just the liquidation of the subversive organisations, *per se*. Massera was clearly ambitious, both for himself and the Navy, and used the undoubted rigour and dedication with which the naval institution went about its counter-insurgency task to reestablish its credentials to share power with the Army. Furthermore, the intention was not only to rehabilitate the Navy in the power structure but to appropriate for it the kind of power that it had enjoyed and exercised under the command of Admiral Isaac Rojas, in the aftermath of the Revolución Libertadora in 1955. In the context of naval political power, it was therefore envisaged that the Proceso Militar would undo the work of the Colorado-Azul clashes and take the Navy back to the days of the Revolución Libertadora. Admiral Massera addresses the question of naval political power during his command by pointing out that

> en la Revolución Libertadora como durante el período que [el Almirante] MASSERA le tocó comandar la Armada durante el Proceso ésta tuvo un mayor prestigio político. Por lo contrario después de los hechos de Azules y Colorados la Armada no tuvo prácticamente ningún poder político.[7]

Apart from the struggle to regain power, the naval institution also made concerted efforts to develop its image at both the popular as well as the elite level. To increase public awareness of the Navy, an attempt was made to undercut the Army's appropriation of the heritage of General San Martin by presenting Admiral Brown, the hero of the Independence War, as

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7 ibid. As far as the locus of naval political power in modern Argentine history is concerned, there can be little doubt that Massera is fundamentally correct: viz., from the naval perspective, the Proceso years represented quite clearly a resurgence of power. Nonetheless, it is fascinating that Massera views the period of his command in a framework that is so explicitly historical.

the "Padre de la Patria en el mar".[8] Similarly, to inculcate a maritime consciousness at the elite level, a special course entitled "Curso Argentina en el Mar" was introduced for distinguished civilians at the Escuela de Guerra Naval, the Navy's educational establishment for training senior officers. The purpose of this course was

> Presentar a los participantes un panorama general e integral de los aspectos que conforman el concepto de la Argentina como Nación Marítima, característica imprescindible para un futuro transcendente.[9]

To what extent, however, were these developments driven by the personal ambition of Admiral Massera himself? A good deal of the literature, both scholarly and academic, on recent Argentine political history has held Massera responsible for many of the excesses of the Dirty War. According to David Rock, Massera "urged military populism, a new "Peronism without Perón" ..."[10] upon his colleagues in the Junta Militar, and tried to use the Beagle Channel crisis with Chile in 1977 "to don the mantle of Perón and establish a popular dictatorship - Bonapartism in a raw form."[11] Eduardo Crawley echoes Rock's assessment:

> The Navy commander, Emilio Massera, had ... political ambitions of his own. A ruthless intriguer in the pursuit of his service career, he was an easy socialiser, and once in power he struck up good relationships with a number of *peronista* union leaders. This ... led him to fancy himself as a sort of latter-day Perón: he began to adopt a distinctly populist attitude in public, and to distance himself from his peers in the Junta.[12]

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8 Unrecorded discussion with Vicealmirante I.M. (R.E.) Eduardo R. Fracassi, Secretary General of the Navy during the commands of Almirante Massera and his successor, Almirante Armando Lambruschini. 10 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

9 Briefing by Capitán de Navío Julio Italo Lavezzo, Jefe de Enseñanza (Chief of Studies), Escuela de Guerra Naval, 17 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

10 David Rock, Argentina 1516-1982 : From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1986), p.369.

11 ibid.

12 Crawley, op.cit., p.437.

Crawley further notes that, in line with his populist pretensions, Massera made a serious effort to improve his public image by "... making contacts with Argentines in exile ... and even, according to several independent accounts, meeting Montonero leader Mario Firmenich."[13] John Simpson and Jana Bennett present evidence in their book to substantiate this accusation, and add that the purpose of Massera's contacts with senior Montoneros being held in the Navy Mechanical School (ESMA) was to seek their advice about how he could best develop the kind of popular appeal that Perón had enjoyed:

> The overall purpose was to present Massera to the public as the one man who could provide the necessary link between the military government and civilian politics, and as a part of that the Navy even began a public relations campaign to try to distance itself from the repression of the military government, inspite of the fact that the Navy had been the most effective service in carrying out the repression.[14]

Within the Peronist movement, it was certainly felt that Massera was attempting to cast himself in the populist mould. As Guido di Tella remarked to me:

> Certainly, Massera saw himself as a possible popular leader... There is a legion in Argentina of pseudo-leaders who wanted to inherit the mantle of Perón, and Massera was one. He did have some support, paid support, some union leaders... Massera was very smart in being very harsh while putting on the face of not being very harsh... So he had this dual character. He even seemed critical of the harshness of the Army. He was very very dishonest...[15]

Simpson and Bennett mention that Massera had got very close to Perón during his last days, and that Perón told the naval officer not long before his

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13 Crawley, op.cit., p.473. The Montoneros were the most powerful of the militant organisations that Massera's Navy combated during the counter-insurgency operations.

14 John Simpson and Jana Bennett, The Disappeared : Voices From a Secret War (London: Robson Books, 1985), p.293.

15 Interview with Diputado Guido di Tella, op. cit.

death: "You have all the qualities to take my place. What a pity you're in the wrong service."[16] They acidly remark:

> [F]or all his efforts to imitate the early Perón in his range of political contacts and allies, [Massera] could never arouse anything approaching the devotion which Perón was able to call upon in others. Massera was all too clearly working for Massera, and no one else.[17]

In the light of the above, it is clear that we need to focus upon the personality and career of Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera. He was, without a doubt, a brilliant officer professionally; throughout his career he was a rank above his *compañeros de promoción*.[18] He was always fiercely loyal to the men under his command, and made an excellent seagoing captain. Professionally speaking, he was marked for the *Almirantazgo* right from the initial days of his career. However, Massera was also politically ambitious from the very beginning; a number of retired naval officers remarked to me during interviews and conversations that Massera had always had more personal friends outside the Navy than within it, which is most unusual for an officer in Argentina. This interesting pot-pourri of a personality was seasoned with the hot spice of Peronism; it was astonishing to hear the former Commander-in-Chief being called a "Peronist" at, of all places, the Escuela Naval Militar at Río Santiago, that bastion of naval tradition and propriety. It was not easy to track down the source of the widespread view within the Navy that Massera, if not a closet Peronist, atleast had Peronist "leanings". It would appear that this opinion dates back to the early days of Massera's career, when he was a lieutenant during the *Peronato*. Massera married into a prominent anti-Peronist family of Mar del Plata, but in order to protect his career took to mouthing Peronist slogans and platitudes. It is a measure of Massera's political skills that

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16 Simpson and Bennett, op. cit., p.289.

17 ibid.

18 By this one implies all those officers who graduated from the Escuela Naval Militar in the same year.

despite his tainted reputation he managed to rise to the very pinnacle of the resolutely anti-Peronist naval institution.

Within the naval institution, opinions regarding Admiral Massera are somewhat mixed, though largely negative. A large number of naval officers, serving and retired, would probably voice the feelings expressed by Captain Raimondi:

> ¿Qué pasó en el último período constitucional? Aparece Almirante Massera, que es un hombre sumamente inteligente, que establece cierto tipo de alianza con el peronismo, y que busca algún tipo de relación entre la Armada y la política. Cuando se produce el golpe del estado del 76, lo que está guiando a Massera es tratar de poner a la Armada en un nivel de igualdad con el Ejército.[19]

There are a number of prominent officers whose opinions of Massera coincided with the one just quoted. Rear Admiral Horacio Zaratiegui, who is regarded by many within the Navy as the "ideologist" of the Proceso years,[20] agrees wholeheartedly with Captain Raimondi's comment. It needs to be pointed out not all naval officers assign particular responsibility for the deeds of the Dirty War on the shoulders of Admiral Massera. Vice Admiral Fracassi, the Secretary General of the Navy under Massera, must be mentioned in this context.[21] Despite his enormous power, Admiral Massera retired on schedule: he was unable to crown his career by becoming the new Perón. If the political behaviour of Massera's successor as Commander-in-Chief is any guide, the high political profile of the Navy during the years of his command was largely the function of his personality, vision and ambition. Although the naval institution remained a powerful political

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19 Interview with Capitán de Navío (R) Lic. Carlos H. Raimondi, 7 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

20 He floated a journal called Convicción that was paid for by the Navy.

21 Informal conversation with Almirante Fracassi, op.cit.

actor under Admiral Armando Lambruschini, it reverted to the low public profile that it has traditionally preferred to maintain.

Anaya and the War for the Malvinas

Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya took over as Commander-in-Chief in late 1981. Under his command the Argentine Navy played a crucial role in the initiative to reoccupy the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas in 1982. To an extent, this decision can be analysed in relation to the special interest the naval institution has always had in the South Atlantic, the disputed insular territories and Antarctica. As Rear Admiral Jorge Fraga, one of Argentina's most eminent geopoliticians, put it: "Hay un cierto sentimiento que llegando así a las islas del sur, así a la Tierra del Fuego, la presencia de la Armada ha sido la más importante."[22] Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that the naval institution has traditionally exercised a jurisdictional hegemony over the Malvinas issue among the various agencies and departments of government in Argentina.[23] Dr. Costa Méndez, who was the Argentine Foreign Minister during the South Atlantic Conflict, told me that while "the diplomatic process was in the hands of the Foreign Ministry... [which] had the responsibility of the negotiations with Britain and the presentations before the United Nations",[24] the Navy played a very important role in the decision-making process:

> The Argentine Navy thought that the defence of the South Atlantic *vis-à-vis* the Royal Navy was a very important priority, for the Navy and for the country. So, the Navy accordingly always pushed the government to give the Malvinas Question priority and to have, just in case, an alternative plan if things really went wrong... [A]lso, the Navy [was] the force that ... underscored the

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22 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Jorge Fraga, 24 August 1987, Buenos Aires.

23 The "jurisdictional hegemony" exercised by the Argentine Navy in the South Atlantic and the southern territories is analysed more fully in Chapter Sixteen.

24 Interview with Dr. Nicanor Costa Méndez, 18 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

> importance of the Malvinas problem on the Beagle problem and on the Antarctic problem.[25]

This was also the perception of the British both during and after the war. The *Franks Committee Report* describes the Argentine Navy as "the most hawkish"[26] and "traditionally the hardest"[27] of the three military institutions on the Falklands/Malvinas issue.

The role of the Argentine Navy as an institution in the South Atlantic War is beyond doubt. What is unclear is why the islands were occupied in April 1982 and not at any other time - after all, the occupation of the Malvinas has been an integral part of the Navy's contingency planning and war gaming for over two decades, as a number of naval officers pointed out to me. Clearly, we require an additional factor to explain the Malvinas decision, and this is where Admiral Anaya comes into the picture. The decision to reoccupy the Falklands would probably not have been taken if Anaya had not been the Commander-in-Chief of the Argentine Navy. This is by no means a novel conclusion.[28] The Franks Committee Report reveals that the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 3 February 1982 that "Admiral Anaya, probably with President Galtieri's full agreement, had "got

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25 ibid.

26 United Kingdom, Falkland Islands Review. Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors. Chairman: The Rt. Hon. the Lord Franks, OM, GCMG, KCB, CBE (London: HMSO, 1983), p.75, point 273.

27 ibid., p.34, point 119.

28 The fact that this statement is not novel does not make it uncontroversial. Some students of the Argentine decision to occupy the islands place far more importance on the r le of General Galtieri than I do. Middlebrook, for instance, has this to say:

> It has been suggested that Admiral Anaya, longest serving member of the junta, made the recovery of the Falklands a condition of his support for Galtieri as President... He was an ardent 'Malvinist', but the suggestion that he made the recovery of the islands a condition of his support for the new President is not supported by senior Argentine admirals. They believe that when Galtieri became President... [p]olicies were discussed for various sectors of government; the head of the list for foreign policy was the resolution of the 'Malvinas problem'.
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> Martin Middlebrook, The Fight for the 'Malvinas': The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War (London: Viking, 1989), pp.1-2.

into the driving seat" in regard to the Malvinas negotiations..."[29] In the spirit of journalism being the first draft of history, it is instructive to analyse what the books that were published in the aftermath of the South Atlantic War had to say about the role of Admiral Anaya in the whole affair. The congruence of opinion is impressive. Most of the literature on the decision-making process by which the Argentine *Junta* decided to reoccupy the disputed insular territories coercively has tended to assign most of the responsibility for the decision upon the shoulders of Admiral Anaya.[30] The Sunday Times Insight Team describe him as "the man in whom the ambition to take the Malvinas burnt the brightest".[31] Jimmy Burns points out that during the command of Admiral Massera, Anaya had been ordered to make 'Plan Goa', which was the blueprint for a military assault upon the islands.[32] Eduardo Crawley remarks that in 1977 the "delaying tactics" of British diplomacy on the Falklands/Malvinas issue were "transparent" to Admiral Anaya, who as the head of a large Argentine naval mission in London was "the man watching [the British diplomatic moves] most closely,"[33] and who therefore became convinced about the futility of the Anglo-Argentine negotiation process. Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins argue that Admiral Anaya was "the toughest member of the junta",[34] who "treated Costa Mendes (sic) with contempt and regarded Galtieri as a broken reed, hopelessly susceptible to American pressure."[35] Nor are these views limited to British journalists. Cardoso, Kirschbaum and Van der Kooy amply

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29 ibid., p.37, point 128.

30 See, for instance, Oscar Raúl Cardoso, Ricardo Kirschbaum and Eduardo van der Kooy, Falklands : The Secret Plot (East Molesey: Preston Editions, 1987), in which the authors describe Admiral Anaya's project in detail.

31 The Sunday Times Insight Team, The Falklands War (London: André Deutsch, 1982), p.263.

32 Jimmy Burns, The Land That Lost Its Heroes: Argentina, The Falklands and Alfonsín (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 1987), pp.30-31, 36-37, 42-43.

33 Crawley, op.cit., p. 442.

34 Sunday Times Insight Team, op.cit., p.133.

35 Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, The Battle for the Falklands (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), p.139.

back up their view of Admiral Anaya's importance in the reoccupation of the Malvinas.[36]

My research reveals that the determining factor in the Argentine decision to reoccupy the disputed island territories by force of arms, and then to refuse to withdraw the occupying forces in the face of the approaching British Task Force, was the viscerally anti-British attitude of Admiral Anaya. Such strong antipathy to the British is most unusual within the Argentine Navy, and has been attributed to Anaya's training in France, where he was greatly influenced by the strong Anglophobic sentiments that have traditionally permeated the French Navy.[37] But how did the Anglophobic admiral come to dominate Argentina's decision-making process during those crucial days? In order to comprehend this, it is necessary understand the nature of Anaya's relationship with General Galtieri. The Army and Naval Commanders-in-Chief had known each other since their schooldays at the Liceo Militar General San Martín, where they had been classmates.[38] Galtieri, who was widely known in the Argentine Army to have below average intelligence, always admired the razor-sharp intellect of his former classmate Anaya. Galtieri wished to replace General Viola as President, but given the theoretically equal share that the other two Armed Forces had in the tripartite Junta Militar, he required the support of either the Navy or the Air Force to achieve the Casa Rosada. Anaya offered his old school friend the Presidency; in return, he received a free hand to do what he wished to solve the Malvinas problem. Galtieri was underwriting the Navy's adventure; it can be seen as a simple *quid pro quo*.

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36 Cardoso, Kirschbaum, Van der Kooy, op.cit.

37 Interview with Contraalmirante (RE) Horacio Zaratiegui, 14 September 1990, residence, Buenos Aires.

38 Another of their classmates would come to hate military life, and would many years later be their nemesis, namely Raúl Alfonsín.

Admittedly, the sequence of causation sketched out above may appear somewhat conjectural, but there is evidence to substantiate this chain of events. Admiral Fraga, the eminent naval strategist, told me that "el Almirante Anaya ejercía un cierto predominio intelectual sobre el General Galtieri."[39] While insisting that the Malvinas were the favourite project of the naval institution as a whole, Admiral Fraga regards Admiral Anaya as the "gran propulsor de la causa."[40] It is surely significant that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which sentenced the defeated commanders of the Argentine Forces after the war, condemned Admiral Anaya to fourteen years in prison and General Galtieri to only twelve years due to "su insistencia en el lanzamiento de las operaciones y su obstinación en no negociar."[41]

The military defeat suffered by the Argentine forces at the hands of the British Task Force in the South Atlantic Conflict brought the political power of the military institutions to its nadir. The Navy suffered from the stigma of defeat far more than the other two military institutions, because it was perceived, in the public eye, that the Navy had pushed for the war and then not fought when the time came. Guido di Tella describes the public attitude thus:

> The fact that they emerged as the Force responsible for the war with England goes very much against the Navy. That probably is the event [in which] the Navy took a distinct [line] from the other Armed Forces and gave the impression of pushing the country towards that war and then waging the war... in the public perception, with less courage, with less determination. This image of Anaya, insisting in declaring the war, and then after the first sinkings bringing all the Fleet towards the harbours... it was considered as a ridiculous, shameful behaviour on the part of Anaya...[42]

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39 Interview with Almirante Fraga, op.cit.

40 ibid.

41 A condensed version of the Judgement of the Supreme Council is presented in La Nación (Buenos Aires), 14 June 1986, pp.5-6.

42 Interview with Diputado Guido di Tella, op.cit.

Since there were a number of British nuclear submarines prowling in the South Atlantic, it made good military sense to order the Fleet back into port, particularly after the sinking of the cruiser *General Belgrano*. It is worth remembering that the Argentine fleet "remained intact in spite of confronting the third most powerful fleet in the world; this preserved the regional balance of power."[43] However, among substantial sections of the Argentine public, the Navy is seen as the military institution that had no compunction in fighting a "dirty war" with no quarters given and no holds barred against its domestic enemies, but which turned tail and ran when faced with its *raison d'être*, fighting against the foreign enemy. In reality, while the surface fleet was called into port, both the Aviación Naval and the Infantería Marina fought with determination. As Scheina points out, after the fleet was withdrawn, "[t]he brunt of the Navy's fighting ... evolved upon its air arm, the Marine Corps, naval personnel in the Malvinas, and the remaining submarines."[44]

There is no question that the Infantería de Marina fought superbly, - the Second Marine Battalion capturing the islands in a classic amphibious landing, and the Fifth Marine Battalion and the Marine Antiaircraft

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43 Robert L. Scheina, 'The Malvinas Campaign', Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute 109 (May 1983), p.117. However, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took a harsher view of the withdrawal of the Fleet to shore. The Supreme Council held Admiral Anaya responsible for delaying the withdrawal of the Fleet - "puesto que el Comité Militar fue informado ... de la falta de capacidad de la flota para oponerse a submarinos nucleares, era obligación de Anaya tomar en consideración estas circunstancias a partir de entonces, y no desde el momento en que Londres decidió el envío de una fuerza de tareas o desde el hundimiento del crucero General Belgrano..." - while also criticising him for the withdrawal, since it resulted in the "dominio total del mar por el enimigo, aislamiento de las tropas destacadas en Malvinas y rendición final de nuestra fuerzas." Quoted in La Nación, 14 June 1986, p. 5.

44 Scheina, op.cit., p.107. My research on the battlefield performance of the Argentine Navy has been greatly enhanced by the good fortune of separate interviews with Rear Admiral Mayorga and Captain Jorge Alberto Errecaborde, the former a naval aviator and the latter a marine corps officer. Along with a third retired officer, who is now deceased, these two senior retired officers formed a study group that was commissioned by the Navy in the aftermath of the war to make an in-depth analysis of the naval side of the Argentine operations. A number of naval officers interviewed by me alluded to the report that they produced with great appreciation. The report itself has the highest security classification, and will probably never be in the public domain because of its forthright and candid nature. Admiral Mayorga and Captain Errecaborde offered me in depth interviews in lieu of a look at the report itself.

Battalion fighting very stubbornly in defence of the islands.[45] The Argentine Navy possesses the strongest air arm of any Latin American navy, and it entered the conflict with three attack squadrons, one antisubmarine squadron, one reconnaissance squadron, two helicopter squadrons, two logistic squadrons, and one training squadron.[46] The performance of the Aviación Naval was superb - with only four naval pilots killed and moderate aircraft losses, naval attack aircraft hit a number of crucial targets, naval support aircraft completed 75% of their supply runs to the islands and operated up to the last day of the war, and naval reconnaissance aircraft located British units and maintained contact with them throughout the war.[47] Ironically, although it was the Super-Etendard aircraft of the Naval Aviation, with their Exocet missiles, that along with the Air Force Mirages captured the attention of the world during the South Atlantic Conflict, the air war is irredeemably associated in the Argentine public mind exclusively with the Air Force, much to the chagrin of the naval institution.[48] In the course of my interviews, conflicting views were expressed on this score. One of the professors at the Escuela Naval Militar told me that naval pilots were unhappy with the way the Air Force had appropriated all the laurels for the air war in the South Atlantic.[49] On the other hand, Capitán de Navío Lavezzo, Jefe de Enseñanza at the Escuela de Guerra Naval and himself a naval aviator, dismissed this issue as merely a manifestation of the intense professional competition that exists between Navy and Air Force pilots in multi-force military systems around the

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45 ibid., p.117.

46 ibid.

47 ibid.

48 If there was any inter-force bitterness on this score, it certainly has not come into the open. Andrada, a former Air Force officer, has this to say about the sinking of HMS Sheffield in his hugely-popular book: "Para nuestras fuerzas armadas fue una operación históricamente valiosa, en la que quedó demostrada la innegable idoneidad profesional de nuestros aviadores navales y la posibilidad de lograr trascendentes resultados cuando se logra combinar con eficacia los medios de la Armada con los de la Fuerza Aérea." Benigno H. Andrada, Guerra aérea en las Malvinas (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1983), p.119.

49 Unrecorded conversation with Dr. Alfio Aquiles Puglisi, 16 September 1987, Escuela Naval Militar, Río Santiago.

world.[50] The Air Force, in any case, has done nothing to disabuse the Argentine public of this misinformation. On the contrary, it has successfully appropriated the aerial conflict for itself by being the only one of the three military institutions to have published an official history of the South Atlantic Conflict.[51]

Another important factor that has, in defeat, militated against the public image of the Navy *vis-à-vis* that of the other two military institutions is the ratio of officer to conscript casualties, mistakenly seen by many as *the* index of military leadership. Excluding the personnel of the Gendarmería Nacional, the Prefectura Naval and the Marina Mercante from the casualty figures, we can see that the difference in the number of Army, Navy and Air Force personnel killed-in-action (KIA) is dramatic.[52] The Army had 13 officers, 28 *suboficiales*, and 115 conscript soldiers KIA. The Air Force suffered 36 officers, 14 *suboficials*, and 5 conscripts KIA. The Navy, however, lost "only" 10 officers, of whom 3 were *guardiamarinas* (midshipmen), while suffering very heavy losses in the lower deck, with 204 *suboficiales* and 159 *conscriptos* and *marineros* KIA. The marked divergence in these figures has, understandably, created the image of the gallant officers of the Air Force. There is, after all, one indisputable fact: *there were more Air Force officers killed-in-action during the South Atlantic Conflict than (1) Army and Navy officers put together and (2) all*

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50 Interview with Capitán de Navío Julio Italo Lavezzo, 17 September 1987, Escuela de Guerra Naval, Buenos Aires.

51 Rubén Moro, Historia del Conflicto del Atlántico Sur (La Guerra Inaudita) (Buenos Aires: Escuela Superior de Guerra Aérea, 1985). While the Army has not published an official history, it published a two-volume "informe oficial" of the war: Comisión de Redacción del Informe Oficial del Ejército Argentino sobre el Conflicto Malvinas, Conflicto Malvinas Tomo I: Desarrollo de los Acontecimientos, Tomo II: Abreviaturas, Anexos y Fuentes Bibliográficas (Buenos Aires: 1983). The Navy, at the time of writing, has yet to publish an official history of the war, although a number of naval participants have written articles in the Boletín del Centro Naval. This topic is studied more fully in Chapter Sixteen, in which the relationship between the Air Force and the Aviación Naval is explored.

52 This data is derived from a list of Argentine military personnel killed-in-action during the South Atlantic Conflict in Anexos XV - 1, XV - 2 and XV - 3 of Rubén Moro, op.cit., pp.547-552.

other Air Force fatalties. While the gallantry of Air Force officers is undeniable, it is important for us to note that the KIA figures of the three Armed Forces relate closely to their system of operations. In land warfare, officer casualties tend to be much lower than those in the ranks, simply because there are always far fewer officers than men on the battlefield due to the pyramidical command structure. Indeed, in relation to their numbers, officer casualties are always disproportionately higher in land warfare than the men under their command, as officers make prime targets on the battlefield. In aerial warfare, on the other hand, the only combatants are the aircrew flying in the aircraft. Since most of the aircrew are officers, Air Force casualty figures are always "top-heavy", with far more casualties in the officer corps than in the ranks, who make up the support services on the ground. The distinctive feature of war at sea is that the targets are vessels, not individuals. Thus, there is a close correlation between the composition of the crews aboard the ships and casualties in naval warfare. The profile of naval personnel KIA is as would be expected in a war in which large ships such as the cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* were sunk, and is in line with the composition of a ship's company in a conscript Navy such as Argentina's.

The Main Conclusions

Three conclusions seem to emerge from this study of naval political activism. The first conclusion pertains to *past patterns*. From a long-term perspective, the Proceso years clearly represented a *resurgence* of naval political power and influence.

The second conclusions points relates to *future possibilities* of naval political participation. The naval institution did not emerge from

this period with much credit, and one of the major consequences of naval participation, or lack of it, in these two wars of the Proceso years could well be a long-term reduction in naval power and influence.

The third conclusion has to do with an enduring aspect of naval political behaviour: the *rôle* of the admiral. As our study of the Proceso period indicates, the Argentine Navy followed its Commander-in-Chief unhesitatingly. The political behaviour of the naval institution bore a close correlation to the personality of its senior admiral. Do navies obey their admirals more readily than armies do their generals? This aspect of naval political behaviour - strong institutional cohesion - will be studied in Chapter Fourteen. At this juncture it seems appropriate to conclude with the final observation that navies, like ships, are total institutions. The admirals, it appears, have a lot to answer for.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In the Dock (Afloat), 1983 onwards: Withdrawal from Power

In the aftermath of the Malvinas defeat, the Argentine Armed Forces found themselves facing the wrath of civil society that had risen from the ashes of repression during the Dirty War. Initially, the military dictatorship attempted to brazen out the crisis by sticking to the "original timetable" of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional, but when it became apparent that this course of action was untenable Argentina's military rulers groped for a formula that would allow them to withdraw with "honour". Inter-Force relations virtually broke down within the Junta Militar; in September 1982 Admiral Anaya pulled the Navy out of the government, and Brigadier Lami Dozo did likewise with the Air Force. At the beginning of October 1982 Anaya handed over command of the naval institution to Admiral Ruben Franco, whose task it was not only to shepherd the Navy during the difficult period of transition to civilian rule but also to feverishly rebuild the naval arsenal to at least its pre-war level.

Of all the serious candidates in the 1983 presidential elections, it would appear that the candidacy of Raúl Alfonsín had the least support within the armed forces, even less than that of the Peronist candidate, Italo Argentino Luder.[1] Alfonsín had played a leading role in opposing human rights violations by the Proceso regimes, and he raised the issue frequently in his electoral campaign. Thus, his unexpected triumph at the polls came as an unpleasant shock to the military, as it was clear right from the very outset that his administration was going to have strained relations with the armed forces. The four major points of friction in

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1 Even if one were to discount Alfonsín's charge of an informal understanding between the military and the unions (the pacto militar-sindical) as campaign propaganda, it must be remembered that Luder was popular within the armed forces because he had, as the acting-President during Isabel Perón's leave of absence, initiated the military into the "war against subversion" in 1975.

civil-military relations during the Alfonsín years were (1) the military demand for an amnesty to those military personnel accused of human rights violations during the military authoritarian dispensation, (2) significant cuts in the budgetary allocation to the armed forces, (3) reform of military doctrine and ideology at the level of the military educational and training institutions and (4) the structural reorganisation of the military establishment at both the political (ministry) and institutional (armed force) level. These policy thrusts intersected with the institutional interests of the Navy in a number of ways. The civilian government's policy regarding the human rights violation trials encountered rigid and persistent resistance from the naval high command due to the latter's desire to insulate and protect Lieutenant Alfredo B. Astiz. The deep cuts in military budgets had a major impact on the operational capability of the naval institution. The policy of doctrinal reform came face-to-face with the cherished notion of institutional autonomy. Finally, structural reform raised questions of inter-Force relations. Each of these issues merits a separate analysis, and this is what will be attempted in this chapter.

The Human Rights Violations Trials and the Astiz Issue

Right from the beginning, Alfonsín insisted that the "Nuremberg principle" (obeying orders is no defence for doing the indefensible) would not apply in Argentina, and during his administration, in response to pressure from the military, he further softened his position. Initially, human rights violations were to be tried by the Consejo Superior de las Fuerzas Armadas, a body consisting of retired officers, but the cases were transfered to the Supreme Court when the Consejo Superior linked them to the reform of the Military Code, an made an interim statement exonerating the accused personnel. Realising that the continued irresolution of the human rights violations trials issue was a severe political liability,

Alfonsín pushed the Punto Final law through Congress in December 1986, which gave the federal prosecutors 60 days in which to press charges, after which they would lapse. Thus, the brunt of the human rights violation trials fell on junior officers. This created a horizontal split in the Army officer corps, and was a major cause for the three military revolts faced by the Alfonsín administration: the *Semana Santa* mutiny from 15-22 April 1987 led by Lieutenant Colonel Aldo Rico, the second Aldo Rico uprising of January 1988 (the Monte Caseros uprising), and the revolt led by Colonel Mohamed Alí Seineldin (the Villa Martelli uprising) in December 1988. In response to the Easter Week revolt of 1987, the Law of Obedience was passed, which gave immunity from prosecution to those personnel whose commanding officers testified that they had undertaken criminal actions under orders.

From our Armada-centric perspective it is important to note that the *levantamientos militares* were confined to the Army. In each revolt the military rebels claimed that they were revolting against the Army high command, not the civilian government. This pressure from within the Army resulted in frequent changes of Army Chief of Staff during the Alfonsín years. In contrast the Navy remained quiet, except for the running battle between the Alfonsín administration and the Navy high command over the promotion of the notorious Lieutenant Alfredo Astiz. One of Alfonsín's last acts as President was clear Astiz for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Commander, thereby removing the singular irritant that had existed in his relations with the Navy. The naval institution remained united behind its Chief of Staff; Vice Admiral Ramón Arosa commanded the Navy for the entire period of the Alfonsín administration.

Budgetary Reduction and Operational Imperatives

In the public eye, the human rights violation issue was seen - with good reason - as the biggest problem that the Alfonsín administration had to face *vis-à-vis* the military. Nearly as important as this political problem, however, was an economic one - what priority should a civilian government assign to military demands on the purse during a time of economic hardship? Raúl Alfonsín assumed the presidency determined to slash defence expenditure from 5 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP) to 2 percent, and by 1987 it was down to 1.4 percent of the GNP. In the early days of the Alfonsín administration, the civilian regime discovered that during the Proceso years the Armed Forces had signed tens of million of dollars in arms contracts. In particular, during its closing months in office, the military regime of General Reynaldo Bignone had spent heavily on arms, partly to replace *matériel* lost in the South Atlantic Conflict, but also to preempt the expected cuts in the military budgets of the incoming civilian administration.[2] In 1982, Argentina imported US$ 1.1 billion worth of arms, which was the first (and only) time that a Latin American country had imported over a billion dollars worth of military hardware, and also the first (and only) time that a country from the region was featured on the list of the world's top ten arms purchasers. The Argentine Navy's reequipment plans may be considered as an illustration of this situation. In 1982-83, the Navy signed contracts to receive two submarines then under construction in West Germany, in addition to four others which were planned to be assembled in Argentina. Also, four highly sophisticated frigates were being built in West Germany for future delivery to the Argentine Navy. The cost of this reequipment program was estimated in 1983 at US$ 2 billion, plus another US$ 1 to 2 billion remaining to be

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2 Robert E. Looney, The Political Economy of Latin American Defense Expenditures : Case Studies of Venezuela and Argentina (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1986), p.212.

paid for orders placed before 1982. The Navy's debt burden, incurred during the Proceso days by naval borrowing to purchase hardware, was estimated at US$ 1.3 billion when the civilian administration took office. This heavy burden on the naval budget was partially eased when the Alfonsín government transferred the burden of repaying the principal on this debt to the Treasury, although this still left the Navy saddled with interest payments from its own budget.[3] During the Alfonsín years, half the Navy's annual budgetary allocation was routinely absorbed by salaries and pensions alone, and with most of the other half being spent on annual training exercises, the amount left for reequipment has been miniscule. A sense of frustration has certainly been felt in the respective military high commands. When I asked Vice Admiral Rivero Kelly in September 1987 what he regarded as the most critical problem facing the military institution that he commanded, he had absolutely no hestitation in picking up the issue of paucity of resources.[4] The Navy has therefore been forced to walk a financial tightrope for the first time since the days of the Peronist regime in the late-1940s and early-1950s, when the naval institution had been deliberately starved of funds. For instance, in the draft budget submitted by the Alfonsín administration to Congress in the summer of 1984, half the Navy's allocation was absorbed by salaries, the other half by annual training exercises.[5] Admiral Rivero Kelly had his priorities firmly in place when he pointed to the resource question as the most critical problem facing the Argentine Navy today.[6]

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3 ibid., p.213, p.215.

4 Interview with Vicealmirante Máximo Eduardo Rivero Kelly, Sub Jefe del Estado Mayor General de la Armada (Vice Chief of the Naval General Staff), 17 September 1987 at the Naval Headquarters, Edificio Libertad, Buenos Aires.

5 ibid.

6 Interview with Vicealmirante Máximo Eduardo Rivero Kelly, Sub Jefe del Estado Mayor General de la Armada (Vice Chief of the Naval General Staff), 17 September 1987 at the Naval Headquarters, Edificio Libertad, Buenos Aires.

If the naval situation seems critical, it is salutary to note that the naval share of the military budget actually went *up* during the Alfonsín years. The Army had the toughest deal of all in this regard: its share in an already much smaller pie fell from over 40 percent to just over 30 percent. The impact was felt everywhere: annual training exercises were curtailed, as was the annual intake of conscripts, with the Army strength consequently dropping from 78,000 to 28,000 (only the officer corps and the volunteer NCOs), and, according to a reliable estimate, 211 out of 234 tanks were obsolescent.[7] As the data presented in Table One clearly demonstrates, the Army's budget was more drastically reduced from 1988 to 1989 than either of the other two Forces. What is even more significant, however, is that in 1989 the Navy, for the first time in Argentine history, received more money than the Army.

TABLE ONE

ARGENTINA: ANNUAL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR DEFENCE: 1988 AND 1989
(in millions of 1989 Australes; percentages of total Federal budget)

	1988		1989		Change: 19881989	
Institution	Allocation	%age	Allocation	%age	Allocation	%age
Army	163,770	4.14	120,365	3.08	43,405	-26.50
Navy	131,370	3.32	127,872	3.27	3,498	-2.66
Air Force	103,770	2.62	82,591	2.11	21,179	-20.41
Defence in General	34,320	0.87	50,706	1.30	16,386	+47.74
Total	433,230	10.95	381,534	9.75	51,696	-11.93

Source: República Argentina, Camara de Diputados de la Nación, Secretaría Parliamentaría, Dirección Secretaría, Mesa de Entradas, *Tramite Parliamentario*, No. 142, Wednesday, 15 November 1989, p.2702.

From all that has been stated above it is evident just how deep the budget cuts actually went. Clearly, this had a serious impact on the

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7 Figure quoted by Prof. Robert Potash during a talk at Oxford University in February 1990.

fundamental institutional interests of the Armed Forces, and a great dael of unhappiness was evinced within the military establishment in this regard. This high-risk strategy of the Alfonsín government can be deemed successful: for the vast majority of officers in the armed forces, the disaffection in relation to the budgetary issue, serious though it was, did not result in a challenge to either the established constitutional government or the civilian political order.

Doctrinal reform and Institutional Autonomy

Since the military institutions have been at the forefront of Argentine politics for over half a century, the fundamental political problem facing the armed forces at the present time is the question of redefining military autonomy in a democratic system in which they are no longer the most important political actors. As Alfonsín defined the problem during the Cena Anual de Camaradería de las Fuerzas Armadas on 7 July 1986, "Una sociedad compleja y avanzada en cierto estadio de modernización como la Argentina, no puede organizarse sobre la base de la hegemonía política de un sólo sector, por el sólo hecho de que éste posea formalmente el monopolio de las armas o cualquier otro monopolio."[8] In order to change the attitude of military officers towards civilian politics, and in order to bury forever such ideologies as the national security doctrine, Alfonsín realised the importance of the military socialisation and indoctrination process, and it was therefore the proclaimed intention of his administration to alter the syllabi of the military educational and training institutions, moving the focus away from the social sciences to more "professional" subjects. In particular, the Alfonsín administration had in its sights the three officer cadet academies - the Colegio Militar, the Escuela Naval Militar and the Escuela de

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8 The text of President Alfonsín's speech on this occasion is presented in Armas y Geoestrategia (Buenos Aires), vol.4, no.11, December 1986, pp.79-86.

Aeronaútica - and the three elite officer training schools - the Escuela Superior de Guerra, the Escuela de Guerra Naval and the Escuela Superior de Guerra Aérea. There was considerable resentment to this move within the three officer corps, since it was regarded as gross interference in internal institutional matters, and thus an attack on institutional autonomy. In the end, however, the Alfonsín administration failed to achieve anything of significance in the area of doctrinal reform, which is manifestly important for the consolidation of democracy in Argentina. The main responsibility for the lack of concrete results in this aspect of Alfonsín's military policy should be attributed to the preoccupation of the civilian regime with other matters rather than to resistance to reform within the military.

Structural reorganisation and Inter-Force Relations

As part of its political programme of professionalising and depoliticising the Armed Forces, the Alfonsín government planned to decentralise the military institutions, both geographically and in their internal power structures. As Alfonsín asserted in a Message to the Nation on 5 December 1986:

> Modernizar las Fuerzas Armadas no sólo significa dotarlas de equipamientos modernos más actualizados o renovar concepciones de organización. No se limita tampoco a adecuar sus estrategias. Modernizar las Fuerzas Armadas, por el contrario, es lograr una correcta correspondencia entre sus estructuras y sus funciones y la sociedad a la que están integradas como parte de ella misma y como parte del aparato del Estado.[9]

In line with this programme, the coast guard agency, the Prefectura Nacional Marítima, was removed from under the control of the naval high command in October 1984 and placed directly under the Defence Ministry, with a prefect drawn from within the ranks of the Prefectura itself at its head, and the frontier police, the Gendarmería Nacional, was likewise

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9 The text of President Alfonsín's Message to the Nation on the occasion of the Reconciliación Nacional is presented in Armas y Geoestrategia (Buenos Aires), vol.4, no.11, December 1986, pp.87-90.

removed from army command. Some important field command posts of flag rank (such as division commanders) were shifted from the comfort of metropolitan Buenos Aires to the rigours of Patagonia and the Andes. A new post of chief of defence staff was created as an intermediate between the chiefs of the three armed forces and the minister of defence. The civilian government also carried out certain other changes, which though largely of a symbolic nature are still significant. The designation of the head of the three armed forces was changed from Comandante en Jefe (Commander-in-Chief) to Jefe del Estado Mayor General (Chief of the General Staff), it being argued - quite correctly - by the civilian government that, according to the Constitution, there can be only one Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and that is the President of the Nation. It is also extremely significant that the personal rank of the head of the Navy was dropped from Almirante (Admiral) to Vicealmirante (Vice-Admiral) as "punishment"[10] for the political role played by the naval institution during the Proceso Militar.

The Alfonsín administration, it could be argued, was Janus-faced on the question of inter-Force relations. On the one hand, the integration of the tripartite military structure through the strengthening of the Estado Mayor Conjunto was an important element in the reorganization of the Armed Forces. The lack of inter-Force cooperation was seen as a major reason for the poor military performance during the Malvinas War. On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that the Alfonsín administration followed a deliberate strategy of weakening the Army *vis-à-vis* the other two Forces. The budgetary data presented in Table Five above is significant in this context. Along with a policy of weakening the Army there appears to have been a concerted effort by the Alfonsín administration to build up the Air

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10 The word used, in jest, by Almirante Rivero Kelly to describe this demotion. Interview, op.cit.

Force as the "professional" and "democratic" Force. Under the determined leadership of Brigadier Ernesto Crespo the Air Force made a serious attempt to distance itself from the other two Armed Forces and present itself as the military institution that had kept away from the "Dirty War" and fought in the "Malvinas War", unlike its counterparts in the military establishment. The Navy, in particular feels aggrieved by the manner in which the Air Force has stolen the credit for the relatively successful airborne operations of the Malvinas/Falklands War by ignoring the more substantial contribution of naval pilots.[11] Also, the Air Force made a great deal of the fact that an Air Force officer (Brigadier Theodore Waldner) was appointed Chief of the Estado Mayor Conjunto for the first time in 1984.

On the basis of the discussion above, it can be asserted that the civilian administration of President Raúl Alfonsín was largely successful in its attempt to curtail the political power of the armed forces in Argentina. With what Rouquié calls "prudent audacity",[12] Alfonsín made a valiant - and rather successful - attempt at reestablishing the sovereignity of law and of civilian authority while avoiding "all measures that could provoke a corporative reflex that might unite all officers against the democratic government."[13]

Conclusion: The Menem Period

The severe military policy of the Alfonsín administration resulted in a profound distrust of the Radical Party within the Armed Forces. This led to an elemental change in the attitude of the military institution to

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11 This aspect will be analysed in considerable detail in Chapter Sixteen during our study of Inter-Force relations.

12 Alain Rouquié, 'Demilitarization and the Institutionalization of Military-dominated Polities in Latin America' in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), Transitions from Authoritarian Rule : Prospects for Democracy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p.131.

13 ibid., p.132.

Peronism. After 1989, anti-Peronism ceased to be a serious issue within the Armed Forces. Captain Carlos Raimondi has accumulated fascinating evidence of military voting behaviour during the 1989 Presidential Elections, which indicates that military officers voted heavily for Carlos Menem, the Peronist candidate. By analysing the postal ballots cast in Antarctica, and the returns of the city of Punta Alta (next to the massive naval base at Puerto Belgrano) and the Aduana polling station (adjacent to Edificio Libertador, the Army Headquarters) in Buenos Aires, Raimondi is able to present an accurate picture of how the military officer votes. In 1989, the ratio between the Peronists, the Radicals and the UCeDe was 47:37:7 at the national level; within the polling stations mentioned above, it was 64:13:17.

A brief examination of the military policy of the Menem administration would not be out of place here. Unlike Alfonsín, "reconciliation" has been Menem's theme all along. Menem recently issued an *indulto* to the former *Junta* members under arrest for the human rights violations of the Proceso years. The present administration has also been acutely sensitive to military sensibilities: a dignified Malvinas memorial was dedicated in Buenos Aires a few months after Menem's election, and a military parade of extravagant proportions not seen since the Proceso days was organised on Independence Day 1990. It is clear that the military policy of the Menem administration is radically different from that of the previous administration. In the light of this, how does one explain the recent *levantamiento* against Menem and its bloody outcome? Is this simply syndicalist activity of the praetorian kind?

It would appear from this chapter that the relationship between the civilian constitutional regime and the military establishment was not the most critical problem that Argentina faced in the consolidation of

democracy in that country. Indeed, the armed forces enjoyed far less power in Argentina during the period of the Alfonsín administration than their counterparts did in corresponding periods in the neighbouring countries. In Brazil, the armed forces exerted constant pressure upon the constituent assembly, and played a critical role in moments of political deadlock, such as the crisis over the length of President Sarney's term in office. In Chile, the armed forces withdrew from the political process as a victorious army, with all flags flying, and retain the potential to play a crucial role in politics; for instance, the Constitution of 1980, which is after all *their* Constitution, guarantees General Pinochet the post of Senator-for-Life.

If there is a threat to democracy in Argentina today, it does not seem to stem from the barracks. The two most likely scenarios for the future of democracy in Argentina are (1) the breakdown of democracy or (2) the failure of democracy to consolidate. In the case of the first scenario, the military is unlikely to be the sole autonomous factor of causation. Indeed, it can perhaps be argued that management of the economy has emerged as the most important subject of government policy in the 1980s in Latin America, and that in the case of Argentina, it is on this issue, and others such as the dilapidated state of Argentine political institutions, that the breakdown or consolidation of democracy most depends. In the case of the second scenario, civil-military tension will be as much a symptom as a cause of the failure of democratic consolidation. While this conclusion is necessarily tentative, it does seem to indicate that the military is no longer the prime mover of politics in Argentina.

Finally, it is worth our while to speculate about the political *rôle* the naval institution is likely to play in the future. It is clear that some of the characteristic features of the Argentine polity that

contributed a great deal to naval political behaviour are in the process of transformation. The anti-Peronist credentials of the Navy are of dubious political importance in the post-Perón era, particularly if, as the Menem period seems to indicate, the Peronist movement is successfully integrated into the political system. Likewise, the appeal of the "liberal" naval institution among the propertied sectors in Argentine society is likely to diminish, given their experience of the latter regarding economic mismanagement during the Proceso Militar period. Certainly, these developments are neither conclusive nor entirely irreversible. While the script for future political developments in Argentina is yet to be written, it does seem reasonable to expect that the naval institution will not exercise the same kind of political power that, as we have seen, it has enjoyed in the past.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SAILING IN FORMATION: INTERACTION WITH OTHER NAVIES

An attempt has been made in Part One of this thesis to study the political actions of the naval institution and to contrast them with those of the Army, during specific periods in Argentine political history. Since our focus was on political developments, the emphasis thus far has essentially been on the Argentine Navy as a political actor. However, a military institution is, *ipso facto*, far more than just another group vying for power. Rouquié cautions us:

> The permanent - even overwhelming - political role of the [armed forces in Latin America], as well as the praetorianism that appears to make them less concerned with things military, may lead us to underestimate their military nature.[1]

Lest Rouquié's warning be deemed unnecessary, it is instructive to note an erroneous statement made by a scholar as distinguished as Schmitter:

> The military in Latin America is only one among several groups competing for hegemony over the political system. As regards internal cohesion, ideological purpose, basis of recruitment or technical knowledge, it possesses no special skills or resources which are not available elsewhere.[2]

Finer is under no such illusion:

> The armed forces have three massive political advantages over civilian organizations: a marked superiority in organization, a highly emotionalized symbolic status, and a monopoly of arms.[3]

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1 Alain Rouquié, The Military and the State in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp.72-73.

2 Philippe C. Schmitter, 'Military Intervention, Political Competitiveness and Public Policy in Latin America: 1950-1967', in Morris Janowitz and Jacques van Doorn, (eds.), On Military Intervention (Aldershot: Gower Publishing, 1985), [first published Rotterdam: Rotterdam University Press, 1971], p.431.

3 S.E. Finer, The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), p.6.

It could well be argued that the political behaviour of a military institution represents merely one dimension of its corporate identity; indeed, a study of the non-political facets of an armed force may go some way in illuminating its *rôle* in politics. Therefore, in order to comprehend fully the differing political attitudes and behaviour patterns of Argentina's military institutions, some important issues pertaining more to military history and military sociology than to politics will be studied in this Part of the thesis.

The unique and defining characteristic of the military is that, as the institution of state and agency of government that is *armed*, it is the ultimate, if not always the sole, custodian of coercive force not only in the political system but in civil society at large. Apart from this obvious factor, there are other aspects peculiar to military forces that differentiate them from other political actors and institutions. As pointed out in the Introduction to this thesis, a military institution, even in a demilitarised social environment, possesses a distinct corporate identity which is the cumulative product of years of organic institutional development, particular and peculiar traditions and ceremonials, established training procedures and socialisation patterns, all of which result in a certain shared *Weltanschauung* within its ranks. When this corporate ethos of unquestioning loyalty to the institution is coupled with rigid discipline within the rank and file and absolute obedience to an established, hierarchical and undisputed structure of command, control and communication, and nonconformity is punishable by extreme sanctions that are determined by a legal code and a system of adjudication that emphasise obedience and discipline, it is not difficult to see why armed forces sometimes make such formidable political actors.[4]

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4 Clearly, this description is of the "ideal type". Few military institutions in Latin America can claim to have achieved the "Prussian model"; the Chilean Army is perhaps a notable exception.

In the following chapters, we will take a look at military education, socialisation patterns and institutional cohesiveness within the Argentine Navy, all of which play a part in defining the nature of this military institution. In the present chapter, an attempt will be made to study the nature and the extent of institutional contacts that the Argentine Navy has historically enjoyed with external military institutions, a topic of some importance because of the direct and not-so-direct impact that contact with foreign militaries is supposed to have on the political and ideological outlook of the officer corps. As Goldwert puts it, "the technical side of service collaboration can never be divorced from the spiritual and political."[5]

The Conventional View

Political studies of the military in Latin American politics in the 1960s attempting to explain the political behaviour of Latin American military institutions tended to heavily stress their external linkages. Lieuwen, for instance, asserts:

> The aristocratic tendencies of [Latin American] naval officers ... often were moderated by the democratic views of the British and United States officers who were their professional advisers. Conversely, before World War II, authoritarian attitudes of some Latin American armies were reinforced by the influence of German, Spanish, and Italian military missions.[6]

García, on the other hand, talks about the "differential degrees of dependence upon other countries for supplies, parts, training and equipment

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Nonetheless, powerful political consequences do flow from the corporate nature of the military institution.

5 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966 : An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p.73.

6 Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p.131.

by the various service branches."[7] Referring more specifically to the Argentine Armed Forces, Johnson remarks that "the Navy, which has historically had strong ties with Great Britain and the United States, is considerably less nationalistic than the army, whose ties before World War II were with Germany and Italy."[8] Goldwert, likewise, states that "[w]hereas the Argentine Army was the recipient of four decades of German military training, the navy was guided first by Britain and later by the United States."[9] Thus, a number of important studies of the Argentine military institutions in the 1960s, when focussing upon the early years of these institutions, tended to associate the Army with the Prussian-German military establishment and the Navy with the navies of Britain and the US. To this day, the notion of a British-modelled Argentine Navy continues to remain as the conventional wisdom on this issue: an authoritative study on Latin American militaries by Adrian English, published in the early 1980s, persists in the identification of the Argentine Navy with its British counterpart, while asserting that the seminal influence on the Argentine Army was France rather than Germany.[10] This opinion was repeated by English in a recent work:

> The main seminal foreign influence in the Argentine Navy has been the British Royal Navy, upon which it is consciously modelled.[11]

This view is widely prevalent within the Argentine military institutions themselves. For instance, even Captain Raimondi, who is an acknowledged academic expert on the Argentine Armed Forces of the present-day, opines

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7 José Z. García, 'Military Factions and Military Intervention in Latin America', in Sheldon W. Simon, (ed.), The Military and Security in the Third World (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), p.49.

8 John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p.141.

9 Goldwert, op. cit., p.73.

10 Adrian J. English, Armed Forces of Latin America: Their Histories, Development, Present Strength and Military Potential (London: Jane's, 1984), p.65.

11 Adrian J. English, Regional Defence Profile No 1: Latin America (London: Jane's, 1988), p.26.

that "[l]a Armada Argentina se nutrió de enseñanza de la Marina inglesa, el Ejército Argentino del Ejército Alemán."[12]

The influence of the Prussian-German military tradition in the Argentine Army can indeed be substantiated. The first two directors of the Colegio Militar, created in 1869 during the presidency of Sarmiento for the formation of officers, were an Austro-Hungarian colonel and a French cavalry commander respectively.[13] Although the Argentine Army initially modelled itself on the French Army, it armed itself from the very beginning with Krupp cannon and Mauser rifles. By 1900, as Rouquié remarks, "the prestige of the [German] Imperial General Staff carried the day"[14] and a long Argentine-German military relationship was inaugurated. Potash mentions the various aspects that went into this multi-dimensional relationship: German munition firms supplied the Argentine Army from the 1890s onwards, German officers organised and commanded the Escuela Superior de Guerra from the moment it opened its doors in April 1900, and Argentine officers were sent to Germany to serve in German regiments, attend advanced military schools and observe annual maneuvers until the outbreak of the First World War.[15] The close Army links with the German military establishment during the First World War resulted in frosty Army-Navy relations in Argentina, as Rouquié notes:

> Mientras que la Argentina permanece oficialmente neutral... la marina no disimula en modo alguno su preferencia por el campo aliado. Basta señalar que en 1914 numerosos oficiales del ejército estaban incluidos en las tropas del Kaiser para comprender que las dos armas tienen, por lo menos, marcos de referencia discordantes.[16]

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12 Interview with Capitán de Navío (R) Lic. Carlos Raimondi, 7 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

13 Rouquié, Military and State, op.cit., p.79.

14 ibid.

15 Robert A. Potash, The Army & Politics in Argentina 1928-1945: Yrigoyen to Perón (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp.3-4.

16 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina: I. hasta 1943 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1981), pp.103-104.

Despite the defeat of Germany in the Great War, and the dismantling of the German military establishment under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, many "... Argentine admirers of the German military machine ... continued to analyze the 1870 [Franco-Prussian] war from the German side, ... as if Germany had not lost World War I."[17] The Argentine government contracted for the training of its army by a German military mission of six officers, under the leadership of General Kretchmar and Colonel General Niedenfuehr, that remained at the Colegio Militar for a quarter of a century.[18] The influence of this training team was evident in the attitude of a large number of Army officers during the Second World War, such as Colonel Juan Domingo Perón, who were decidedly pro-Italy and pro-Germany.

The Derivation of Naval Regulations

The links between the Argentine Navy and the Royal Navy were never quite so intimate as those that the Argentine and German armies enjoyed. As Rouquié opines, "[la] influencia británica [en la Armada] no puede compararse con la germanización del ejército; fue infinitamente más discreta."[19] Indeed, Admiral Milia, one of the few naval scholars to have studied the external influences on the Argentine Navy during its formative years,[20] contends that the Royal Navy was not the *rôle* model for the Argentine naval institution in its early days, as is widely believed. Rather, it is from the Armada Real of Carlos III of Spain that the Argentine Navy traces its line of descent, and most of the administrative regulations of the latter are drawn from the former. Admiral Arguindeguy

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17 Alain Rouquié, Military and State, op.cit., p.80.

18 George I. Blanksten, Perón's Argentina (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.307.

19 Rouquié, I. hasta 1943, op.cit., p.102.

20 See Fernando A. Milia, "The Argentine Navy Revisited", Naval History, Winter 1990, pp.24-29. This interesting article has been translated into Spanish with some additional information on Argentine naval ships: "La Armada Argentina: Un perfil socio-político", Boletín del Centro Naval (BCN), Vol.107, Nos.758/759, July/December 1989, pp.490-498.

concurs with this view, and notes that the "única presencia visible y real" of the "tradición naval española" within the Argentine Navy was the "mantenimiento de la vigencia de la Reglamentación Naval y la Justicia Militar imperante, al punto que entre 1810 y 1880 rigieran a bordo en su misma letra."[21] It was only in 1884, more than seventy years after the Declaration of Independence from Spanish rule, that an Argentine Naval Commission headed by Admiral Anjel Justiniano Carranza presented the Minister of War and Navy with new regulations pertaining to the rank structure and organisation of naval personnel.[22] Moreover, these "new" regulations were mere "adaptaciones a la idiosincracia argentina"[23], as Arguindeguy puts it, of the old Spanish regulations. Admiral Milia, likewise, is of the opinion that the Reglamentos Generales de Servicio a Bordo (General Regulations on Board) "era una copia, prácticamente textual, de las ordenanzas de la Armada Española del Rey Carlos III de España."[24] My own research on this point[25] confirms the view held by the two admirals on this score; Milia is not exagerating when he asserts that

> el origen de la institución básica que regula todo el servicio naval en la Armada es español. Exclusivamente español... estrictamente español. No hay buscando la reglamentación fundacional, origen que no sea España.[26]

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21 Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, "Las distintas vertientes en la formación de la Armada Argentina", typewritten memorandum to the author.

22 Ordenanzas Generales para la Armada: Proyecto de la Comisión Co-redactora, Volume I (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Europea, 1884), whereby the the Spanish "ordenanzas" were converted into Argentine "reglamentos".

23 Arguindeguy, typewritten memorandum, op.cit.

24 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Fernando A. Milia, 27 August 1987, office of the Boletín del Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

25 I compared the original Carlos III regulations [Ordenanzas Generales de la Armada Naval: Parte Primera: Sobre la Gobernación Militar y Marinera de la Armada en General, y Uso de sus Fuerzas en la mar, 2 volumes: volume I: (Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda de Don Joachîn Ibarra, 1793), volume II: (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1793)] with Argentine Navy regulations of the pre-War [Reglamento General del Servicio Naval (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de la D.G.A.-Ministerio de Marina), two editions: 1928 and 1936.] and the post-War period [Reglamento General del Servicio Naval: Libro I: Del Servicio en General (Buenos Aires: S. de M.- Tall. Gráf. de la D.G.A.N., 1961) and Reglamento General del Servicio Naval: Libro II: Del Servicio a Bordo, two volumes: 1st Vol: Del Personal Superior, 2nd Vol: Del Personal Subalterno (Buenos Aires: Imprento Lopez, 1959)]; given that nearly two centuries have elapsed since the Carlos III regulations were codified, the similarity that the latter versions have with it is impressive.

26 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit.

Other signs of the old Spanish naval tradition abound in the Argentine Navy. The Code of Honour that the Argentine naval officer is expected to observe throughout his career, if not his life, is a perfect indication of the lingering Spanish influence. Surprisingly, a qualified observer such as Imaz gets this wrong when he suggests that the Argentine Navy adopted the Code of Honour of the Royal Navy. In fact, the Code of Honour of the Argentine naval officer has not changed even slightly from the days of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata:

> A la aplicación, buena conducta, subordinación al superior, circunspección afable con el inferior, respeto a las dignidades de las demás carreras, urbanidad general, actividad y celo incansable en la fatiga, y finalmente, el ideal de exponer su vida a cualquier riesgo en defensa y gloria de la Patria, que son las cualidades que caracterizan de digno al Oficial, debe unir el de Marina los conocimientos propios de los muchos ramos de su carrera, considerando que si ignora no puede mandar, y que si algun ocaso le pone en cargo superior a su inteligencia, estará en el continuado desaire de darlo a conocer a sus inferiores, y en igual riesgo de perder su estimación.[27]

Midshipmen are still designated as *guardiamarinas*; indeed, the Argentine naval rank structure in general remains remarkably faithful to the old Spanish nomenclature[28] although the insignia to denote rank now follow the near-universal Royal Navy pattern. The social club of naval *suboficiales* in Buenos Aires is still known as the Círculo de Oficiales del Mar, the old Spanish designation for petty officers. The Spanish influence upon the Argentine Navy is summed up by Milia thus:

> A pesar de los importantes cambios en la identidad nacional, ... existe una persistente influencia española

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27 This Code of Honour is taken directly from the Ordenanzas Generales de la Armada Naval of Carlos III, op.cit.

28 There have, of course, been some changes in rank nomenclatures. Both the defunct and the present-day Argentine Navy rank designations are given in Appendix One, along with their Army, Air Force, Commonwealth and US equivalents.

> sobre la Armada Argentina, derivada de las reglamentaciones navales básicas originales...[29]

The Sources of Naval Doctrine

The Argentine Navy has derived most of its strategic doctrine from the French naval institution, particularly from the writings of Admiral Raoul Castex.[30] To a lesser extent, the writings of Admiral Mahan of the US Navy have also influenced Argentine naval thinking.[31] This unusual "champagne and bourbon cocktail"[32] was a direct result of the Storni Committee, headed by the famous admiral, then a senior captain, which recommended in 1930 that a naval war college (the Escuela de Guerra Naval) be established that combined French strategy with US operational doctrine.[33] As Admiral Milia puts it, in the realm of strategic doctrine "nosotros somos un 80% francés, un 15% mahanianos..."[34], implying thereby that the British influence is minimal. Thus, the influence of the French, and to a lesser extent, the US naval establishments on the strategic doctrine of the Argentine Navy is overwhelming. The British contribution to the Argentine Navy at the doctrinal level is minor, and is limited "sólo puro y exclusivamente particular la obra de Corbett."[35]

At the level of operational and tactical doctrine, the Argentine Navy was dominated by "una fuerte influencia italiana"[36] till the turn of this

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29 Milia, "La Armada Argentina", BCN, op.cit.

30 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit. Admiral Raoul Castex wrote about the submarine experience in the First World War with great insight.

31 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit. Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), US naval officer and historian who taught at the US Naval War College for nearly three decades. His most influential work, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1670-1783, was published in 1890.

32 As Admiral Milia puts it in his Naval History article, op.cit., p. 28.

33 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit.

34 ibid.

35 Interview with Almirante Milia, op.cit. The reference is to Sir Julian Stafford Corbett (1854-1922), whose most important book is Some Principles of Maritime Strategy (1911).

36 ibid.

century. This Italian influence was largely the result of the predominance of Italian-constructed vessels in the Argentine fleet. The other naval institution which exercised a lot of influence in the Argentine Navy at the level of operations and tactics till the First World War was the Japanese Navy, particularly after the defeat of Tsarist fleet in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.[37] Immediately after the First World War, the US Navy became the major source of operational and tactical doctrine, partly because two massive battleships (dreadnoughts) were being built in US shipyards for the Argentine fleet during that period.[38]

An extremely pertinent example of the US influence on Argentine naval doctrine from the mid-1950s is the manual *Arte del mando naval*,[39] a copy of which is presented to each cadet along with the regulation kit when he reports to the Escuela Naval Militar for the first time. This interesting manual, over 350 pages long, aims at acquainting the future naval officer with the situations he is likely to face in his career, and also presents him with the correct solutions and responses to these situations. The first part is on psychological principles and covers topics such as the essence of human character, conflicts or dilemmas, frustration, selection, the individual and the group, and the structure and functioning of groups; the second part has chapters on naval leadership, managing men, relations with superiors and factors of success, among others; and the final part presents the cadet with 47 typical "situations" that can arise, both aboard and on shore, and asks him how he would react in each case. What is particularly interesting from our point of view is that the *Arte del mando naval* is a translation, with minor adaptations, of the US naval

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37 ibid.

38 ibid.

39 Armada Argentina, Dirección de Instrucción Naval, Arte del mando naval (Buenos Aires: two editions, 1957 and 1974).

instructional manual *Naval Leadership*[40] which was written for midshipmen at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis. However, since there are significant differences between the US and Argentine navies, the US naval training manual does not always reflect real life within the Argentine Navy. In the context of alcohol problems, for example, the Argentine manual asserts that "[u]no de los factores importantes para la carrera futura en la Marina es la forma en que el oficial controla el problema de la bebida."[41] In reality, as Admiral Milia pointed out to me, drinking has never been a serious problem in the Argentine fleet, certainly far less so than alcohol-related problems in the US Navy.[42] Thus the instructional manual presents the future Argentine naval officer with an incorrect picture as far as this important topic is concerned. Only very recently has a new manual[43] been published that is intended to initially supplement and eventually replace *Arte del mando naval*.

Thus, we have seen that while a host of major navies served as *rôle* models for the Argentine Navy in the first decades of this century, the Royal Navy contributed little to its administrative regulations, strategic doctrine or operational and tactical procedures. Let us now see if the British naval system had any role to play in either the training of Argentine naval personnel or in the construction of vessels for the Argentine fleet.

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40 United States Naval Academy, Naval Leadership (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1949).

41 Arte del mando naval, op.cit., p.290.

42 Unrecorded conversation with Almirante Milia, August 1990.

43 Ariel Edgardo Bianchi, Guía para el ejercicio del mando naval: De los pequeños grupos (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 1990).

The Training of Naval Personnel

Goldwert asserts that "[f]rom the 1890s to the mid-1930s, British ships, equipment and instruction prevailed in the Argentine navy."[44] We will attempt to analyse the accuracy of this observation with regard to the ships that made up the Argentine fleet in the next section of this chapter. As far as the instruction and training of Argentine naval personnel is concerned, Goldwert's impression is far from correct. As Imaz rightly points out, only candidates from the British Empire were admitted to the British military academies at the turn of the century.[45] Therefore, the Royal Navy "no recibió becarios en sus escuelas, no embarcó oficiales argentinos en sus unidades."[46] Thus, the Argentine Navy had to send its officers elsewhere for specialised training, and from the very beginning they were sent in substantial numbers to the United States.

Relations with the US Navy were inaugurated during the Presidency of Taft (1909-1913), when the US was undertaking a massive naval programme. Argentine naval officers were sent to the US Naval Academy at Annapolis and the School of Submarines at New London. A survey in 1930 of 46 senior serving naval officers, all of whom had been commissioned before 1916, revealed that 9 of them had been sent on naval missions to Britain and 11 to the US. A further 9 had served within the US Navy, 5 of whom were in the US Fleet in 1917-1918, *during a war in which Argentina was officially neutral.*[47] These links were intensified in the post-War period, culminating with the appointment of a three-man US naval team to instruct

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44 Goldwert, op.cit., p.73.

45 José Luis de Imaz, Los Que Mandan (Those Who Rule) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), p.73.

46 Rouquié, I. hasta 1943, op.cit., p.103.

47 ibid.

the cadets at the Escuela Naval Militar.[48] During the Second World War, the Argentine Navy remained pro-Allied despite the firmly neutral position of the Government. In 1940, even before the entry of the US in the War, the US Navy, taking advantage of its close links with the Argentine Navy, made a number of efforts to secure the cooperation of the latter in its military plans at the institutional level. A memorandum of a member of the War Plans Division of the US Navy Department notes that the US Navy was "particularly interested in Argentina on account of the Argentine Navy's being the most powerful one in the hemisphere outside the United States."[49] In 1942, after the US entry into the War, the Argentine Government sent a delegation of Army and Navy officers to Washington to discuss possible Lend-Lease arrangements and defence plans. Nothing substantial emerged from these discussions, since the US was not prepared to provide Lend-Lease aid until the Argentines abandoned their neutral stance, or at least undertook military action of a defensive nature, such as escorting trans-Atlantic convoys, something the latter were unwilling to do. It is significant to note, however, that a conflict arose between the US Navy Department, which was eager to maintain its close institutional links with the Argentine Navy, and the US State Department over the latter's policy in this regard. An internal State Department memorandum notes that "[t]he Argentine Naval authorities have been on good terms with the United States Naval Authorities for many years so that the Navy Department would prefer to have the onus for the failure of the agreement to be approved rest upon either the [State] Department or the President."[50] For our study, it is also of interest to note that the British tried to "retain" their old ties with the Argentine Navy in spite of the close links that the US Navy had succeeded in establishing with the latter. In response to a US move to

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48 United States, Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1934, Volume IV, p.541.

49 US Dept. of State, FRUS, 1940, Vol. V, p.28.

50 Memorandum, number 835.24/331. US Dept. of State, FRUS, 1942, Vol. V, p.379.

standardise the military equipment of all Latin American armed forces in 1946, the British Embassy in Washington reminded the US State Department that "British equipment and training [had] long been prominent in several of the Latin American Navies",[51] implying thereby that Britain wished to retain its position in the Latin American naval market. This *aide-mémoire* goes on to add that this applied "with particular force to the Argentine Navy in view of the importance of perpetuating its traditional sympathy, which was of considerable value to the cause of the United Nations in wartime; in marked contrast to the attitude of the Argentine Army..."[52] Needless to say, this plea for a place under the South American sun went unheard. Since the Second World War, the percentage of naval officers, particularly submariners, naval aviators and marine corps officers, who have received specialized training in the United States is substantial.[53]

The Acquisition of Naval Weaponry

While Rouquié is correct when he opines that the Royal Navy did not play an important role in the training of Argentine Navy personnel, he errs when he writes that "Gran Bretaña ocupó un lugar privilegiado principalmente en el equipamiento de la flota [argentina]."[54] He states that 54 out of the 66 vessels that made up the Argentine fleet in 1912 were constructed in Britain.[55] In themselves, these numbers are accurate, but they nonetheless present a misleading picture because Rouquié does not take the tonnage of vessels into account. The data presented in Table One *does*

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51 Aide-Mémoire, 16 July 1946, no. 810.20 Defense/7-1646. US Dept. of State, FRUS, 1946, Vol. XI, pp.278-279.

52 ibid.

53 There is an acute lack of data on this topic, which makes a rigorous analysis of this important aspect virtually impossible. The Argentine Navy seems to be hypersensitive ("security conscious") about this particular aspect of professional training. So far, the Director General de Instrucción Naval has not responded to a formal request from me for information on the number of Argentine naval officers who have attended professional courses abroad.

54 Rouquié, I. hasta 1943, op.cit., pp.102-103.

55 ibid.

TABLE ONE

ARGENTINE NAVAL FLEET (1902-1980)
Composition by Country of Construction

Year	1902	1910	1920	1930	1941	1950/54	1954/60	1961/69	1970/79
ITALY									
Number of Vessels	5	5	4	6	7	6	4	0	0
Total Tonnage	29204	28789	27347	40960	29480	23225	15750	0	0
Average Tonnage	5841	5756	6837	6827	4211	3871	3937	0	0
Percentage of Fleet	16.1	19.2	15.4	18.7	15.5	7.5	6.7	0	0
Percentage of Tonnage	51.9	53.9	25.4	32.5	23.2	13.7	14.2	0	0
GREAT BRITAIN									
Number of Vessels	26	21	16	8	15	12	11	8	8
Total Tonnage	27051	24657	20652	17120	27635	19500	32960	28250	21202
Average Tonnage	1040	1174	1291	2140	1842	1625	2996	3531	2650
Percentage of Fleet	83.8	80.8	61.5	25.0	33.3	15.0	18.3	20.0	23.5
Percentage of Tonnage	48.1	46.1	19.2	13.6	21.7	11.5	29.7	33.3	25.8
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA									
Number of Vessels	0	0	2	2	2	46	31	24	19
Total Tonnage	0	0	55880	55880	55440	114042	51045	50621	51731
Average Tonnage	0	0	27940	27940	27720	2479	1647	2109	2722
Percentage of Fleet	0	0	7.6	6.2	4.4	57.5	51.7	60.0	55.9
Percentage of Tonnage	0	0	51.9	44.3	43.7	67.3	46.0	59.7	62.9
GERMANY									
Number of Vessels	0	0	4	14	8	4	0	0	4
Total Tonnage	0	0	3880	8880	6000	4000	0	0	2940
Average Tonnage	0	0	970	634	750	1000	0	0	735
Percentage of Fleet	0	0	15.4	43.7	17.8	5.0	0	0	11.8
Percentage of Tonnage	0	0	3.5	7.0	4.7	2.4	0	0	3.5
FRANCE									
Number of Vessels	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0
Total Tonnage	0	0	0	3300	3044	3044	3044	0	0
Average Tonnage	0	0	0	1650	1522	1522	1522	0	0
Percentage of Fleet	0	0	0	6.2	4.4	2.5	3.3	0	0
Percentage of Tonnage	0	0	0	2.6	2.4	1.8	2.7	0	0
ARGENTINA									
Number of Vessels	0	0	0	0	11	10	12	8	3
Total Tonnage	0	0	0	0	5450	5600	8150	5946	6300
Average Tonnage	0	0	0	0	495	560	679	743	2100
Percentage of Fleet	0	0	0	0	24.4	12.5	20.0	20.0	8.8
Percentage of Tonnage	0	0	0	0	4.3	3.3	7.3	7.0	7.7
TOTAL									
Number of Vessels	31	26	26	32	45	80	60	40	34
Tonnage	56255	53446	107759	126140	127049	169411	110949	84817	82173
Average Tonnage	1815	2055	4144	3942	2823	2118	1849	2120	2417

Source: Contraalmirante (R) Fernando A. Milia, Director, *Boletín del Centro Naval*, Buenos Aires.

take this important factor into account,[56] and thereby reveals a strikingly different picture. Between 1902 and 1910, five Italian-built ships[57] of a total tonnage of 29,204, and 26 British-built ships[58] of 27,051 tonnes *in toto* made up the Argentine fleet. Between 1910 and 1920, the corresponding figures were five Italian-built ships for a total of 28,789 tonnes and 21 British-built ships for a total of 24,657 tonnes. Thus, between 1902-1910, Italian-built ships, comprising only 16.1% of the fleet, made up more than half its tonnage (51.9%), while British-built ships, 83.2% of the fleet, made up only 48.1% of the total tonnage. For the years 1910-1920, the corresponding figures are 19.2% of the fleet and 53.8% of the tonnage for Italian-built vessels and 80.8% of the fleet and 46.1% of the tonnage for British-built ships. The conclusion is obvious: while Britain supplied the bulk of the Argentine fleet of *small* vessels, the Italians built all of Argentina's *big*, "prestigious", ships. In 1915, a new supplier, the United States of America, entered the picture for the first time and made its presence felt in the Argentine fleet immediately, as is fully reflected in the data for 1920 and 1930. The US, by supplying Argentina with two battleships of 27,940 tons each[59] in 1915, leapt to the top of the tonnage table right from its *debut* in the Argentine fleet. In the years 1920-1930, the two US-built ships, only 7.6% of the fleet, made up 51.9% of its total tonnage, the corresponding figures for Italy during that period being 15.4% and 25.4%, and those for Britain 61.5% and 19.2%. From then on, while the US-built component of the Argentine fleet increased in size and the Italian-built component dwindled, British-built vessels were never again to make up more than a third of the Argentine fleet in terms of either numbers

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56 This data was graciously supplied by Almirante Milia in 1987, who had compiled it for a study he was then undertaking on the various external influences on the Argentine Navy. This research has since been published in the Naval History and BCN articles cited above.

57 The newly-built battle cruisers Garibaldi, San Martín, Belgrano and Pueyrredon, and the much older cruiser Patagonia.

58 Among them, the battleships Almirante Brown, Libertad and Independencia, the cruisers 25 de Mayo, 9 de Julio, Patria and Buenos Aires, and the famous corvette Uruguay.

59 Moreno and Rivadavia.

or tonnage. As the data in Table One clearly indicates, Britain supplied the Argentine Navy with most of its small ships from the turn of the century until the First World War, but Italian-built vessels and later US-built vessels made up the big units of the Argentine fleet, particularly from the turn of the century onwards. According to Rouquié, the fact that the British built *most* of the vessels of the Argentine fleet, albeit the *small* ones, "implica no sólo una relación comercial episódica sino continuos contactos,"[60]. Thus, in Rouquié's opinion, the British were able to exercise a subtle influence over the Argentine naval institution. On the other hand, one can argue, quite reasonably, that flagships are more central to the institutional consciousness of a navy than its small vessels. It is therefore difficult to see how Britain could possibly have exercised a stronger influence on the Argentine Navy than Italy or the United States, if the supply of warships is treated as an indicator of influence.

In the last quarter of the last century, British-built vessels enjoyed a much higher profile in the Argentine fleet than they have in the present century. This can be seen quite clearly in Table Two.[61] When President Sarmiento decided in 1872, in the face of the disastrous Argentine performance during the War of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay (1865-1870), to institutionalise, professionalise and modernise the Argentine naval and military forces,[62] he turned to Britain to provide

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60 Rouquié, I. hasta 1943, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

61 The information on the warships of the Argentine Navy and their respective sources of acquisition that is presented in the pages that follow is to a large extent derived from volumes 3-6 of Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy's mammoth study, Apuntes sobre los buques de la Armada Argentina: 1810-1970 (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estudios Históricos-Navales, 1972). Almirante Arguindeguy also generously sent me a typewritten memoradum with useful supplementary information. The sections on the Argentine Navy in the two books by Adrian English (both op.cit.) were useful; Jane's Fighting Ships, the standard reference source in the field, was also extensively used. The idea for Table Two itself came from Almirante Arguindeguy. It is worth highlighting that this is a tabulation of non-Argentine-built vessels only: thus the discrepancy with Table One.

62 See Chapter Two.

the vessels of "steel and steam" for the Argentine fleet. All the vessels of the riverine and coast-defence fleet created by Sarmiento: the river monitors *Los Andes* and *El Plata*, the gunboats *Constitución*, *República*, *Bermejo* and *Pilcomayo*, the corvettes *Paraná* and *Uruguay*, and the dispatch vessels *Vigilante* and *Resguardo*, were built at the Cammell shipyards in Birkenhead, the sole exception being the ill-fated torpedo boat *Fulminante*, which was constructed in the Yarrow and Headley shipyards in Poplar. In 1880, the number of British-built vessels in the Argentine fleet increased with the addition of the ironclad battleship *Almirante Brown* (built in Poplar) and the torpedo-ram *Maipú* (built in Glasgow). This process of expansion of the fleet was completed with the commissioning of the corvette *La Argentina* and the cruiser *Patagonia* in 1884-85, both vessels having been constructed at the then Austro-Hungarian (now Italian) shipyard in Trieste.

The Chilean victory over Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) was the spur to Argentina's naval buildup in the 1890s, since this put the spotlight on the blue-water capability of the Chilean Navy, a serious threat as far as the Argentine admirals were concerned. Transforming the riverine and coastal force into a high seas fleet was the objective of the vessel-acquisition programme that was undertaken by Argentina to counter Chile's sea power. Once again the Argentine naval authorities turned to British shipyards: the coastal battleships *Independencia* and *Libertad*, the torpedo gunboats *Espora*, *Rosales* and *Patria*, and the training ship *Presidente Sarmiento* were all constructed in Birkenhead, while the yards in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Chiswick, and Poplar accounted for the cruisers *Veinticinco de Mayo*, *Nueve de Julio* and *Buenos Aires*, the torpedo boats *Py* and *Murature*, and the *"Corrientes"* class destroyers respectively. However, the most important blue-water men-of-war acquired in the 1890s were Italian- rather than British-built. At the

height of the boundary dispute with Chile, the four armoured battle cruisers, *Garibaldi*, *San Martin*, *General Belgrano* and *Pueyrredon*, were acquired from the Ansaldo and Orlando yards in Sestri Ponente and Livorno respectively, thus making the Argentine fleet by far the most powerful in South America. The Argentine-Chilean naval arms race was brought to a close by the General Arbitration Treaty of May 1902: to comply with the naval disarmament requirements of the treaty, Argentina sold the Italian-built, nearly-completed armoured battleships *Moreno* and *Rivadavia* to Japan. However, since riverine vessels did not come under the purview of the naval disarmament provisions, the river monitors *Parana* and *Rosario*, built in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, were commissioned into the Argentine Navy in 1907.

To counter Argentina's naval supremacy in South America, Brazil acquired two dreadnoughts in 1910, thereby becoming the first country after Britain to acquire these awe-inspiring battleships. In response, Argentina ordered the construction of the battleships *Moreno* and *Rivadavia* at the New York Building Company's shipyards in Camden, New Jersey, and the Fore River shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts, respectively. The twin vessels were delivered in 1915, thereby inaugurating a long relationship between the Argentine fleet and US shipyards. Meanwhile, the First World War had interrupted Argentina's naval armament plans: with the outbreak of war, as many as twelve Argentine destroyers, still under construction in British, French and German shipyards, were commandeered by the Greek, French and German navies respectively.

In the 1920s, Argentina attempted to make up for the hiatus imposed by the war years upon its vessel acquisition programme. Ten *"Bathurst"* class minesweepers were purchased from Germany in 1923, the first time surplus war vessels were acquired since the creation of

Sarmiento's fleet over half a century earlier. Under the ambitious naval modernisation plan of 1926, the destroyers *Cervantes* and *Garay* were acquired from the Cadiz shipyards in Spain in 1927, and in 1929 three more destroyers, *La Rioja*, *Mendoza* and *Tucuman* were completed at the Samuel White yards in Cowes, UK. The last Italian-built warships in the Argentine fleet entered service in the early 1930s: the twin heavy cruisers, *Veinticinco de Mayo* and *Almirante Brown*, constructed at the shipyards in Livorno and Sestri Ponente respectively, and Argentina's first submarines, *Salta*, *Santiago del Estero* and *Santa Fé*, built at the Franco Tosti shipyards in Taranto. Seven destroyers of the *"Buenos Aires"* class were completed by British shipyards in Barrow-on-Furness, Clydebank and Birkenhead in 1937-1938, and with the delivery of the cruiser *La Argentina* by the Vickers-Armstrong shipyards in 1939, the naval modernisation plan of 1926 was finally completed on the eve of the Second World War.

As a consequence of Argentina's firmly neutral stance during the Second World War, the country was virtually isolated at a time when Brazil, as an enthusiatic Allied belligerent nation, received large supplies of military hardware from the US under Lend-Lease. After the war, the desperate attempts of the Peronist regime to remedy the Argentine-Brazilian naval imbalance met with opposition from the only possible potential suppliers, the former Allied powers, who were deeply suspicious of Perón and considered Argentina as one of the remaining bastions of fascism. However, a so-called "gentlemen's agreement" between Britain and the United States not to supply military hardware to Argentina broke down in the late 1940s, and in 1948 the war surplus *"Tacoma"* class frigates *Heroina*, *Santísima Trinidad* and *Sarandi* and the *"Asheville"* class frigate *Hércules* were purchased from the US, along with the Canadian-built *"Flower"* class corvette *República*. With these deals was inaugurated a new trend in

the acquisition of combatant vessels for the Argentine fleet: for the next quarter century, all of Argentina's warship purchases would be of used vessels, largely but not exclusively from the United States. Two major US war surplus acquisitions were the *"Brooklyn"* class cruisers *Nueve de Julio* (ex-USS *Boise*) and *Diez y Siete de Octubre*[63] (ex-USS *Phoenix*) in 1952. This was followed six years later with the purchase of the *"Colossus"* class aircraft carrier *Independencia* (ex-HMS *Warrior*) from Britain, making Argentina the first Latin American country to acquire an aircraft carrier. In 1961 the *"Fletcher"* class destroyers *Brown*, *Espora* and *Rosales* and the *"Gato"* class submarines *Santa Fé* and *Santiago del Estero* were acquired from the US. Six British *"Ton"* class minesweepers were bought in 1968; in the same year, the *"Colossus"* class carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo* (ex-HNMS *Karel Doorman*, ex-HMS *Venerable*) was purchased from Holland to replace its sister ship in the Argentine fleet, and in 1971 the *"Balao"* class submarines *Santa Fé* and *Santiago del Estero* were acquired from the US to replace the two *"Gato"* class boats that had borne the same names. Five ex-US Navy destroyers joined the Argentine fleet in the early 1970s: *Almirante Storni* and *Almirante Domecq García* (*"Fletcher"* class), *Seguí* and *Hipólito Bouchard* (*"Allen M. Sumner"* class) and *Comodoro Py* (*"Gearing"* class). A final *"Allen M. Sumner"* class destroyer, *Piedrabuena*, was acquired from the US in 1977. This was to be the last purchase of US-built surplus vessels; soon after, the Carter administration embarked upon its policy of denying military equipment to countries with human rights violations, thereby shutting off all further weapon sales to Argentina, then in the throes of the anti-subversive ("dirty") war. As Admiral Milia rightly points out, up until the 1940s the purchase of US-built warships "fue un factor de modernización y de desarrollo, pero después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, las ventas de excedentes de guerra produjo la obsolescencia del elenco."[64]

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63 Renamed General Belgrano in September 1955 during the Revolución Libertadora.

64 Milia, "La Armada Argentina", BCN, op.cit., p.498.

A quarter century of purchasing only surplus warships for the Argentine fleet came to an end in 1974 with the incorporation of the German-built Type 209 "1200" class submarines *Salta* and *San Luis* and the tactical attack craft *Intrepida* and *Indomita*, constructed at the Howaldtswerke shipyards in Essen and the Lurssen Werft yards in Bremen. After the Proceso *coup* of 1976 an extensive shipbuilding programme was initiated, with Argentina turning increasingly to European shipyards due to the US arms embargo that resulted from the Carter administration's human rights policy. The first of two British Type 42 missile destroyers, *Hércules*, was delivered in 1976; its sister ship, *Santísima Trinidad*, joined the Argentine fleet in 1980. Four Israeli-built *"Dabur"* class patrol craft entered service in 1978, as did the French-built Type A69 missile frigates *Drummond* and *Guerrico*; a third frigate, *Granville*, was acquired from France in 1980.

In the period following the South Atlantic conflict of 1982 and immediately preceeding the inauguration of the Alfonsín administration in 1983, the military government undertook a massive weapon purchase programme aimed not only at making up war losses but also at preempting the cutback in defence expenditure expected under the civilian democratic government. In this attempt the Navy was rather more successful than the other two Forces. The four German-built MEKO Type 360 missile destroyers, *Almirante Brown*, *La Argentina*, *Heroína* and *Sarandi*, entered service in 1983-84, and the Type 209 "1700" class submarines *Santa Cruz* and *San Juan*, built at the Thyssen Nordseewerke, followed immediately afterwards. Finally, the MEKO 140 frigates *Espora*, *Rosales*, *Spiro*, *Parker*, *Robinson* and *Seaver*, built in Argentina with German technical assistance, were incorporated into the fleet in 1987-88. It is quite evident that German shipyards have been the main source of warships for the Argentine Navy since the mid-1970s.

Table Two: Foreign-Built Warships of the Argentine Navy: 1874-1990: Country of Construction and Years in Service

Year Incorp	Type	Name(s)	Built in	Years in Service
1874	Mon	LOS ANDES/EL PLATA	UK	
1874	Bomb	CONSTITUCION	UK	
1874	Bomb	BERMEJO	UK	
1874	Bomb	PILCOMAYO	UK	
1874	Bomb	REPUBLICANA	UK	
1874	Corb	PARANA	UK	
1874	Corb	URUGUAY	UK	
1874	Torp	FULMINANTE	UK	
1874	Av	RESGUARDO/VIGILANTE	UK	
1880	Acor	ALMIRANTE BROWN	UK	
1880	Torp	MAIPU	UK	
1882	Torp	Nos 1-10	UK	
1882	Torp	ALERTA/CENTELLA/PY/FERRER	UK	
1884	Corb	LA ARGENTINA	AU	
1885	Cruc	PATAGONIA	AU	
1890	Torp	BATHURST/BOUCHARD/PINEDO/ JORGE/KING/THORNE	UK	
1890	Torp	ESPORA/ROSALES	UK	
1891	Acor	LIBERTAD	UK	
1891	Acor	INDEPENDENCIA	UK	
1891	Torp	COMODORO PY/COM. MURATURE	UK	
1891	Cruc	25 DE MAYO	UK	
1893	Cruc	9 DE JULIO	UK	
1893	Torp	PATRIA	UK	
1895	Cruc	BUENOS AIRES	UK	
1896	CrAc	GARIBALDI	I	
1896	CrAc	SAN MARTIN	I	
1897	Dest	CORRIENTES/ENTRE RIOS/ MISSIONES/SANTA FE	UK	
1898	CrAc	BELGRANO	I	
1898	CrAc	PUEYRREDON	I	
1898	FEsc	PRESIDENTE SARMIENTO	UK	
1902	Acor	MARIANO MORENO	I	- Sold to Japan) Naval Disarmament Pact with
1902	Acor	BERNARDINO RIVADAVIA	I	- Sold to Japan) Chile: General Arbitration
1903	Dest	six vessels	I	- Sold to Italy) Treaty of May 1902
1907	Mon	ROSARIO	UK	
1907	Mon	PARANA	UK	
1911	Dest	SAN LUIS/SANTA FE/SANTIAGO/ TUCUMAN	UK	) Taken over by Greece)
1911	Dest	SAN JUAN/SALTA/MENDOZA/RIOJA	FR	- Taken over by France) First World War
1911	Dest	SAN LUIS/SANTIAGO/SANTA FE/ TUCUMAN	D	) Taken over by Germany)
1912	Torp	CATAMARCA/JUJUY/CORDOBA/ LA PLATA	D	
1915	Acor	MORENO	USA	
1915	Acor	RIVADAVIA	USA	
1923	Min	BATHURST/FOURNIER/JORGE/KING/ MURATURE/PINEDO/THORNE/SEGUI/ PY/GOLONDRINA	D	
1927	Dest	GARAY/CERVANTES	ESP	
1928	Dest	MENDOZA/LA RIOJA/TUCUMAN	UK	
1931	Cruc	25 DE MAYO	I	
1931	Cruc	ALMIRANTE BROWN	I	
1933	Sub	SALTA/SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO SANTA FE	I	
1938	Dest	BUENOS AIRES/CORRIENTES/ ENTRE RIOS/MISIONES/SAN JUAN/ SAN LUIS/SANTA CRUZ	UK	
1939	Cruc	LA ARGENTINA	UK	
1948	Frag	SANTISIMA TRINIDAD/HEROINA/ SARANDI/HERCULES	USA	
1948	Corb	REPUBLICA	CAN	
1952	Cruc	GENERAL BELGRANO (formerly 17 DE SEPTIEMBRE)	USA	
1952	Cruc	9 DE JULIO	USA	
1958	PtAv	INDEPENDENCIA	UK	
1961	Dest	BROWN/ESPORA/ROSALES	USA	
1961	Sub	SANTA FE/SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO	USA	
1968	PtAv	25 DE MAYO	UK	
1968	Min	NEUQUEN/CHACO/FORMOSA/CHUBUT/ RIO NEGRO/TIERRA DEL FUEGO	UK	
1971	Sub	SANTA FE/SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO	USA	
1971	Dest	STORNI/DOMECQ GARCIA	USA	
1972	Dest	SEGUI/HIPOLITO BOUCHARD	USA	
1973	Dest	COMODORO PY	USA	
1974	Sub	SALTA/SAN LUIS	D	
1974	Lan	INTREPIDA/INDOMITA	D	
1976	Dest	HERCULES	UK	
1977	Dest	PIEDRABUENA	USA	
1978	Lan	CONCEPCION DEL URUGUAY/ CLORINDA/BARRANQUERAS/ BARADERO	IS	
1978	Frag	DRUMMOND/GUERRICO	FR	
1980	Frag	GRANVILLE	FR	
1980	Dest	SANTISIMA TRINIDAD	UK	
1983	Dest	ALMIRANTE BROWN/LA ARGENTINA	D	
1984	Dest	HEROINA/SARANDI	D	
1984	Sub	SANTA CRUZ	D	
1985	Sub	SAN JUAN	D	
1987	Frag	ESPORA/ROSALES	D	
1988	Frag	SPIRO/PARKER/ROBINSON/SEAVER	D	

KEY:

- = In service as combatant
- = In service as auxiliary
- Acor = Battleship
- Av = Dispatch Vessel
- Bomb = Gunboat
- Corb = Corvette
- CrAc = Battle Cruiser
- Cruc = Cruiser
- Dest = Destroyer
- FEsc = Training Ship
- Frag = Frigate
- Lan = Patrol Boat/Fast Tactical Attack Craft
- Min = Mine Hunter/Minesweeper
- Mon = River Monitor
- PtAv = Aircraft Carrier
- Sub = Submarine
- Torp = Torpedo Boat
- † = Afloat in active service
- †* = Afloat as Museum Ship
- ↓ = Sunk at sea
- ↓* = Sunk at sea by hostile fire
- * = Purchase of used vessel

Sources: (1) Information communicated by Contraalmirante (RE) Cont. Pablo Eusebio Arguindegui, September 1990; (2) Jane's Fighting Ships (various years, 1900-1990); (3) Pablo E. Arguindegui, Apuntes sobre los buques de la Armada Argentina: 1810-1970 (1972); (4) Adrian J. English, Armed Forces of Latin America (1984); (5) [illegible] Defence Profile N[illegible]t: [illegible]ina (1988)

An attempt has been made in Table Two to graphically illustrate the information presented above. What clearly emerges is that British-built warships have *not* enjoyed any kind of preponderance in the Argentine fleet this century. To round off this study of the links between the Argentine Navy and foreign military hardware manufacturers, let us now briefly consider the sources of supply of aircraft for the Aviación Naval.[65]

In the "lighter than air" age, the Argentine Navy procured its balloons from Italy, which were still in use in the early 1930s. Aircraft joined the Navy as early as 1912, but it was not until 1921 that a fleet air arm was formed. During the 1920s Argentine naval aviators flew a mixed hangerful of aircraft: US-built Curtiss PN-5 flying boats and Dewoitine D.21s, British Vickers 84 amphibians, Supermarine Southamptons and Vickers Valparaisos, Italian-built Savoia Marchetti S.59bis and Dornier Wal flying boats from Germany. By the time World War II broke out, a predominant proportion of Argentine naval aircraft were US-built: Dewoitine D.21 fighters, Martin 139 bombers, Vought V.124A bomber-reconnaissance aircraft and Consolidated P2Y-3 flying boats, among others. After the Second World War, US war surplus aircraft such as the Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat and Vought F4U-5 Corsair fighter-bombers, Consolidated PBY-5A Catalina and Martin PMB-5 Mariner patrol amphibians, Douglas DC-2 and Beech C-45 transports and Beech AT-11, North American AT-6, Vultee BT-13 and Stearman PT-17 trainers were purchased in substantial numbers and came to comprise most of the Argentine naval air fleet. The US-built Bell 47D was the first helicopter operated by the Argentine Navy.

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65 The survey that follows of Argentine naval aircraft is heavily dependent upon the excellent history written by Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, Historia de la Aviación Naval Argentina, two volumes (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estudios Históricos Navales, 1980).

After the acquisition of the aircraft carrier in 1958 the Aviación Naval came into its own. The predominance of US-built aircraft continued through the 1950s and early 1960s, with the Argentine Navy operating Grumman Panther fighters, Corsair fighter-bombers, Catalina and Mariner amphibians, North American SNJ-5 trainers, Bell 47 and Sikorsky S.55 helicopters, Douglas C-54 and C-47 transports and Lockheed P2V-5 Neptune maritime patrol aircraft. The Macchi MB.326 armed trainer was acquired from Italy in the late 1960s, as were ex-US Navy Douglas A-4Q Skyhawks. In the late 1970s, in the face of the US arms embargo, Argentina initiated the procurement of the French-built Dassault Super Etendard fighters and Italian-built Macchi MB.339 light attack aircraft, the former type playing a sterling *rôle* during the South Atlantic Conflict against Britain in 1982. The most recent Argentine naval aircraft acquisition has been the purchase of Brazilian-built Embraer EMB.326 Xavante light attack aircraft in the mid-1980s.

Before ending this section, a final point is worth making. In general, it would be correct to argue, as Admiral Milia does, that "Argentine Navy procurements have been [determined] by professional [rather] than political or economic interests."[66] To substantiate this position, Milia draws our attention to the fact that although Argentine naval officers were first trained as submariners in the United States, Argentina's first submarines were nevertheless purchased from Italy rather than the US. Our study of the acquisition of naval weaponry by the Argentine Navy would appear to support Admiral Milia's assertion.

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66 Milia, "The Argentine Navy Revisited", op.cit., p.29.

Conclusion : The British Connection

If, as one has attempted to indicate, the institutional links that the Argentine Navy has had with the Royal Navy are indeed tenuous when compared to those with some other navies, why is the former regarded as pro-British? Rouquié traces this identification to the predilections of Argentina's Anglophile elite:

> Si la marina argentina puede ser considerada como pro británica, en concordancia al respecto con el fervor anglómano de la *gentry* nacional, sin duda es mucho más por admiración hacia la primer flota del mundo o por tradición que debido a lazos orgánicos y permanentes.[67]

Imaz, however, argues with some validity that this tendency to trace all things naval to the Royal Navy is not peculiar to Argentina:

> From the British navy not only Argentina's but all navies of any importance at the beginning of the century, including the American, adopted the British naval code of honor, a specific value system, and a substantial respect for ethical and official standards of conduct which would later come to be identified with navy status.[68]

Thus, even if other navies have been important to the development of the Argentine Navy, it is significant that many aspects of the daily routine of the Argentine sailor are derived directly from the Royal Navy. As Admiral Arguindeguy points out:

> El uniforme, las insignias, las jerarquías, las costumbres a bordo, la rutina, las guardias, la jerga (slang) marinera, tienen mucho de la británica, adaptada al particular castellano que hablamos los argentinos.[69]

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67 Rouquié, I. hasta 1943, op.cit., p.103.

68 Imaz, op. cit., pp.72-73. While the general point made by Imaz is correct, he is wrong about the "code of honour" which, as we have seen earlier on in this Chapter, the Argentine Navy derives not from Britain but Spain.

69 Arguindeguy, typewritten memorandum, op.cit.

Furthermore, the pro-British image of the Argentine Navy is buttressed by the fact that a number of vessels in the Argentine fleet bear "British" names. This is, of course, because Argentina's naval heroes of the Independence War period were predominantly of British (or Irish) extraction. Apart from the obvious "Almirante Brown", other "British" names, such as "Granville", "Thorne", "Bathurst", "Parker" and "Drummond", have been borne by many a vessel in Argentine naval history, such as the series of torpedo boats in 1890 and 1939, and again in the 1980s.

Arguindeguy makes a telling point when he remarks:

> ...¿que mejor prueba de la existencia no sólo de una tradición, sino del reconocimiento de ella en la formación naval argentina? Y que conste que esos nombres (tanto en 1890, como en 1939 o en 1980...) han sido impuestos en o durante gobiernos eminentemente "nacionalistas"...[70]

Admiral Milia summarises his research into the external influences on the Argentine Navy thus:

> The final product is not so simple as a copy. It has the complexity of any synthesis with multiple influences, i.e., the Spanish influence for basic cultural heritage, the French influence for education and thinking, and the American influence for technology and operational procedures...
>
> ...my Navy is the end product of a singular historical and sociological process, a process that [has lasted] as long as the life of Argentina as a nation, but the final modern part of which covers a century of peace. Such a long peaceful process was a blessing to my country, but to build a war machine without the tests of combat is not an easy task.[71]

It should be evident from the above that there is a certain tension in the respective views of Admiral Milia and Admiral Arguindeguy. For Milia, it is an open-and-shut case: Britain cannot be considered the most

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70 ibid.

71 Milia, "The Argentine Navy Revisited", op.cit., p.29.

important external influence on the Argentine Navy simply because the history of Anglo-Argentine naval interaction does not warrant this conclusion. Both the "hardware" (vessels, weapons and equipment) and the "software" (regulations, doctrines and training) that together constitute Argentina's naval institution bear the marks of relationships other than the one with Britain. For Arguindeguy, the matter of external influence seems to be something altogether more subtle. It has to do with values and ethos, which are perceptible but intangible things. In other words, what has a greater impact on a navy's institutional consciousness, "vessels" or "values"?

Irrespective of which way the "ships versus sentiments" debate is decided, one last point still remains: just how important is the impact of external influences on a naval institution's corporate personality? In the final analysis, it must be pointed out that military institutions tend to view themselves as the sublime representative of the nation, embodying all that is best about the nation, patriotism at its highest. This poetic and romantic self-image militates against doing anything that is not expressly in the national interest. External contacts do matter, but only up to a point because their influence upon ideology and political behaviour is essentially through the imperfect mechanism of passive indoctrination.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OF OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN: THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THE ARGENTINE NAVAL OFFICER

As we have just seen in the previous chapter, there are a number of misconceptions regarding the nature and scope of the links between Argentine military institutions and their foreign counterparts, even within the military institutions themselves. In much the same manner, conventional wisdom *vis-à-vis* the social origins of the officer corps of the Argentine Armed Forces is also significantly flawed. The social origins of the officer corps has a great deal of relevance to our study. Rouquié accepts the fact that "[a]s a result of the authoritarian training that he has received and of the specific characteristics of the institution that has formed him, the officer is determined less by his family background than by his relation to the army."[1] He however hastens to add:

> This does not mean that we should neglect family origins. These affect the relation of the officer to civilian society in the sense that since he lives in symbiosis with the institution he has chosen as the organizing principle of his existence, his family (including his in-laws) constitutes his main, and sometimes his only, source of contact with the civilian world.[2]

Bopegamage concurs with this point:

> The social forces which operate in the formative years of civilian life tend to continue their influence in the later lives of military men. Further analysis of such social origins of the military could become a powerful key to the understanding of its political logic.[3]

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1 Alain Rouquié, The Military and the State in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.86

2 ibid.

3 A. Bopegamage, 'Caste, Class and the Indian Military: A Study of the Social Origins of Indian Army Personnel', in Jacques Van Doorn, (ed.), Military Profession and Military Regimes: Commitments and Conflicts (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1969), p.127.

In Rouquié's view, a number of scholars have tried "to explain the political attitudes of the [armed forces] solely through [this] much misunderstood variable."[4] Lieuwen, for instance, relies upon the unsubstantiated sociological explanation that Army officers in Argentina have "a middle-class background", while naval officers come "from the upper middle class and the landed aristocracy",[5] to explain the differences that exist in the political behaviour and ideological orientation of the two military institutions. In another study a few years later, Lieuwen again contrasts the "upper-middle class" origins of the naval officer corps with the "petty-bourgeois" class origins of Army officers,[6] and ascribes the Navy's antipathy towards Peronism to the determination of its officers "to keep the lower-income groups from exercising political influence."[7] Finer likewise attributes the consistent anti-Peronist stance of the Argentine Navy to the links that naval officers, unlike their army counterparts, had with "the Oligarchy".[8] Blanket class characterisations such as these are usually simplistic, but in this particular case they are inaccurate as well. As Abrahamsson correctly argues, "very few inferences with regard to political attitudes can be drawn from data on social background."[9]

Among all the military officers interviewed for this thesis, whether serving or retired, senior or junior, naval or non-naval, there is *complete unanimity* of opinion that the social origins of Army, Navy, and Air Force officers do not differ significantly.[10] Admiral Carlos Büsser, who as the

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4 Rouquié, op.cit., p.86.

5 Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p. 131

6 Edwin Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents: Neomilitarism in Latin America (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.15.

7 ibid., p.23.

8 S.E. Finer, The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), p.43.

9 Bengt Abrahamsson, 'Elements of Military Conservatism: Traditional and Modern', in Morris Janowitz and Jacques Van Doorn, (eds.), On Military Ideology (Rotterdam: Rotterdam University Press, 1971), p.61.

10 A list of the officers interviewed by the author is included in the Sources at the end of this thesis.

Chief of the Infantería Marina "took" the Malvinas/Falklands in April 1982, recited the *apellidos* of the naval officers who served under his command during the South Atlantic Conflict to demonstrate that naval officers hail from a diverse and largely immigrant social base. He pointed out that while his family was of Swiss origin, his adjutant officer had been of French descent and his chief of communications of English extraction. Further, one of his batallion commanders had German ancestry while a senior army commander was of Arab descent.[11] Such an outlook is shared by Army and Air Force officers as well. For instance, when a retired colonel was questioned about the "immigrant middle-class" origins that Army officers are supposed to have, he indignantly pointed out that his family had been in the military for five generations - "mi tatarabuelo, a mi bisabuelo, a mi abuelo todos militares" - and could easily be characterised as "patrician", since it had arrived in South America in the sixteenth century. However, even he insisted that social origins had nothing to do with a career in the military, since officers were commissioned "sin ninguna caracterización de nada, ni en la Marina, ni en el Ejército, ni en la Fuerza Aérea."[12] Comodoro García Mira at the Escuela Superior de Guerra Aérea asserts that the selection procedure for the Armed Forces is exceedingly open, and that potential officers are neither selected nor excluded on the basis of their family background.[13] Lang puts this into the correct historical perspective when he remarks:

> A decline in the number of aristocratic officers took place in the armed forces of every modern nation as the expertise requisite to effective performance gradually displaced ascriptive criteria based on social origin and family tradition.[14]

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11 Interview with Contraalmirante IM (R) Carlos A.C. Büsser, 15 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

12 Interviewed on 17 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

13 Interview with Comodoro (R) Dr. Octavio José García Mira, 9 September 1987, Escuela Superior de Guerra Aérea, Buenos Aires.

14 Kurt Lang, 'Technology and Career Management in the Military Establishment', in Morris Janowitz, (ed.), The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organization (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), p.39.

In general, the researcher on the Argentine Navy is forced to rely heavily upon interviews such as those presented above because no data pertaining to the social origins of the naval officer corps is available for systematic analysis. The Navy, even more so than the other two Argentine military institutions, withholds information of this nature.[15] This scarcity of hard data makes a rigorous statistical study of this important subject virtually impossible. I was able to acquire *some* data on this topic by presenting a detailed questionaire of a purely historical nature to the authorities of the Escuela Naval Militar (ESNM). Tabulated below is the information that was communicated to this researcher by the ESNM in response to the questionaire. As can be seen in Table Three, the information provided is sketchy and nowhere near as detailed as it could have been. To give only one example of the inadequacy of the data provided, the fact that 60% of the cadets came from the Capital Federal, Buenos Aires province, and the cities of Rosario, Santa Fé and Córdoba is not much of an indicator because about 60% of Argentina's population resides in these areas. The data that is *really* required in order to make a reasoned analysis about the province of origin of naval cadets is information on the percentage of cadets who are *porteños*. Despite significant shortcomings, the data in Table Three *does* provide us with some interesting insights: for instance, it is evident from the data on the father's profession that the vast majority of Argentine naval officers hail from a middle-class family rather than a "patrician" one. It is nevertheless clear that far more information is needed before an indepth analysis of this important subject can be attempted.

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15 This paucity or lack of data about family background and social origins is a common problem faced by students of military institutions. Frankel's comment in his excellent study of the South African Defence Force strikes a chord: "During the course of this study considerable difficulty was encountered in collecting raw data on the social composition of the present and past South African officer corps, with the result that many of the fascinating hypotheses linking social background to military behaviour engendered by the extant literature could not be tested in any systematic manner." Philip H. Frankel, Pretoria's Pretorians: Civil-Military Relations in South Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.36.

TABLE THREE

CABALLERO SI, PATRICIO NO: GENTLEMEN NOT BY BIRTH BUT TRAINING

Aggregate data on the ascriptive status of the cadets of the Escuela Naval Militar at the time of entry into the institution (1920-1980)

I: Province of origin

Buenos Aires, Gran Buenos Aires,
Provincia de Buenos Aires, Rosario,
Santa Fé and Córdoba.....60%

"Islas especificas", such as
Misiones, Salta and San Juan.....30%

Rest of Argentina.....10%

II: Nationality of parents

Both parents Argentine.....90%

[No data available on nationality of grandparents, but it is estimated for demographic reasons that until the early 1960s over 85% of the cadets had at least one grandparent of non-Argentine origin.]

III: Profession of father

Military officer.....5-6%

Military non-commissioned officer.....5-6%

Profesionales (doctors, lawyers, engineers).....10-12%

Teachers, government employees, bank clerks..... +-60%

Merchants, travelling salesmen, etc..... +-15%

[Estimated that nearly 90% of the cadets had a middle-class background, and about 10% were the products of military schools *(liceos militares)*.]

Source: Escuela Naval Militar

The only other source of concrete information in this regard is a list of each and every naval officer who graduated from the Escuela Naval Militar between 1879 and 1986.[16] A careful study of this list does not reveal a large number of old "patrician" Spanish *apellidos*. Indeed, as can

16 Armada Argentina, Estado Mayor General de al Armada, Dirección General del Personal Naval, Promociones Egresadas de la Escuela Naval Militar: 1879-1986. Compiled by Capitán de Navío IM (RE) Mauricio V. Piaggio. (Buenos Aires: 1987).

be seen in Table Four, it is the contrary that appears to be true, as Italian family names, signifying an immigrant background, tend to form an important component of the list through the years.

TABLE FOUR

PERCENTAGE OF CADETS IN THE ESCUELA NAVAL MILITAR WITH ITALIAN SURNAMES: Analysis of every tenth Promoción of the Comando Naval from Promoción No 1 onwards

Promo-ción number	Date of "Egreso"	(1) Total intake	(2) Italian surnames	(3) Probable Italian	(4) %age of (2)	(5) %age of (2)+(3)
1	20 Jan 1879	4	1	0	25.0	25.0
11	02 Jan 1888	10	1	0	10.0	10.0
21	21 Jan 1897	19	3	1	15.8	21.1
31	20 Dec 1906	16	2	2	12.5	25.0
41	21 Oct 1915	19	5	0	26.3	26.3
51	01 Jan 1926	18	7	2	38.8	50.0
61	31 Dec 1935	32	8	0	25.0	25.0
71	01 Jul 1944	55	10	4	18.2	27.3
81	01 Dec 1954	61	20	4	32.7	39.3
91	16 Nov 1964	21	5	3	23.8	38.0
101	30 Dec 1972	81	27	4	33.3	38.2
111	01 Jan 1982	83	30	4	36.1	40.9

Source: Armada Argentina, Estado Mayor General de la Armada, Dirección General del Personal Naval, *Promociones Egresadas de la Escuela Naval Militar 1879-1986*. Compiled by Capitán de Navío (R) Mauricio V. Piaggio. (Buenos Aires: 1987).

The new information that is presented above lends credence to the previously somewhat-speculative claims of those students of the Argentine Armed Forces who asserted that the social origins of naval officers do not differ significantly from those of their middle-class counterparts in the other military institutions. Florit, for example insists that

> La extracción social de los componentes de ... [la] Armada es, en términos generales, análoga a la del Ejército y la Aeronáutica.[17]

Indeed, the only identifiable group of military officers from "patrician" backgrounds exists within the Cavalry Corps of the Army, not

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17 Carlos A. Florit, Las Fuerzas Armadas y la Guerra Psicológica (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Arayú, 1963), p. 42

within the Navy. During the Azul-Colorado clashes in the early 1960s, it was evident that a large number of cavalry officers, who formed the bulk of the Azules, came from Argentina's old *estanciero* families.[18] It must be noted, however, that cavalry officers such as Alejandro Augustín Lanusse, Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, Augustín Pío de Elía, Tomás A. Sánchez de Bustamante, Marcelo Becar Varela, Mariano de Navares, Alcides Lopez Aufranc, F.H. de Alzaga, Marcelo de Elía, and Julio R. Alsogaray, whose *apellidos* were a roll-call of the traditional Spanish names of Argentina's historic families, unhesitatingly obeyed the orders of their chief of cavalry, Juan Carlos Onganía, whose social origins were anything but patrician. The political behaviour of this "patrician" group would tend to support Imaz's contention that a "military caste" such as the Prussian *Junkers*, and a military establishment in which recruitment is either totally closed to "outside" groups, or is at the very least "a function of the future officer's ascriptive status",[19] does not exist in Argentina. "The Argentine armed forces", Imaz asserts, "have always been open groups and have served as channels offering opportunities for upward mobility both to the provincial Creole sectors and to the native-born sons of immigrant parents."[20] Indeed, scholarships to the military academies "made higher studies possible for many who would not have afforded them outside the service."[21] While the non-availability of data for the Navy in this regard again impedes any attempts at a systematic analysis, it may be recorded at this juncture that *all* the naval personnel interviewed by this author echoed Imaz's views on this matter.

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18 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina-II. 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), p. 361

19 José Luis de Imaz, Los Que Mandan (Those who Rule) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), p. 76

20 ibid., pp. 76-77

21 ibid., p. 77

Given the paucity of data, this study of the social origins of naval officers in Argentina is by no means authoritative or conclusive. It is, however, sufficiently clear even from the sketchy analysis presented above that we will have to look further afield to find an adequate explanation for the "upper-class" image of the naval officer corps. Rowe is right in asserting that "[the] Argentine officer corps, in recent years, has constituted an elite by virtue of the power it has wielded, *not because of the social class from which it is drawn.*"[22]

Johnson makes an important general point of the civilian *perception* of naval officers in Latin America, and suggests some reasons for the same:

> Civilians consider the navy the "aristcratic" service and the army the "democratic" service, although there is no longer much basis for the labels. A generation ago naval officers did have to have greater technical skills than army officers, and therefore they probably appealed to a somewhat "higher social type". Probably a more important consideration in establishing the public image has been the political role that the two services have played. The navies... have not been able to compete with the armies in decision-making at the national level and so have tended to remain out of the public eye. The very fact that they have been unknown to the public has given them something of an Olympian status, which may not have been warranted in the past and certainly is not today.[23]

Thus, irrespective of the *actual* social origin of the Argentine naval officer, it is important for us to recognise, as Goldwert does, that "in the eyes of Argentine civilians entrance into the naval officer-corps does confer a status higher than does entrance into the army officer-corps."[24] This image of the upper-class naval officer persists inspite of the parity in the renumeration received by *all* officers of equivalent rank within the

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22 James W. Rowe, 'Argentina's Restless Military' in Robert D. Tomasek, (ed.), Latin American Politics: Studies of the Contemporary Scene (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 467. Emphasis mine.

23 John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p.170.

24 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p. 71

Argentine Armed Forces, irrespective of the force they belong to. Since what we are discussing here is of an essentially intangible nature, it might be worth our while to put forward a few considerations of a speculative nature to explain this "upper-class" image of the Navy in Argentina. This image probably has a lot to do with the mystique attached to the sea among peoples that lack a maritime consciousness and a seafaring tradition. Argentina certainly fits the bill in this regard. As Rouquié points out, Argentina is a

> país de hombres de tierra adentro, donde la pesca de mar era prácticamente desconocida a principios de siglo, no poseía ninguna población marítima donde reclutar tripulaciones aguerridas.[25]

Indeed, naval officers in Argentina do frequently lament the fact that their compatriots are inordinately fond of the "humid *pampas*".[26]

Related to the mystique associated with seamanship is the cosmopolitan, cultured image that goes hand in hand with international travel. A naval man, in the duration of his career, is likely to visit a number of ports, particularly in Europe and North America. Since international travel in most countries is still associated with the wealthy upper classes, it comes as no surprise that there is a tendency to regard naval officers as members of the upper class in Argentina.

Let us change tack and consider another line of inquiry. It is important for our purposes to note that entry into the naval officer corps is far more competitive than that in the other two forces. The number of candidates who apply for selection to the Escuela Naval Militar gives the Navy a ratio of 1:10 to select its cadets from. The Army and the Air Force

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25 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina: I: hasta 1943 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1981), pp. 101-102

26 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Jorge Fraga, 24 August 1987, Buenos Aires.

have a far lower selection-ratio of approximately 1:4. Furthermore, rising to the top of the institutional hierarchy is not a uniformly easy task in the three military institutions. While only 0.5% of all naval officers become admirals, 0.7% of army officers and 0.9% of air force officers rise to the ranks of general and brigadier respectively.[27] On the basis of the figures presented above, it could well be suggested that the "quality" of naval officers and their chiefs is higher than that of their counterparts in the other two military institutions. If the above reasoning is accepted, it could go some way in explaining why a naval career is perceived as being more prestigious than an army career in the public mind.

In the ultimate analysis, the image of the patrician naval officer may not only be subjective (which images tend to be, anyway) but *synthetic*. Indeed, the Argentine Armed Forces go to extraordinary lengths to maintain the image of "the officer and the gentleman". For instance, all Argentine military officers, not just naval ones, are always addressed in writing with the honorific *"Don"* placed between their rank and their name. The clubs of military officers in Buenos Aires, such as the Centro Naval or the Circulo Militar, display a plushness that would put most regimental clubs in London to shame. In an acutely status-conscious society such as Argentina, the status display and lifestyle of the Argentine military officer has traditionally been a source of envy for the Argentine civilian, and it is only with the precipitous decline in military salaries during the Alfonsín administration that this has ceased to be the case.

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27 These percentages were graciously supplied by Capitán de Navío (R) Lic. Carlos H. Raimondi. Interview, 7 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MARCHING IN STEP: INSTITUTIONAL COHESION: COMRADESHIP OR COMPULSION?

Organisational unity has long been held to be one of the most important characteristics of the military institution. Indeed, the armed forces make much of their internal cohesion, which they contrast with the factionalised group nature of civil society. And yet, as Sarkesian points out:

> [M]ost military institutions are not cohesive, much less monolithic... [They] have internal disagreements, disparate loyalties, and differing perceptions of their role.[1]

The question of institutional cohesion is clearly an important aspect of military existence. This chapter will focus upon the internal unity and institutional cohesion of the Argentine Navy.

One of the most outstanding features of the political behaviour of the Argentine Navy, as Imaz points out, is that it has consistently been "cohesive and institutionalised to such a degree that in the midst of upheaval caused by the division of almost all groups in the country, it preserved its ranks and value system intact."[2] The naval institution has always attributed this unity to its great *espíritu de cuerpo*. There can be no better example of this naval belief than the following message, which was broadcast over the *"Voz de Libertad"*, the Radio Base Naval at Puerto Belgrano during the Navy's "finest hour", the Revolución Libertadora in 1955:

> Héroes hubo muchos pero hay un héroe indiscutido y que es el héroe más auténtico de las fuerzas Navales

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1 Sam C. Sarkesian, 'A Political Perspective on Military Power in Developing Areas', in Sheldon W. Simon, (ed.), The Military and Security in the Third World: Domestic and International Impacts (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), p.3.

2 José Luis de Imaz, Los Que Mandan (Those Who Rule) (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1970), p.77.

> Revolucionarias. No es conscripto, marinero, cabo o suboficial. No es oficial o jefe; no es personaje alguno determinado, es el espíritu de cuerpo de la Marina que en esta oportunidad lanzó su vigor más glorioso. Ese espíritu de cuerpo ha sido realmente el saldo doméstico que la Marina hoy atesora como su riqueza más pura.[3]

This glorified view of the institutional cohesion of the Argentine Navy is not limited to within the naval institution. On the contrary, it is readily echoed by outside observers. Arturo Frondizi, for instance, is of the opinion that "[l]a Armada tuvo siempre una gran unidad interna. En ella es muy fuerte el espíritu de cuerpo."[4] This opinion is particularly impressive when one considers that the main problem that Frondizi faced *vis-à-vis* the naval establishment during his presidency was the forced resignation of Admiral Estevez, an event which can hardly be considered an exemplar of institutional cohesion. Indeed, the "Estevez affair" was one of the rare occasions when the breakdown of naval internal unity was publically visible. Clearly, naval personnel, and particularly the senior captains and admirals, are not always of one mind on important issues. However, in the context of institutional cohesion, what is important is not that there are diverse, even divergent, opinions within the Navy, but that these differences are resolved within the institution itself and that every effort is made to ensure that they are not exposed to the outside world.

Naval officers insist that the naval identity is so strong that it subsumes all other loyalties, affinities and affiliations that a navy man may have. This is especially so in the case of the Peronist sympathies that most naval *suboficiales* are suspected of having by their officers. Admiral Milia, while discussing the role of the naval institution in the

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3 Quoted in Miguel Angel Cavallo, Puerto Belgrano Hora Cero : La Marina se Subleva, third edition (Buenos Aires: Fundamental Editores, 1955).

4 Written statement from Dr. Arturo Frondizi, 26 September 1990, Buenos Aires.

Revolución Libertadora, had this to say about the cohesion within the ranks:

> The ranks - petty officers, warrant officers, troops too - love[d] Perón more than any another government. But [they were] surrounded by the culture and comradeship, the naval comradeship. It was not the same in the Army. In the Army, there was no comrade[ship] between the ranks and the officers. In the Navy, we had, and I believe we still do, strong comradeship. I have seen a warrant officer taking up his rifle against the Peronist troops and cry[ing] ... Because his heart belong[ed] to Perón, but his duty belong[ed] to the Navy... putting [it] in the balance to select, they select[ed] the Navy.[5]

Thus, even the disaffection among the sailors and the *suboficiales* during the *coup* that overthrew Perón is seen within the officer corps as a sign of institutional cohesion and a triumph of naval comradeship. A number of naval officers who were participants in the Revolución Libertadora emphasised the point that the cooperation of the *suboficiales* was freely given: there was absolutely no compulsion to join the rebellion against the Peronist government, since that could have led to the sabotage of the rebelling ships at sea. Indeed, a couple of interviewees went to the extent of insisting that petty officers who were known to be Peronist sympathisers were given explicit permission by their captains not to embark, but without exception they chose to remain with their crew.

The situation with regard to internal unity in the Argentine Army could not be more different from that of the Navy. Factionalism has always existed in some form in the Army. As Potash, the eminent scholar of the Argentine Army, puts it:

> Whatever the degree of corporate identity Army officers have acquired, especially vis-à-vis the civilian sector, a countertendency in the form of factionalism has frequently manifested itself. Conflicts and cleavages

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5 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Fernando A. Milia, 27 August 1987, office of the Boletín del Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

> disruptive of officer unity have been a recurring phenomenon in the twentieth century.[6]

The presence of secret lodges and military societies in the Argentine Army is proverbial, from the Logía Lautaro of the Independence War period to the anti-Yrigoyenist Logía San Martín of the 1920s and the infamous GOU of the early 1940s. Potash asserts that "[t]he creation of a lodge or military clique has been a response by a group of officers to issues that transcended military matters and on which the unity of the officer corps could not be assumed."[7] Arguindeguy, on the other hand, opines that secret military lodges do not arise solely as a result of conspiratorial planning: "[a]sociaciones nacidas de fines nobles y de la más sana camaradería pueden mutar, por falta de autodefensas o de la voluntad para utilizarlas, en verdaderas logias."[8] Thus, he argues that innocuous professional associations can get transmuted into significant political actors:

> [S]in caer en lo místico y secreto de las logias, es evidente que los nucleamientos grupales (fueran estos por camadas o promociones, o a las distintas armas...) tuvieron una fuerza especial de aglutinamiento muy por encima y superior a la aceptable de la camaradería o al llamado "espíritu de cuerpo", los que fueron fomentados oficialmente con la creación de las asociaciones de las distintas armas... Estas asociaciones adquirieron el vínculo de verdaderas hermandades corporativistas, y en los distintos golpes militares, alzamientos o planteos a la autoridad civil y constituida, tuvieron el alcance de reales logias.
>
> Lo cierto es que estas "hermandades" tuvieron un especial y particular poder, cada una de ellos en su momento...[9]

On the other hand, Rouquié is of the opinion that the importance of secret military lodges in the Argentine Army has been vastly overstated:

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6 Robert A. Potash, 'The Impact of Professionalism on the Twentieth Century Argentine Military', Program in Latin American Studies Occasional Papers Series No.3, International Area Studies Programs, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, April 1977, p.6.

7 ibid., p.7.

8 Pablo E. Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.70.

9 ibid., p.69.

> El gusto por el misterio así como el atractivo de las revelaciones espectaculares sobre sus jefes clandestinos contribuyeron a acreditar la acción decisiva de esas sociedades discretas y aun secretas. En realidad, aparte de la Sociedad de Defensa Antiyrigoyenista de los años veinte y del GOU, ninguna organización militar clandestina y estructurada desempeñó un papel de primer orden.[10]

However, this is not to say that Rouquié regards the Argentine Army as a united institution. It is simply that he has a different explanation for the deep divisions in that institution. In order to explain the excessive internal cleavages and the lack of institutional cohesion within the Argentine Army, Rouquié places far more emphasis upon the division of the institution vertically across the rank structure into various functionally distinct *Armas:*

> La inclinación de los militares por los conciliábulos misteriosos y su afición a mantener en secreto todas sus deliberaciones no pueden anular las características institucionales propias que... dificultan las solidaridades transversales. Por el contrario, es sorprendente comprobar como, en la mayoría de la sociedades militares, los cortes ideológicos corresponden *grosso modo* y salvando las excepciones a divisiones funcionales. El ejército argentino corrobora ampliamente esta comprobación banal.[11]

In order to substantiate his argument above, Rouquié provides us with a fascinating account of the rise and fall of the power of the various *Armas* from the time of the *Peronato* to the military governments of the Revolución Argentina period.[12] From 1946 to 1955 all the commanders-in-chief of the Army and both the ministers of war were generals in the Infantry, which due to its mass base has traditionally been seen as the "populist" Arm; it is instructive that Perón himself was an Infantry general. Opposition to the Peronist regime was strongest within the Cavalry, and after the failed *coup*

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10 Alain Rouquié, Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina II, 1943-1973 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), p.358.

11 ibid., pp.358-359.

12 Rouquié, op.cit., pp.360-363.

attempt of 1951 it was in the officer corps of this Arm that the repression of the Peronist state was most strongly felt. The Army leaders of the Revolución Libertadora belonged to the Artillery while it was the Infantry regiments that made up the bulk of the loyalist ground forces. After a brief interlude of Artillery dominance after the overthrow of Perón, attributable largely to the presence of Generals Lonardi and Ossorio Arana, the Cavalry generals asserted themselves, and particularly after the *Azul-Colorado* clashes of 1962-1963, emerged as the power within the Army. From 1958 to 1976, a period of nearly two decades, non-Cavalry generals commanded the Army for less than 18 months; all the three military presidents of the Revolución Argentina period, the generals Onganía, Levingston and Lanusse, were obviously Cavalry men.

A number of naval officers attributed the lack of institutional cohesion within the Argentine Army to its functional division into *Armas*. Right from their Colegio Militar days when they are still cadets, Argentine Army officers identify themselves with and are identified with their Arm. The cadets are segregated by Arm while in the Colegio and rarely meet fellow-cadets outside their own Arm. Thus, the future officer gets socialised early in his career into regarding his Arm rather than the Army as the governing institution of his life. The situation in the Navy could not be more different. The naval officer is not characterised or classified by his functional specialisation. Naval aviators, submariners and surface sailors are all encouraged by the values and structure of the naval institution to regard themselves primarily, even solely, as naval officers.

Interestingly, an Army-Navy difference in the level of institutional unity and cohesiveness does not seem to be a uniquely Argentine phenomenon.

It would appear that this difference is replicated in other countries as well. Lieuwen contends that armies "[reflect] social tensions more accurately, and therefore [are] more seriously wracked by internal splits", while navies, "less politically minded than armies, usually [remain] unified."[13] Johnson explains the divided army-unified navy dichotomy in terms of propinquity to power and the ability to form cliques:

> Intra-service rivalries... most often break out into the open in the army, because there the stakes in terms of power are higher... [I]n the navies officers are constantly being broken up into small groups aboard ships, which discourages the formation of cliques.[14]

Thus, both these scholars seem to be suggesting that armies, unlike navies, tend to be geographically dispersed throughout the country while having a concentrated presence in important regions. This deployment pattern of simultaneous dispersion and concentration gives armies an easy access to state power, but also involves them in situations of social and political conflict.

The reasons advanced by Lieuwen and Johnson to explain why navies around the world are more united internally than armies are interesting and probably have some validity in explaining the Argentine situation. It is evident that the Argentine Navy does not suffer from the twin problems of secret lodges and vertical cleavages along functional lines that make the Argentine Army such a factionalised institution. However, the argument thus far can at best provide us with insights into why the Argentine Navy is not like the Argentine Army. What it does *not* do is account for naval unity *per se*. It is not enough to assert that the Navy is united because it is not divided like the Army is, nor is it sufficient to argue that the

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13 Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), pp. 131-132.

14 John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p.124.

Navy is united because it has a strong *espíritu de cuerpo*; it is necessary to say *why* it has a strong corporate spirit. In the remainder of this chapter we will seek reasons that *explain* the institutional cohesiveness of Argentina's naval institution.

In the first place, is the cohesiveness of the naval institution the result of comradeship, as most naval officers claim, or is it the product of military discipline? Imaz regards naval training as primarily responsible for this high level of cohesion:

> Everything indicates that the type of values inculcated into the cadet from the moment he has passed his entrance examination accounts for the cohesion of the Navy. Beyond his professional training, the Navy cadet was taught a code of honor, to "handle ships, lead meñ, and defend the country," to adjust his life to an ethical code and to observe strict loyalty to his branch of the service.[15]

But it takes more than mere indoctrination during training to create institutional cohesiveness of the level that exists in the Argentine Navy. There are other features of naval life, particularly the environment in which navy men work, that contribute a great deal in this regard. Imaz talks about

> [t]he comradeship produced by shipboard life, which leads Navy men to argue that three social levels are found on board and that there is solidarity among the three because all their lives are equally at stake... While it permits the officers to become acquainted with the problems and needs of their subordinates, it leads the

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15 Imaz, op.cit., pp.77-78. Like Imaz, Janowitz also sees a connection between military education and group solidarity, but does not limit this connection solely to the Navy:

> A sense of intimacy and social solidarity among the officer corps is basic to the professional code. While other professional groups speak of a sense of community, none rivals the military in this respect. Much of military education seems to be concerned with this sense of group solidarity.

Morris Janowitz, Sociology and the Military Establishment (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1959), p.93.

> latter to identify with those of the officers who serve as their examples.[16]

Goldwert concurs:

> Life aboard ship, with all its cooperative activities, precludes the strict hierarchical relationship typical in the army between officers and men. In the army, conscripts still respond to orders with the humble, "Yes, my general" ... In the navy, "Yes, sir" will suffice.[17]

Naval officers interviewed for this thesis insisted that whereas Army officers communicate with their men by barking an order in a parade-ground voice, hearing a raised voice in the Navy is rare. Captain Lavezzo, for instance, pointed out that since most communication on board ship is through radio, one has to talk softly in order to be understood.[18] Likewise, while the army commander sits at the head of the table with his officers at mealtimes, the naval captain dines alone in his cabin; his second-in-command sits with the officers, but in the center, not at the head, of the table.[19] The etiquette of Army and Navy life is different in most parts of the world, and this is amply reflected in Argentine practice.

Also contributing to the institutional cohesiveness of the Navy is

> Una especie de cultivo de una pretendida pureza marina... [E]ste aislamiento cultivado sea también uno de los secretos del mantenimiento de la unidad institucional.[20]

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16 Imaz, op.cit., pp.78-79.

17 Marvin Goldwert, Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p.73.

18 Interview with Capitán de Navío Julio Italo Lavezzo, 17 September 1987, Escuela de Guerra Naval, Buenos Aires.

19 Unrecorded discussion with Dr. Alfio Aquiles Puglisi, 16 September 1987, Escuela Naval Militar, Río Santiago.

20 Carlos A. Florit, La Fuerzas Armadas y la Guerra Psicológica (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Arayú, 1963), p.43.

This propensity of the Argentine Navy to build for itself an "endogroup", a separate world isolated from socio-political realities, is described very effectively by Imaz:

> The life of [Navy men] ... is spent on ships and in coastal towns, particularly at the great naval base of Puerto Belgrano... Cabins, staterooms, casinos, and bases tend to isolate them from a society they do not always find to their image and likeness. This isolation is no obstacle from the professional point of view. On the contrary, it strengthens the system of loyalties towards the institution. Thus in times of crisis the Naval service has shown a uniformity of conduct that is unknown in the Army.[21]

Some fascinating insights into the nature of naval comradeship can be derived from small group research into the sociology of life on board small warships. In 1909 Charles Cooley classified social groups[22] as "primary" or "secondary", the groups in the former category being typically small in size and solidaristic, with face-to-face interaction and specific internal norms of conduct.[23] This would clearly be applicable to the crews of small vessels, which Erving Goffman has refered to as an example of a "total institution". Not surprisingly, the most interesting article on the sociology of life aboard ship was written by a sociologist who was also a naval commander. In the aftermath of the Second World War George Homans, while still a relatively unknown social scientist, wrote an fascinating paper describing his experiences as a commander of small ships engaged in anti-submarine warfare and convoy escort duties.[24] He identified four

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21 Imaz, op.cit., p.78.

22 Social groups may be defined as collectivities of individuals who interact and form social relationships.

23 C.H. Cooley, Social Organization (New York: Scribner's, 1909).

24 George C. Homans, 'The Small Warship', American Sociological Review, vol.11, no.3, June 1946, pp.294-300. This fascinating paper can be regarded as a precursor to Homans' later works on small groups and exchange theory: The Human Group (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950); Social Behavior: Its elementary forms (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1961); and Sentiments and Activities (New York: Free Press, 1962). In the latter years of his career, particularly since his famous paper 'Bringing men back in', American Sociological Review, vol.29, 1964, pp.809-18, Homans has come to emphasise the importance of individual characteristics over social structures as explanations for social phenomena.

problems (technical competence, balance, reciprocity and communication) as central to the group dynamics of the crew of a small warship. Homans links morale on board with the technical competence of the vessel as a whole and of its individual crew members:

> [N]o seaman wishes to be one of the crew of a ship whose reputation is not good. The kind of smartness he asks for may not be the kind admired by many officers. He is a man of sense and loves sound seamanship and sound cooking more than a magnificent paint job... [T]here are certain practical, simple things about the mission of the ship which must be properly handled if his willingness to cooperate is to be kept at a high level. Morale is just a fancy name for willingness to cooperate.[25]

This becomes a particularly important problem because "[a]ll warships work with other warships, and comparisons are always being made between them."[26] Morale tends to be low on a warship that is performing the task assigned to her less well than her sister-vessels in the flotilla.

The problem of balance is created by the fact that "[s]ince every ship has to meet the same fundamental demands and remain self-sufficient,... the crew of a small ship is actually more differentiated than its numerical size might suggest."[27] It is the captain's responsibility to ensure that "no one segment sets itself apart from the rest". About unity within the vessel, Homans has an important point to make:

> A ship's party, when all hands, officers and men, go ashore to play a game of baseball against another ship, the loser providing the beer, reinforces in the ship's company a sense of unity, but only if this unity exists to begin with. It must be created in the work of every day, not in special occasions.[28]

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25 Homans, 'The Small Warship', op.cit., pp.294-295.

26 ibid., p.294.

27 ibid., p.295.

28 ibid., p.296.

The position of the captain in maintaining unity and loyalty is understandably emphasised by Homans:

> It is well recognised that a good leader-should look after his men. It is not so well recognised that he should look after them in matters *they* consider important and not simply in the matters the commanding officer and his superiors consider important.[29]

He argues that the captain must see to it that "his men [are] protected against unnecessary irritations, even if it [means] protecting them against the Navy itself", and that "sometimes a sharp remark from his own superior officer [helps] the skipper prove to his men that he [is] fighting for them."[30] Nothing that the captain ever does for his crew is in the sense of a favour, as Homans hastens to emphasise:

> [N]othing he does is in any sense a favor... If he ever claimed something from his subordinates in return for the good deeds he had done on their behalf, he would get nothing more than some exceedingly irreverent remarks made behind his back. At the same time, nothing he does is taken wholly impersonally. *Only if the skipper is doing his best for the men, and they know it, will they do their best for the ship*. This is the meaning of reciprocity.[31]

An understanding of the unique *rôle* of the warship captain can give us a clear insight into the nature of naval institutional cohesion. Certainly, disobeying the captain's order is tantamount to mutiny, but the actual relationship between leader and follower is far more symbiotic:

> By ancient tradition, he is the last to leave the ship if she goes down. He is held responsible by the Navy for anything that goes wrong... and is so considered by the men under him. To help him bear this burden, he is, in theory, made dictator aboard his ship, but, as he stands on the bridge and gives his orders, no one is more aware that he is helpless without the willing cooperation of

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29 ibid., p.296. Emphasis my own.

30 ibid., p.297.

31 ibid., p.298. Emphasis my own.

> the crew. And he is the man above all others who may, at any moment, put that willingness in jeopardy.[32]

To what extent is the aforementioned sociological research on the dynamics of small groups relevant to our study of the internal cohesion of Argentina's naval institution? It is worth emphasising that in the official estimation of the Argentine Navy these sociological studies are extremely pertinent to the organisation and functioning of the institution. A good indication of this fact is a book published recently by the Instituto de Publicaciones Navales which links naval leadership to the management of small groups;[33] not surprisingly, this book is prescribed reading for all the cadets at the Escuela Naval Militar.

From the foregoing, it is quite clear that there are fundamental differences in the Argentine Army and Navy as far their internal unity as institutions is concerned. It is important, however, that we do not commit the mistake of considering the respective degrees of cohesiveness of these two military institutions as being static or unchanging over long periods of time. Despite frequent manifestations of internal cleavages, the principle of hierarchical discipline does reassert itself within the Argentine Army in the long run, as Rouquié reminds us:

> La disciplina vertical y la jerarquía siguen siendo los puntos cardinales de la vida militar. A veces no son respetados, por cierto, pero siempre se las restablece.[34]

Just as Army incohesiveness should not be overemphasised, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the internal unity of Argentina's naval institution has not always been impeccable. A cautionary reminder to this

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32 ibid., p.300.

33 Ariel Edgardo Bianchi, Guía para el ejercicio del mando naval: De los pequeños grupos (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 1990).

34 Rouquié, op.cit., p.340.

effect can be found in Admiral Perren's anguished comment about the state of naval cohesion and internal discipline after dissension in the Almirantzgo forced Admiral Estevez to resign:

> La disciplina y el espíritu de cuerpo, que fueran el orgullo de la Armada y la esencia de su fortaleza moral habían sido irremediablemente dañados. La responsibilidad nos correspondía a todos: a quienes actuaron cegados por sus pasiones políticas; a quienes lo hicieron con falta de serenidad y juicio equilibrado; a quienes se obstinaron en no reconocer sus errores y la gravedad de los hechos, tratando de restarles importancia hasta el final; y a quienes vimos con claridad el desarrollo del proceso y fuimos incapaces de hallar la forma de detenerlo antes de su tremenda culminación.[35]

Naval unity manifests itself in the political process frequently. Lieuwen describes the mechanics of naval decision-making at the political level in Argentina. Whenever a serious political situation affecting the naval institution arises, a *junta de almirantes*, consisting of all nineteen admirals, meets in a closed conference room. The issue is placed before the group, and after all the admirals, starting from the junior upwards, have expressed an opinion, a consensus is arrived at which is supported unequivocally by all present, even those who may have expressed a dissenting opinion during the discussions.[36] As the system of loyalties is wholly impersonal, dissident naval men confine their criticisms to conversations with their peers,[37] and maintain institutional unity *vis-à-vis* the outside world.

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35 Jorge Enrique Perren, 'Memoirs', typewritten manuscript, p.492.

36 Edwin Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents: Neomilitarism in Latin America (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.17.

37 Imaz, op.cit., p.79.

It is fitting to conclude this study with the words of Imaz, when he points out a fundamental difference between the Argentine Army and the Argentine Navy:

> Loyalty to the Army is a product of military discipline and the hierarchical position of the individual, while in the Navy it is an act freely consented to, to the extent that a value taught as a belief is freely consented to.[38]

38 ibid., p.78.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PERISCOPIC VISION: SOCIALISATION, TRAINING AND IDEOLOGY

In the last chapter we focused our attention on the various factors that contribute to the internal cohesion of Argentina's naval institution. The existence, articulation and dissemination of a collective ideology is an important indicator of institutional cohesion. Clearly, an understanding of the ideological leanings of individual military officers, as well as the collective ideological ethos of a military institution, is necessary if we are to place its political activity in the correct context. In this chapter the ideological orientation of the Argentine naval officer corps will be analysed.

The widespread popular image of military institutions is that they cherish order and discipline above all else. The man in uniform is seen to uphold the *status quo*; that, indeed, is deemed to be his professional function. In much of the early literature on military ideology there was scholarly consensus on the conservative nature of military institutions. However, different reasons were advanced by different scholars to explain this perceived conservative bias. Some scholars argued that the military is conservative due to functional *necessity*; as Abrahamsson put it, "military men as a professional group seem to be conservative partly because many of the values and attitudes that are part of the conservative syndrome appear to facilitate, and tend to support, adjustment to the professional role."[1] In other words, conservatism provides "the set of values that are functional to military professional performance".[2] Other scholars saw military conservatism as far more a question of normative

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1 Bengt Abrahamsson, 'Elements of Military Conservatism: Traditional and Modern', in Morris Janowitz and Jacques van Doorn, (eds.), On Military Ideology (Rotterdam: Rotterdam University Press, 1971), p.66.

2 ibid., p.62.

preference. Huntington, for instance, talked about the "conservative realism" of the military ethic:

> The military ethic emphasises the permanence, irrationality, weakness, and evil in human nature. It stresses the supremacy of society over the individual and the importance of order, hierarchy, and division of function. It stresses the continuity and value of history... It exalts obedience as the highest virtue of military men... It is, in brief, realistic and conservative.[3]

From yet another scholarly perspective, military conservatism had little to do with ideological preference *per se*. It was argued that while the military usually supported the forces of *status quo* in a situation of social conflict, this was not for reasons of conservative ideology. Instead, military politics was seen to be nothing more than a deep-seated desire to impose or, if need be, to restore "order". As Abrams put it:

> Order is seen in military political theory as an alternative to politics... The intellectual setting for military seizures of power is one of ideological disarray. And the distinctive military contribution to such situations has not been the elaboration of synthetic ideologies but rather the curt suspension of the babel of tongues.[4]

Abrams argued that military politics was inherently non-ideological: in his view "soldiers typically reveal themselves as the-world's least ideological politicians."[5] But how can this view be squared with the various military regimes that emerged in Latin America in the late 1960s and 1970s? Were not these regimes deeply ideological, with policy initiatives that went far beyond a mere desire to restore order?[6] The various higher military

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3 Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p.79.

4 ibid.

5 P. Abrams, 'Restoring Order: Some Early European Cases', in Morris Janowitz and Jacques van Doorn (eds.), On Military Intervention (Aldershot: Gower Publishing, 1985), p.40. This book was first published by Rotterdam University Press in 1971.

6 Clearly, both Juan Velasco Alvarado and Augusto Pinochet Ugarte placed a great deal of emphasis on "order" and were quite willing to use force to achieve their aim. But this was the only point

schools, such as the Escola Superior de Guerra in Brazil and the Centro de Altos Estudios Militares in Peru, were established specifically to give an ideological content to military "bureaucratic-authoritarian" rule; surely the so-called "National Security Doctrine" was what Abrams calls a "synthetic ideology". In this context it is salutary to note what Alain Rouquié has to say about the national security doctrine and its relation to ideology:

> The "national security doctrine" that... institutionalized military governments share to a lesser or greater degree furnishes a rhetoric that conceals their illegitimacy, rather than providing a new source of legitimacy. That doctrine was above a way to forge a mobilizing consensus within the military institution around an image that was related to their professional alarmism. Their theories of war, by enlarging the spectrum of threats and locating them within the nation itself, gave a corporate basis for the army's intervention in politics, but they did not explain it. They could justify a lasting presence in positions of command in the state, but they did not establish a new power. In a word, the theory of national security in no way takes the place of an ideology, not in its consistency, or its diffusion, or its constitutive function.[7]

What seems to emerge from the above discussion is the insufficiency of both the notion of "military conservatism" and the doctrine of "national security" in providing either a full description or an adequate explanation of military ideology. Clearly, there is no gainsaying that most military institutions *favour* social order *and* national security. Conservatism by itself is far too vague, and national security far too broad and obvious, to either decribe or explain institutional peculiarities and differences. The objective of this chapter is to describe the differences in the respective ideological orientations of Argentina's three military

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that the military leaders of the 1968 coup in Peru and the 1973 coup in Chile had in common; in terms of social and economic policy, the two military regimes could not have been more apart.

7 Alain Rouquié, The Military and the State in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.346.

institutions, and to attempt to explain the ideological ethos that permeates the naval institution.

In ideological terms, the Argentine Army is regarded as *nationalistic* and the Argentine Navy *liberal*. Here, we use these two terms in a uniquely Argentine sense. Waisman's exposition of the term "liberal" in the Argentine context is pertinent:

> Liberalism is always used in the traditional Lockean sense. When referring to economic policy, it means laissez-faire economics. Economic and political liberalism do not necessarily imply each other: since the Depression, most Argentine supporters of economic liberalism have backed political authoritarianism. [8]

Further, Waisman points out that "[n]ationalism in Argentina is a right-wing authoritarian political ideology."[9] In 1964, Johnson wrote of an Argentine naval officer telling him that in the Navy "we spell nacionalismo (of the army) with a 'z'" (nazionalismo)."[10] It should be qualified here that the Army is by no means ideologically homogeneous. Half of the Infantry is nationalist, the other half liberal, while the Engineers are developmentalists *("desarrollistas")*. The Artillery is largely liberal and the Cavalry, with some notable exceptions, predominantly Catholic Nationalist *("nacionalismo catolico")* in its orientation. In this context it is also worth mentioning that the Air Force is Catholic Nationalist in orientation: its institutional emblem is a Cross on an eagle, the motto being "Por Dios y por la Patria". Thus, it is easy to see that the ideological fault lines within the Argentine military establishment are extremely diverse and complex. In comparison to the ideological differentiation sketched above, it is clear that our discussion at the

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8 Carlos H. Waisman, Reversal of Development in Argentina : Postwar Counterrevolutionary Policies and Their Structural Consequences (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. xii.

9 ibid.

10 John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p.141.

beginning of this chapter of "military conservatism" and "national security", far from promoting an analysis of military political behaviour, actually impeded such an analysis.

The institutional self-perception of the Argentine Navy is that it is a "liberal" institution. It is necessary that we dissect precisely what this much-used term means in this context. The usage is a trifle ill-defined, but three senses of the term "liberal" emerged in this research: (1) the sense of economic liberalism, as has been mentioned above; (2) the sense of cosmopolitanism, or the lack of xenophobic nationalism; and (3) the sense of religious toleration, if not of anti-clericism. The first two "senses" will be explored in this chapter; Navy-Church relations are the subject of the next chapter.

Some scholars, such as Lieuwen, have focused their analyses on the class composition of the naval officer corps because they perceive a correlation between class and ideology.[11] Indeed, Lieuwen uses the ideological position of the Navy as an indicator of the class composition of its officer corps, but his approach is defective at three different but interrelated levels. The most basic problem, as Rowe points out, is "the frequent confusion of acquired political tastes with expression of inherited class interest."[12] Second, while Lieuwen tries to determine class composition from ideological positions, this researcher is engaged in the reverse process, *viz.*, investigating the factors that determine the ideology of the naval officer corps. Finally, the proposition that the ideological predeliction of the naval officer corps bears a correlation with "class composition" is open to question in the light of our conclusion in Chapter Thirteen that the social origins of naval officers do not differ

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11 See Lieuwen, Arms and Politics, Generals vs. Presidents, both op.cit.

12 Rowe, op.cit., p.458.

in any significant way from those of their counterparts in the other two military institutions. It is therefore more meaningful to investigate whether there are other factors of naval existence in Argentina that contribute to the reinforcement of the Navy's ideological stance.

Education: Indoctrination of Institutional Beliefs

A large number of naval officers argue that the liberal ideology of the naval institution is a result of the political education imparted to cadets at the Escuela Naval Militar. Admiral Rojas puts this argument thus:

> It is very important to have in mind that the education, the main direction of the spiritual confirmation of the cadet, the future officer, [is] *liberal*... [This is] the crucial point... Not to the left, not to the right, not to the middle, but liberal, and *republicana*, and absolute reverence for the Constitution. The first book for all cadets is the Constitution... The main direction ... in the Escuela Naval del Río Santiago is absolutely liberal.[13]

While the statement above is representative of a widespread sentiment within the institution, its validity is still open to question. The nature of the syllabus at the naval academy is clearly an issue of much significance in this context. Analysing the syllabus of the Escuela Naval Militar is by its very nature a research task that requires the active cooperation of the naval authorities. Unfortunately, the issue of military syllabi in Argentina was heavily politicised during the Alfonsín years, with the Armed Forces viewing the attempts of civilian politicians to reform the course content in the military schools as tantamount to an invasion of institutional autonomy. The official response to a detailed questionaire submitted by this researcher to the authorities of the Escuela

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13 Interview with Almirante (R) Isaac Francisco Rojas, 25 August 1987, Buenos Aires.

Naval Militar was that no data existed of the course content of the institution, even for the early decades of this century: "Los datos no se poseen elaborados en una serie histórica..." In general, it would appear that the syllabus of the Escuela Naval Militar is heavily biased in favour of the physical and mathematical sciences rather than the social sciences and the humanities: a number of naval officers referred to the education they received at the academy as *"cartesiana"*. As far as natural science instruction at the Escuela Naval Militar is concerned, the other noteworthy aspect to emerge in the interviews was that both the course content and standard of teaching was far superior to what was provided at the Colegio Militar and the Escuela de Aviación Militar. Indeed, a number of officers asserted that the level of physics and mathematics is similar to that of the best engineering faculties in Argentina. These assertions contradict Estep's statement that the curricula at the three academies "in many respects are similar in that they give a thorough grounding in college-level mathematics, history, languages, logic, ethics, geography, and phyical and biological sciences."[14] Estep also asserts that "cadets in each of the academies spend about one-half of their time in academic instruction in the classroom and the remainder in military field activities and physical training exercises."[15] It is unclear where Estep gets his information from; in any case, it is impossible to research this crucial issue at the present time.

Rather than explicit instruction, ideological influence by osmosis through a slow but steady process of socialisation is probably more likely. As Kurt Lang argues:

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14 Raymond Estep, The Argentine Armed Forces and Government (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Documentary Research Division, Aerospace Studies Institute, Air University, July 1970), p.70.

15 ibid., pp.70-71.

> Experience in the military academies or service as junior officers under close supervision by superiors is designed to promote a unified outlook.[16]

Janowitz presents us with comprehensive description of how the assimilation process works within the armed forces:

> Few organizations place as much emphasis on procedures for assimilating new members as does the military establishment. Assimilation involves the ongoing process of recruitment, selection, training, and career development. Not only must the new recruit, officer, or enlisted man learn a complex of technical skills. He is also expected to master an elaborate code of social behavior and professional honor, since membership in the military means participation in an organizational community which regulates behavior both on and off the "job". In the process of assimilation the recruit learns the roles, the required behaviors of his office, which he must perform regardless of personal preferences.[17]

Thus, while education and training makes a distinct impact upon the ideological orientation of the junior officer, it is by itself insufficient to create the ideological homogeneity that one frequently associates with military institutions. Abrahamsson's exposition of the causes of ideological homogeneity is convincing:

> The often-found homogeneity among the military as to ideological, political and strategic beliefs can be seen as caused by three separate processes. First selection and self-selection in recruitment of personnel tends to over-represent applicants to the profession having attitudes congenial to the military establishment. Second, the selection undertaken in the promotion of personnel tends to favor individuals conforming to the internal values of the profession. Third, indoctrination during the training of personnel further intensifies the crystallisation of beliefs.[18]

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16 Kurt Lang, 'Technology and Career Management', in Morris Janowitz, (ed.), The New Military, op.cit., p.39.

17 Morris Janowitz, Sociology and the Military Establishment (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1959), p.44.

18 B. Abrahamsson, 'Military Professionalisation and Estimates on the Probability of War', in Jacques van Doorn, (ed.), Military Profession And Military Regimes, op.cit., p.35.

In the light of the above, let us now study some other aspects of naval life that influence ideology at both the individual and the collective levels.

Socialisation: Inculcation of Institutional Values

As we have seen above, nearly all naval officers interviewed for this thesis attributed the liberal orientation of the Argentine Navy to the formative influence of the Escuela Naval Militar. The influence of the sea on both the individual and the institution was another popular explanation that emerged in the interviews for the cosmopolitan outlook within the naval institution. It was argued by some officers that despite the flying of flags and other legal and official manifestations, national identities tend to melt away at sea. Instead there develops a sense of the "Family of Man", or at the very least, a certain notion of marine fraternity. An extreme example of this sense of fraternity is the unstinting effort that regularly goes into saving life at sea, irrespective of the nationality of the vessel in distress. For instance, an Argentine naval captain may have been conditioned right from his days as a cadet into an unquestioning acceptance that Soviet Communism poses a mortal threat to his country. That, however, would not keep him from rushing to the aid of a fishing vessel in the South Atlantic, even if it were flying a Soviet flag. Thus, there is a clear transnational, perhaps even supranational, aspect to the normal duties of a naval officer. Coastal navies patrol national waters and protect exclusive economic zones; larger navies such as Argentina's also operate on High Seas, in international waters. It is significant that most naval officers are considerably more conversant with international maritime law than they are with domestic statutes.

According to the argument just presented, the elemental impact of the sea imparts to the sailor a metaphysical notion of life transcending national identity. More concretely, a life at sea in the twentieth century necessarily results in frequent contact with people of other nationalities. In ports of call, the outside world forces itself into the consciousness of the naval officer. In the Argentine Navy, this process of "global socialisation" starts early in an officer's career. Cadets of the Escuela Naval Militar spend a year in the academy's magnificent training ship *Libertad*, sailing to distant seas and ports. Apart from learning the art and science of seamanship, the young cadets are encouraged to observe other peoples with an open mind. Thus, while this voyage of training and discovery certainly imparts a sense of national and institutional pride, it also gives the nascent naval officer a real opportunity to study how things are done elsewhere. It soon dawns on the cadet that Argentina is *not "el mejor del mundo"* in every respect, and that there is something positive in virtually every other country. Thus, the maritime nature of the naval career contributes a great deal to a naval officer's liberal convictions. In Goldwert's opinion, it ensures that "[t]he naval officer is... drawn not to the xenophobic and narrow integral nationalism, but to the more cosmopolitan liberal nationalist tradition."[19]

To briefly encapsulate the argument being made here, a young naval cadet or junior officer is greatly influenced by his experiences around the world, and this makes him less nationalistic than his army counterpart. A superficial glance at this proposition may reveal a contradiction with our assertion in the last chapter, in the context of our study of institutional cohesiveness, that the Navy was a "total institution". However, it must be kept in mind that a total institution does not necessarily have to be a

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19 Goldwert, op.cit., p.72.

closed one. His first brush with the outside world has a longlasting impact on the naval officer precisely because it is an institutionally-sanctioned and officially-encouraged experience that he shares with his fellow officers. It gives most naval officers in Argentina a certain tolerance that is usually missing in their Army and Air Force counterparts. This is, of course, a strong statement to make and it must therefore be carefully qualified on two counts. Firstly, while relatively open-minded officers can certainly be found in the Argentine Army, the institutional ethos is nationalistic: armies, *ipso facto*, are the epitome of nationalism. It would appear that even in countries where navies supercede armies as national symbols, such as Great Britain, the same relative institutional attitudes apply.

Interestingly, an important manifestation of this fact is the generic type of uniform worn by armies and navies. Even in this day of homogenised land warfare, army uniforms are nearly always unique, be it in design, colour or insignia, from country to country; this can be seen particularly in ceremonial garb. The only significant exceptions are the armies of the Commonwealth, and even in them differentiation on national lines has been steadily taking place over the last quarter century. The naval uniform, on the other hand, is universal, with only minor differences in insignia from one country to the next, and virtually no difference to speak of in colour and design. There is, however, another important difference between army and naval uniforms. Army uniforms have always been designed with the intention of distinguishing the wearer from the civilian population around him, and are therefore non-adaptable to civilian use. Naval uniforms, by contrast, are little more than black suits with rank tapes and the crested buttons. If a military institution expresses itself in its uniform, the

elemental generic differences between army and naval uniforms explain the issue with greater clarity than a thousand words.

The second qualification has to do with the Argentine Navy itself, and is therefore the more important. It is important to point out that a predisposition towards tolerance *vis-à-vis* alien ideas and values does *not* imply a non-partisan attitude towards national problems. The Argentine Navy's deep and longstanding hostility towards Peronism precludes such a conclusion. Indeed, a knowledge of the outside world may well muddy domestic waters: the Argentine Navy's willingness to see Peronism as nothing more, and nothing less, than the Argentine version of fascism can be seen in this light. As Florit puts it, "*la cortesía naval*" and cosmopolitanism "no favorece en el marino el *establecimiento de una perspectiva nacional para la reflexión de los problemas nacionales.*"[20] It must also be pointed out that the naval notion of tolerance does not extend to its perceived domestic enemies. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the supporters of economic liberalism in Argentina have also been the more willing to suspend democratic practice and lapse into authoritarian rule in order to promote their solutions to Argentina's problems. The *gorila liberal* is not a contradiction in terms; a naval officer who admires the "Korean miracle" and would like to see Argentina develop in a like manner will probably have few qualms about the brutal repression of "subversives" who he sees as preventing his country's stability and progress.

Along with these explanations, the influence of foreign navies, and particularly the Royal Navy of Great Britain, on the Argentine Navy has often been suggested as a factor of fundamental importance in the

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20 Florit, op.cit., p.43. Italics in the original.

development of the naval ideological perspective important in Argentina. Florit argues that the demonstration effect of other navies on the Argentine naval institution is tremendous, and "junto con las modalidades técnicas de combate, suelen insinuarse las modalidades de juzgamiento político y de operatividad política."[21] However, as we have attempted to demonstrate conclusively in Chapter Twelve, the Royal Navy was never the most important external influence on the Argentine Navy. While the impact of the external world in general on the ideological perspective of Argentina's naval institution cannot be doubted, the mechanism of influence is far more subtle than the instrumental *rôle* of friendly foreign navies suggested by scholars such as Lieuwen and Florit.

The identification of international trade with the interests of the naval institution is also a very important factor in the development of an ideological perception. The Navy sees the promotion and protection of Argentina's foreign trade as one of its most significant institutional tasks. The protection of the merchant fleet is, after all, one of the classic naval tasks. This operational assignment dovetails quite neatly into the official naval ideology of "free markets and free trade". This factor also explains why the Argentine Navy has always perceived an identity of interest with Argentina's agro-producing and exporting sector, and why the naval institution has generally looked upon any project of state-sponsored industrialisation and tariff protection, be it Peronist or Radical, with a great deal of suspicion.

Also important in influencing the ideological convictions of naval officers and in determining the political project of the naval institution is what Imaz calls the "naval value system". As he puts it:

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21 ibid.

> The practice of those gentlemanly standards, the collective acceptance of a strict code of honor, and the enduring respect for good form lead Navy men to feel personally identified with the highest social stratum, because only the values of this stratum are identifiable with the Navy value system.[22]

This naval self-identification with the upper classes is not simply the result of a shared value system, however. It is also, to an extent, the result of political expediency. As Imaz points out, "[t]he Argentine Navy was deeply involved in the overthrow of the Perón regime in 1955; the upper class was interested in seeing Perón overthrown, although not necessarily for the same reasons."[23] Thus, there was a manifold increase in the contacts between the naval conspirators and the upper class leadership shortly before and after the *coup* of 1955. This led to the identification of the Navy's political project with the interests of the upper classes, and led "many senior officers and Navy ministers ... to assume representation of a social stratum which they did not even know."[24] While this line of reasoning is substantially correct, it must also be remembered that the anti-Peronist attitude of the Argentine Navy can be traced right back to the rise of Perón in the GOU *coup* of 1943. In any case, the firmly liberal ideological position espoused and supported by the naval institution since the Revolución Libertadora has led to its political project being identified with the interests of the upper classes. This has historically been a factor of fundamental importance in Argentine politics.

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22 Imaz, op.cit., p.79.

23 ibid., p.89, n.6.

24 ibid., p.79.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Other Drumbeats: The Navy, the Church and Freemasonry

In the scholarly study of a military institution particular attention must perforce be paid to those factors and issues that have the potential of either reinforcing or diminishing institutional cohesion. From the perspective of our study of the Argentine Navy, the question of religious affiliation has an obvious importance for three distinct reasons. The most important reason for an analysis of the position of religion within Argentina's naval institution flows from our study of ideology in the last chapter. The extent to which Catholic values and principles clash with the dominant liberal ethos within the naval institution is surely important. The official position of Roman Catholicism in the Argentine political system presents us with another reason for focusing our attention on religious affiliation within the Navy. In a country in which Roman Catholicism is the established religion and the president and vice-president are constitutionally required to be practicing Catholics, there is obvious need to understand the *rôle* of religion in the military institutions. A final reason why religious affiliation within the Navy deserves serious study is in the context of extra-institutional influences on naval personnel. It was pointed out to me in an interview that extra-institutional allegiances can seriously undermine the institutional chain of command, and it is for this reason that a strong sense of affiliation and loyalty to any institution other than the Navy itself is officially frowned upon. Admiral Milia remarked that if two naval personnel are seen to behave or interact in a manner not warranted by the institutional chain of command (excessive familiarity between a lieutenant and a captain, for example), it is a sure sign that they are both affiliated to a non-naval

institution and are subject to its chain of command.[1] The first two reasons explain why we must take a closer look at the position of Roman Catholicism within the Argentine Navy, while the last reason justifies a study of the influence of Freemasonry within Argentina's naval institution.

The Anchor and the Crucifix

The question of just how Catholic the Argentine Navy really is is not an easy one to answer. No literature exists on this topic, either of a scholarly or of a popular nature. None of the institutional publications of the Argentine Navy ever refer to the religious question except in the most cursory and tangential manner. Thus, the evidence that one has been able to gather on this topic is almost entirely based on interviews with naval personnel. Unfortunately, this evidence is itself contradictory, indicating thereby that no simple answer exists regarding the extent and nature of religiousity within the naval institution. On the one hand, there is a widespread assumption within the Navy that most of the personnel are Catholic, but this assumption seems to derive from the established position of Roman Catholicism within Argentina rather than any real analysis. If data does exist on the religious affiliation of naval personnel it is certainly not in the public domain, or even accessible for scholarly research. The position asserted by Padre Sosa, the Capellan Mayor (Chaplain Major) of the Navy, unsurprisingly is that most of his flock are "believers". In a fascinating interview he argued that religion is an integral part of the lives of most naval personnel and is woven into the fabric of institutional ceremonial occasions. He further pointed to the part played by naval chaplains under his command during the South Atlantic conflict, who stayed with the troops, particularly the Marines,

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1 One of my many unrecorded conversations with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Fernando Milia, July-September 1990, Buenos Aires.

till the fall of the islands to the British.[2] Other evidence exists of innate Catholicism within the naval institution. All cabins on board ship have small crucifixes attached to the wall. The Navy as an institution venerates the Virgin Mary in the form of Stella Maris, and chapels exist on all naval bases, in all naval buildings, and on board all naval vessels.

There is, however, another side to this coin. A large number of naval officers insisted that the Navy was an extremely tolerant institution as far as religious affiliation was concerned, and Catholicism was not forced on anyone. Admiral Milia, for instance, pointed out that while one had to be Catholic in order to become a general in the Army, and indeed to even join the Air Force as an officer, non-Catholics had become admirals. There is, for instance, a strictly enforced code of taboo topics in the officers' boardroom: any discussion of religion, money or women is considered improper. Thus, it is not easy to ascertain precisely how strong the hold of Catholicism is on the naval institution. In interviews an entire spectrum of views appeared. On one end of this spectrum, Captain Molinari argued that most naval officers were deeply religious Catholics, as he himself was.[3] At any rate there was no doubt in his mind about the desirability of institutionalised Catholicism. At the other end of the spectrum, Captain Durrieu asserted that he himself was agnostic, if not atheistic, and that he had absolutely no doubt that most naval officers were Catholic only in name and culture.[4] Most interviewees fell between these two extremes: most appeared somewhat embarrassed talking about their religious affiliation and appeared to be nominal Catholics, just like the overwhelming majority of their compatriots.

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2 Interview with Capitán de Navío Padre Sosa, 18 September 1987, Vicariato Castrense, Buenos Aires.

3 Interview with Capitán de Navío (R.E.) Aldo Molinari, 7 September 1990, at his office in Buenos Aires.

4 Interview with Capitán de Navío (R.E.) Mario Andrés Durrieu, 6 September 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

Two conclusions appear to emerge from this study, one more definite than the other. It is clear that the Navy is considerably less religious than the other two Armed Forces. Compared with the Catholic Nationalism of the Air Force, in particular, the Navy's brand of Catholicism appears distinctly mild. Certainly, the Navy has official institutional masses from time to time, but the general impression is that naval chaplains have far less autonomy than their counterparts in the Army and Air Force. One good external evidence that this is indeed the case is the holding of military rank and the wearing of military insignia by naval chaplains alone. Padre Sosa, for instance, is a Capitán de Navío, and he wears the rank tapes of a full naval captain on this cassock sleeves.

The other conclusion is perforce more tentative. It would appear that there has been a significant change in naval attitudes over the last six decades. In the 1920s and 1930s, naval officers appear to have been considerably more secular, and even somewhat anti-clerical, than they are today. It is not easy to determine if this is indeed the case, and what reasons can be attributed to this shift in institutional attitudes. Naval religiousity may well be a result of the Revolución Libertadora, in which the Navy found itself in an alliance with the Church against the Peronist regime. Certainly, the naval hierarchy went out of its way to emphasise that the institution was not anti-clerical in the aftermath of the successful *coup*. The repeated Peronist taunts of atheism and Masonism clearly had an impact on the Navy. In an address to new naval aviators on 7 December 1955, Navy Minister Admiral Teodoro Hartung took the bull by the horns and discussed the "religious question" in his entirety. His words on this subject deserve to be quoted in full:

> Con respecto a la cuestión religiosa, circulan graves rumores contra nuestros aviadores navales y contra nuestros marinos. Nos llaman masones y ateos. Se trata,

sin duda, de una campaña sistemática, consistente en hacer circular en forma insidiosa tales versiones, con el propósito avieso de engañar a los incautos y obtener adeptos entre los débiles de espíritu.

Nada más contrario a la verdad. Por tradición y por convicción las tripulaciones de nuestras unidades aéreas, de mar y tierra, son profundamente religiosas. La misma condición de aviador y marino, que luchan a diario contra los elementos, y que encomiendan su alma a Dios en los momentos de peligro, los impulsa hacia un verdadero sentimiento religioso, que es profundo, sin llegar poe ello al fanatismo.

La Marina de Guerra mantiene en sus cuadros el clero castrense, integrado por sacerdotes de culto católico apostólico romano, cumpliendo, no sólo con el principio constitucional que manda sostener esta verdadera religión, sino con un permanente estado espiritual. Prueba de ello, es que mañana mismo se producirá la procesión de la Virgen, y la Marina, respetuosa de sus deberes cristianos, concurrirá como siempre a las ceremonias que se realicen con tal motivo. Es que la profunda fe en Dios, Nuestro Señor, nos acompaña en toda hora y en cada momento.

The Anchor and the Dividers

To move directly from a discussion of Roman Catholicism in the Argentine Navy to an analysis of Freemasonry may seem objectionable to some. The reason for objection might well be that this juxtapositioning of topics implicitly equates the Roman Catholic Church and Freemasonry as being extra-institutional influences of equal weight. However, the intention here is neither to project a spurious equation between these two institutions nor to present them as diametrically-opposed and mutually-exclusive social groups. On the contrary, this juxtaposition is directly based on the responses of the interviewees themselves. An "innocent" question on the links between the Navy and the Church during the Revolución Libertadora in 1955, based on the shared anti-Peronism of the two institutions, was invariably treated by naval interviewees as an accusation of institutional anti-clericalism. The normal response to this question

therefore tended to be a tangential explanation that the Navy was not a Masonic institution as alleged by the Peronists.[5] This is significant because the notion of *"la masonería dentro de la Armada"* is an important part of Argentine folklore. For instance, it is mentioned in a prominent anti-Masonic book that Argentine Masons received orders from London in 1955 to create in the Army *"corrientes de opinión similares a las que existen en la Marina"*, the clear implication being that the Navy was riddled with masonic influences.[6] As we have already noted in Chapter Five, the Peronists were pastmasters at alleging masonic influences within the Navy: as Perón himself alleged after his downfall, "[c]uando el peronismo en 1955 evitó al país la destrucción de una lucha fratrícida, lo hizo confiando en que el Ejército defendería patrióticamente la nacionalidad, pero a poco andar sucedió todo lo contrario: la Marina al servicio de la Gran Bretaña y la Masonería infiltrada en el Ejército, con similar designio, consumaron la más inícua traición a la Patria."[7] Small wonder then that Navy men are acutely conscious of this charge, and respond with venom when they perceive that they are being accused of being Freemasons. Admiral Arguindeguy, for instance, asserts:

> El arma que ha sido calificada de "masónica" con mayor frecuencia ha sido la Armada. Perón se refirió pública y frecuentemente, especialmente luego del movimiento en su contra de septeimbre de 1955, a los "masones de la Marina". Desde mi ingreso en el año 1943, hasta mi egreso de sus cuadros en actividad a principios de 1975, nunca tuve noticia ni simple referencia de un grupo masón en ella...
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> No he sido ni soy masón, así que no oculto una situación exotérica. La condición de masón ha sido siempre acordada en la Argentina, y por supuesto dentro de sus fuerzas

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5 Two of the most vociferous interviewees in this context were Admirals Rojas and Sanchez Sañudo. Interview with Almirante (R.E.) Issac Francisco Rojas, 25 August 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires. Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Carlos A. Sanchez Sañudo, 10 September 1987, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

6 Aníbal A. Röttjer, La Masonería en la Argentina y en el mundo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nuevo Orden, 1983), p.383.

7 Juan Domingo Perón, Tres Revoluciones Militares (Buenos Aires: Escorpión Ediciones, 1963), pp.185-186.

> armadas, como condición denigratoria, extranjerizante y sin bases reales de justificación.[8]

A proper study of Freemasonry is well nigh impossible, given the amount of myth-making that goes into this "unreal twilit world of legend, fancy, nightmare, and paranoia"[9] from both the adherents and detractors of this secret society. As Roberts quite properly remarks, this is "an outstanding example of a view of politics shaped by nonsense..."[10] If in the case of the Church few books exist detailing its relationship with the Navy, in the case of Freemasonry and the latter institution there is a surfeit of literature, all of it releasing heat rather than shedding light. For this reason one again is left with no option but to rely on interviewees with naval personnel. In response to a direct question about the *rôle* of Freemasonry within the Navy, four types of answers were received. An overwhelming majority of those interviewed asserted that the Masonic presence and influence within the naval institution was non-existent or negligible, though it is noteworthy that this group was subdivided into those who regarded Masonic influence as a trivial issue and those who accorded it importance. The general form of response was "I am not a Mason so I can't be sure, of course, but in my twenty/thirty/forty years in the Navy I never came across a Mason myself." What is interesting in this context is that Army and Air Force officers questioned about Freemasonry within the Navy agreed that the Navy was free of Masonic influence even though they had no vested interest in maintaining the image of the naval institution.

Some naval officers, however, argued that while there *were* a few known Masons within the Navy, it was incorrect to say that the institution

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8 Pablo Eusebio Arguindeguy, 'El Perturbador Militar: Ensayo', typewritten manuscript, 1989, p.66.

9 J.M. Roberts, The Mythology of the Secret Societies (Frogmore: Paladin, 1974), p.31.

10 Roberts, op.cit., p.11.

as a whole was influenced by Freemasonry. This group again was subdivided into those who felt that there was no harm in a naval officer being a Mason as long as it did not interfere with his job performance and naval discipline, and those who felt that being a member of a secret society was impermissible and incompatible with being a naval officer. Lieutenant Mason Lugones asserted that although he was not a Mason himself, he had been approached many times by Masons within the Navy who had assumed from his surname that he must be one.[11] Admiral Milia came up with a fascinating historical example of a prominent Freemason within the Navy. This was the case of Fernando José Jaime Tagliaferro, a naval engineer who graduated in the fourth Promoción of the Ejecutivo Propulsión in 1916 from the naval academy and retired in 1943 with the rank of Ingeniero Subinspector (a defunct rank now equal to Capitán de Fragata or Commander). According to Admiral Milia, Tagliaferro had been for many years the highest ranking Freemason in South America, and when President Ramón Castillo, a known Mason, had been overthrown by the GOU *coup* in 1943, he had fled to a naval gunboat on which Tagliaferro was the engineering officer. Admiral Zaratiegui admitted that he had known two Masons in the Navy.[12] One of these was a commander who he had forced to resign-when he had learnt about his Masonic affiliations, the other was a retired admiral. What was interesting was that the retired admiral in question had already been interviewed by me, and in response to my query about Freemasonry he had argued that it was simply a harmless social club of which he, incidently, was *not* a member! The difficulties inherent in the research of a topic of this nature should be evident from the above example. The primary problem, of course, is that it is virtually impossible to research a clandestine

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11 Interview with Teniente de Navío (R.E.) Raúl Horacio Mason Lugones, 7 September 1990, Centro Naval, Buenos Aires.

12 Interview with Contraalmirante (R.E.) Horacio Zaratiegui, 14 September 1990, at his residence in Buenos Aires.

organisation except from the inside. As Roberts aptly points out about secret societies in general:

> [S]cholarly study of any institution usually begins and ends with its positive reality, with what it actually was. In the case of the secret societies, there are important obstacles to arriving at a correct view of this... [S]uch hard evidence as does exist about the political secret societies... is usually slight and scrappy. The point of a secret organization, after all, is that it is secret; it is not likely to keep a considerable body of records or to allow the profane to have access to them.[13]

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13 Roberts, op.cit., p.25.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TURF AND SURF: CONFLICT AND ACCOMODATION IN INTER-FORCE RELATIONS

Of all the differences between military and civilian institutions none is more apparent than the *uniform*. The uniform has a dual function: it simultaneously unites and divides. On the one hand, the uniform erases the individual personalities of the members of a corporate body by identifying them as an aggregation or unity. But the uniform also separates: at the level of the collectivity, it identifies the corporate body as a distinctive group in civil society by differentiating it from the other aggregations; at the level of the individual, it differentiates the member from the non-member. Thus, the military uniform not only identifies the soldier from the civilian, it also differentiates him from the sailor and the aviator.[1] In the context of military institutions, the understandable pride that a man in uniform has in the corporate body he belongs to, be it a basic unit such as a regiment, ship or squadron or a larger organisation such as an Arm[2] or a Force,[3] frequently gets translated into a barely-disguised contempt for all those military men who do not share his affiliation; at best, this simply implies a lack of affinity, but it can sometimes result in total distrust. An army *needs* an enemy; in

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1 There is a folkloric quality about the stereotypes that exist in all multi-Force military structures: the "flat-footed" infantry man, the "dashing" fighter pilot, the "brash" para commando, the "silent" submariner, the "aloof" tank commander, the "bumbling" logistics officer. Certainly, the Argentine Armed Forces do not lack in stereotypes of the various Armas that together comprise the military institutions.

2 The term "Arm" is used essentially in the context of the Army, and it implies organisation on specialist-functional lines. The infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineers are arms. In navies, despite specialisations such as submarines, aviation and surface ships, distinctions tend to be less pronounced; in the air force, the basic division is between air crew and ground crew, although amongst air crew the pilots are seen as the elite, with combat pilots at the top of the heap.

3 That is, the Army, Navy and Air Force. Throughout this thesis I use the term "Force" (short for "Armed Force") rather than "Service" (short for "Defence Service"), the latter being the common usage in the English language to denote a military institution. This is for a good reason: there is no equivalent term for "Defence Service" in Spanish, the normal designation for a military institution being "fuerza armada". Since "inter-service relations" translates into Spanish as "relaciones interfuerzas", I have opted to use "inter-force relations" to describe this relationship.

peacetime, a different uniform is worn not by the foreigner but by the compatriot who, because of his distinct corporate membership, is scarcely a comrade at all. There is something quite primordial about this type of group loyalty.

It is therefore important to remember that inter-Force rivalries, a common feature in multi-Force military structures around the world, represent more than just the struggle between military institutions to advance their respective interests. Concatenated with institutional competition is the primordial notion of collective superiority that we have just discussed, which makes any sort of inter-Force competition, be it symbolic or substantial, totally unlike institutional conflict in the non-military context. In situations of military intervention into political life, inter-Force conflict is an important equation in the power matrix simply because the competition is for the resources and prerogatives of the state itself.

In this chapter we will attempt to study the relationship of the Argentine Navy with the other Armed Forces in four different contexts: (1) non-conflictual accomodation, (2) conflictual acquiescence, (3) accomodative competition and (4) conflictual competition. A case-study will be presented to illustrate each of these power situations. The four case-studies of inter-Force relations that we will attempt to analyse are (1) the naval management of the atomic energy programme through the appointment of an admiral as president of the Comisión Nacional de Energia Atomica (CNEA); (2) the naval attempt to monopolise the formulation of national policy towards the southern regions of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, the South Atlantic islands and Antarctica; (3) the annual inter-Force competition for the largest possible share of the budgetary

allocation for defence purposes; and (4) the long-standing disagreement between the Navy and Air Force over the organisation of military aviation which become even more bitter after the South Atlantic War when the Air Force claimed credit for the Argentine air attacks in a flurry of self-advertisement that totally neglected the Aviación Naval.

Non-Conflictual Accomodation: Running the Nuclear Programme[4]

We have seen in Part One of this thesis that the political power of the naval institution in Argentina has fluctuated over time, the Navy's relationship with the dominant political group within the Army being one of the critical equations in the power matrix. It is to be noted, however, that certain rules of the game *vis-à-vis* power-sharing between the military institutions were established in Argentina, and these rules were recognised and respected by all three Armed Forces despite the Army advantage that arises out of the asymmetry in the possession of power. For instance, even during periods in which the Navy was politically impotent, such as the Onganía years (1966-1970), the naval institution enjoyed "jurisdictional hegemony" over certain policy issues and state institutions.

One such activity is the management of Argentina's atomic energy programme, which has traditionally been in naval hands. This naval monopoly over the presidency of the National Atomic Energy Commission

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4 This case study is based upon three sources. The first is an interview with Vicealmirante (R) Dr. Carlos A. Castro Madero, who was the president of the National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) from 1976 to 1983, during the period of the Proceso de Reorganisación Nacional. The interview was held at his office in Buenos Aires on 7 September 1987. The second source is also an interview, this time with Contraalmirante (R) Oscar A. Quihillalt, who is widely regarded as the <u>real</u> father of Argentina's atomic energy programme. This interview was held at Almirante Quihillalt's office in Buenos Aires on 23 July 1990. The final source is a penetrating comparative study of the scientific/technological establishments in Brazil and Argentina in Emanuel Adler, <u>The Power of Ideology: The Quest for Technological Autonomy in Argentina and Brazil</u> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

(CNEA) provides an interesting insight into the division of power and responsibilities within the three military institutions.

Argentina's atomic energy programme was started by the Peronist government in 1949 under the supervision of an expatriate Austrian physicist (and fugitive Nazi) by the name of Ronald Richter. A few months later, on 31 May 1950 the National Atomic Energy Commission was established with Perón as the president. By 1952, however, it was becoming apparent that, despite the vast sums of money being expended on it, Richter's programme was leading nowhere. From among Perón's inner circle of close friends and advisers, it was his naval aide and personal pilot, naval Captain Pedro E. Iraolagoitia, who first became aware of the defunct nature of Richter's research programme. On the naval officer's urging, Perón agreed to appoint a government investigating committee to investigate what was going on at Richter's research establishment, and the committee soon corroborated Iraologoitía's initial report. Perón then decided to appoint Iraolagoitía as the secretary of the CNEA, replacing Colonel Emérito P. González,[5] while retaining the presidency of the body himself. Admiral Castro Madero is therefore not exaggerating when he remarks that "the relationship between the Navy and nuclear power [in Argentina] is ... circumstantial."[6]

When the Revolución Libertadora overthrew the Peronist government in 1955,[7] Iraolagoitía, by now an admiral, was one of the many Peronist officials who lost his job. He was replaced by his classmate, Captain

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5 Both Coronel Emérito P. González and Capitán de Navío Pedro E. Iraolagoitía were officers of the Army and Naval Aviation respectively. According to Contraalmirante Fernando A. Milia, González and Iraolagoitía "eran oficiales ... sin ningún conocimiento del tema."

6 Interview with Almirante Castro Madero, ibid.

7 For an analysis of the role of the Navy in this Revolution, see Chapter Five.

Oscar A. Quihillalt,[8] who at that time was the Director of one of Latin America's most sophisticated and advanced physics-institutes,[9] the J.A. Barseiro Institute at Bariloche. As Admiral Castro Madero sees it, "because the Atomic Energy Commission was directed by one Navy man, he was replaced by another Navy man."[10] Given the political importance and prominence of the Navy both during and immediately after the Revolución Libertadora, the logic of inter-force politics in 1955 clearly dictated that the "circumstantial" relationship between the Navy and the atomic energy programme be converted into something of a more permanent and durable nature.

Under the Peronist government, the President of the Republic had also been the president of the CNEA, but this organisational structure was altered when the military government appointed Quihillalt as the president, not the secretary, of the research body. When a new civilian administration was inaugurated in 1958 with Dr. Frondizi as the President of the Republic, it replaced Quihillalt by *another* naval officer, Admiral Helio López.[11] Admiral Castro Madero remarks that this change was not "due to the fact that the Navy was specially interested in ... nuclear power, but ... it is a polite way with the military forces to replace one admiral by another."[12]

Admiral Helio López remained president for only a year and a half before President Frondizi invited Quihillalt, now an Admiral, to take over

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8 Capitán de Navío Ingeniero Oscar A. Quihillalt was a Mechanical Engineer specialising in Gunnery, who had left the Escuela Naval Militar as an officer of the "general line", but had then graduated to the "Cuerpo de Ingenieros Especialistas". Information communicated by Contraalmirante Fernando A. Milia.

9 Thus regarded by Adler, op.cit., p. 286.

10 Interview with Almirante Castro Madero, op. cit.

11 Contraalmirante Ingeniero Helio López was, like Quihillalt, a Mechanical Engineer, though he specialised in Optics. Information from Almirante Milia.

12 Interview with Almirante Castro Madero, op. cit.

the presidency of the Atomic Energy Commission for a second time. Quihillalt remained in charge through two civilian[13] and three military[14] regimes. In his two tenures as CNEA president, from 1955-1959 and 1960-1973, encompassing a total of eighteen years, Quihillalt

> saw eight Argentine presidents come and go. Under his guidance the CNEA and the atomic program grew into the most successful institution and national program Argentina ever had...[15]

That, however, did not prevent his removal from the presidentship of the CNEA when the Peronists returned to power in 1973. Quihillalt was replaced by Admiral Pedro Iraolagoitía, Perón's old friend and adviser on nuclear matters. When the Peronist government was overthrown in 1976, history repeated itself, as it usually does in Argentina, and Iraolagoitía was removed from the top of the CNEA for a second time. Admiral Dr. Carlos Castro Madero[16] was appointed as the new president of the CNEA. He has this to say about the reasons for his appointment:

> ... the division of power among the three military forces [made it advisable] that a new Navy man should be put in front of the Atomic Energy Commission. And that was [why] ... I was chosen. I was chosen because I was a Navy man, I was a Ph.D. in Physics, I [had been] working before in the atomic energy commission - in fact, I collected most of the conditions to be nominated for that post.[17]

Admiral Castro Madero stayed at the helm of the Atomic Energy Commission until 1983, when the civilian government of President Raúl Alfonsín took office amidst widespread public dissatifaction with the armed

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13 Dr. José María Guido (1962-1963) and Dr. Arturo Illía (1963-1966).

14 General Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970), General Roberto Marcelo Levingston (1970-1971) and General Alejandro Augustín Lanusse (1971-1973).

15 Adler, op. cit., p. 291.

16 Contraalmirante (later Vicealmirante) Dr. Carlos Castro Madero, though a "general line" officer, has a couple of Ph.Ds in Physics, one from the Balseiro Institute of the University of Cuyo, another from the U.S.A. According to Almirante Milia, "Castro Madero fue el primer Presidente de la CNEA con una formación técnico-científica."

17 Interview with Almirante Castro Madero, op. cit.

forces. Alfonsín decided to remove military officers from all non-military posts, and announced that the Navy's monopoly over the presidency of the CNEA would be ended. Admiral Castro Madero was replaced, as an interim measure, by Dr. Renato Rodicella, a physicist in charge of the Departamento de Proyectos Internacionales, in December 1983. Dr. Alberto R. Constantini, who was appointed as the first civilian to head the CNEA in February 1984, was a civil engineer with no experience in nuclear energy, but his successor, Dr. Emma Pérez Ferreyra, is a product of the CNEA who was directing Argentina's particle acceleration project when she took over in May 1987.[18] It is significant to note that these changes have had little effect upon the work going on in the programme, however. Castro Madero points out that although "there were some military [personnel who] ... worked in the groups of the Atomic Energy Commission, ... all the staff was predominantly civilian, including during the [periods of] military governments."[19] This would indicate that the naval stewardship of the atomic energy programme was not a structured institutional link, but rather the product of a power-sharing arrangement with the other two military institutions in which the Navy provided the occupant of the top post. Admiral Castro Madero seems to be hinting as much when he remarks:

> ... the passage of all the admirals as president of the Atomic Energy Commission was a matter of prestige [for] ... the Navy but ... they did not fulfil any strategic [requirements] ... for the Navy ... There were no developments for the Navy, submarines for instance...[20]

If it was merely a matter of prestige, with very limited career or resource implications for the Navy as an institution, why didn't the Army covet the stewardship of the country's atomic energy programme, and attempt to take it over? Admiral Castro Madero feels that the Army, taking this

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18 Information received from Almirante Milia.

19 Interview with Almirante Castro Madero, op. cit.

20 ibid.

possibility into consideration, did send a number of its officers to advanced physics courses abroad, but maintains that there had always been an implicit understanding between the three armed forces about their respective jurisdictions *vis-à-vis* projects for economic development and scientific/technological research:

> ... the Army has the Fabricaciones Militares, particularly devoted to the development of iron and steel. The airmen ... chose aluminium, because in a way aluminium is related with [aviation] ... and they say, well OK, the Navy can take the Atomic Energy Commission. It was ... not clearly defined ... [it was] implicitly defined ... it was a majority decision [among the three forces] that a man from the Navy [should] exercise the ... [presidency] of the Atomic Energy Commission.[21]

But was the Navy better equipped than the other two forces to manage atomic research activities in Argentina? Admiral Castro Madero points out that

> The Navy, in general, [is] ... more inclined ... to[wards] the scientific disciplines ...Several naval officers ... follow[ed] courses in US universities, or France, or England, getting high diplomas ... much more than the other two forces.[22]

Despite the above, however, he remains of the opinion that the only reason for the three and a half decades of uninterrupted naval control of nuclear research in Argentina was that "it was decided from the very beginning that [the president of] the atomic energy commission [would be] an admiral, and then there was no reason why that decision should be changed."[23] Thus, the "non-conflictual accomodation" dynamic in inter-Force relations implies that mutual spheres of influence, control and responsibility are respected, particularly when a "prestigious" *rôle* is at stake. As far as this

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21 ibid.

22 ibid.

23 ibid.

particular piece of turf was concerned, it required nothing less than Argentina's defeat in the South Atlantic Conflict with Britain in 1982 to wrest the presidency of the CNEA out of naval hands.

Conflictive Acquiescence: Formulating "Atlantartida" Policy

If the naval stewardship of Argentina's atomic energy programme had only symbolic value for the institution, the same cannot be said about the interest that the Argentine Navy has always displayed in the *regiones australes*. Here there are very real naval interests at stake. The Navy sees itself as the pioneering institution that opened the ice-bound southern seas and settled the southern regions. To a large extent this institutional perception is not inaccurate. Destefani asserts that "tenemos pruebas históricas que nos permiten suponer, que loberos de nuestro pabellón visitaban la Antártida antes de 1819."[24] Certainly, by the turn of the century a number of Argentine naval officers, amongst whom the names of Captain Luis Piedra Buena[25] and Alfarez José María Sobral[26] stand out, had ventured into the unexplored southern regions. Some of the earliest vessels to reach the Antarctic coastline were of the Argentine Navy, and till this day Argentina's Antarctic programme is heavily dependent upon the Navy.[27] Apart from its *rôle* in Antarctic exploration, the Argentine Navy also considers itself as the pioneer in Patagonia, and has therefore tried to portray itself as a major participant in the so-called "Conquisto del Desierto", the military campaign led by General Julio

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24 Laurio H. Destefani, Manual de Historia Naval Argentina (Buenos Aires: Tall. Gráf. de la DIAB, 1980), p. 181.

25 See Raúl A. Entraigas, Piedra Buena: Caballero del Mar (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estudios Históricos Navales, 1966) and Hebe Boyer, Un marino inmortal: La prodigiosa aventura de Luis Piedra Buena (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 1968).

26 See Laurio H. Destefani, El alfarez Sobral y la soberania argentina en la Antártida (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1979)

27 See Enrique Jorge Pierrou, La Armada Argentina en la Antártida, 1939-1959: sus campañas en buques y bases (Buenos Aires, Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 1981)

Roca that suppressed the Patagonian native peoples and opened the region for colonisation at the turn of the century.[28] The naval historian Gonzalez Lonzieme sees the Conquest of the Desert as "un esbozo de la historia del esfuerzo que los hombres de la Armada Argentina hicieron en íntima correspondencia con sus camaradas del Ejército, para afianzar el progreso de la Nación."[29] In this general context, it is particularly interesting and relevant to note that the governor of Tierra del Fuego has traditionally been a naval officer. As Admiral Fraga remarks, "Hay un cierto sentimiento que llegando así a las islas del sur, así a la Tierra del Fuego, la presencia de la Armada ha sido la más importante."[30]

As is well known, under the leadership of Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya the Navy played a crucial *rôle* in the Argentine initiative to reoccupy the disputed Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas in April 1982.[31] In the light of what has been discussed above, it would be proper to assert that this naval initiative was a function of the special interest that the Argentine Navy has *always* displayed in the South Atlantic, the disputed insular territories and Antarctica. As Dr. Costa Méndez, who was the Argentine Foreign Minister during the South Atlantic Conflict, pointed out, although "the diplomatic process was in the hands of the Foreign Ministry... [which] had the responsibility of the negotiations with Britain and the presentations before the United Nations",[32] it was the Navy that played a very important *rôle* in the decision-making process:

> The Argentine Navy gave the South Atlantic a great priority. The Argentine Navy thought that the defence of the South Atlantic *vis-à-vis* the Royal Navy was a very

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28 See Enrique Conzalez Lonzieme, La Armada en la Conquista del Desierto, second edition (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1977).

29 Enrique Gonzalez Lonzieme, La Armada en el Conquista del Desierto, second edition (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1977), p.17.

30 Interview with Contraalmirante (R) Jorge Fraga, 24 August 1987, Buenos Aires.

31 The Argentine Navy's rôle in the South Atlantic War is discussed in Chapter Eleven.

32 Interview with Dr. Nicanor Costa Méndez, 18 September 1987, Buenos Aires.

> important priority, for the Navy and for the country. So, the Navy accordingly always pushed the government to give the Malvinas Question priority and to have, just in case, an alternative plan if things really went wrong... [A]lso, the Navy [was] the force that ... underscored the importance of the Malvinas problem on the Beagle problem and on the Antarctic problem.[33]

Admiral Carlos Alvarez, who commanded the Navy in the mid-1970s, remarks that "[l]as relaciones de la Armada con el Ministerio de [Relaciones Exteriores] han sido siempre muy estrechas," particularly over the issue of the disputed insular territories in the South Atlantic.[34] Admiral Carlos Coda, who was Admiral Alvarez's predecessor as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, estimates that the Navy's view on South Atlantic and Antarctic matters "[n]o diría dominante pero si muy influente."[35] Thus, it would appear that while the Navy exercises a large influence over policy-formulation in this area, it by no means enjoys a monopoly in this regard.

Accomodative Competition: Sharing the Annual Budgetary Allocation

Conflicts tend to arise whenever a group of individuals or a number of institutions have to share an income amongst themselves. This problem tends to be particularly acute when a single defence budget has to be divided amongst the military institutions that constitute a country's military establishment. Complications arise for ā number of reasons. At one level it cannot be denied that each Armed Force has an equal claim to the purse for the straightforward reason that their *raison d'être* is identical: national security. However, the defence budget cannot be shared out equally simply because military institutions differ tremendously in size. Distributing the budgetary allocation in proportion to the relative

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33 ibid.

34 Written statement from Almirante (RE) Carlos Alvarez, 1 October 1990.

35 Written statement from Almirante (RE) Carlos G.N. Coda, 2 October 1990.

numerical strengths of the institutions is a solution that cannot work out either, since different categories of military hardware vary enormously in expense; a single ship costs far more than a regiment-worth of rifles, for instance. This lack of any fixed criterion or index for budgetary allocation results in a conflictual situation annually when each military institution attempts to win the maximum share of the defence budget for itself. It should come as no surprise that this situation exists in Argentina as well. As a matter of fact, what actually *is* surprising is that the *problema de asignación presupuestaria*, potentially a major source of inter-Force conflict, has in reality always been kept under reasonable control in Argentina. Why has the question of distributing the military purse amongst the three Armed Forces never become a serious problem in Argentina? Why has this issue, so very critical to the life of an institution, never precipitated major conflict, even at times when the Armed Forces have been in government? The answer, it would appear, lies in Admiral Rojas' short response to my query in this context: "no hubieron asignaciones desproporcionadas."[36]

Tables Five and Six present two series of data on the annual budgetary allocation to the Armed Forces. Series A contains data from 1880 to 1935, when the defence budget was shared annually by the Army and the Navy, while Series B covers the period 1945-1976, when the Air Force had entered the picture as a separate *fuerza armada*. Neither data series is complete; the data that is presented in the two tables has been taken from official publications but no information is available for certain years. However, Series A and B give us enough information to test the validity of Admiral Rojas' assertion.

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36 Written statement from Almirante (RE) Isaac Francisco Rojas, 29 September 1990.

TABLE FIVE: ANNUAL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO THE ARMED FORCES IN ARGENTINA: 1880-1935 (Series A)

Year(s)	Army (in current pesos argentinos)	Navy	Percentage Army:Navy
1880	4,437,963.00	640,782.00	87:13
1882	9,843,516.46	3,545,009.86	73:27
1883	5,701,827.64	2,384,453.82	71:29
1884	6,150,924.72	2,549,537.49	71:29
1885	7,435,402.44	3,513,870.40	68:32
1887	8,121,879.68	3,197,307.00	72:28
1891	9,013,195.36	2,901,080.64	76:24
1892	11,040,586.60	5,734,824.12	66:34
1893	13,495,200.00	6,751,050.75	67:33
1894	15,729,149.56	8,210,205.16	66:34
1896	18,050,009.92	12,180,667.04	60:40
1898	19,431,656.00	11,827,879.00	62:38
1899	16,904,852.00	13,508,390.72	56:44
1900	13,745,028.00	11,294,160.16	55:45
1901	12,984,441.20	9,529,112.16	58:42
1902	18,001,580.76	11,044,746.00	62:38
1903	15,033,877.08	9,206,146.40	62:38
1904	16,532,522.36	9,822,660.00	63:37
1905	16,438,626.36	9,734,188.00	63:37
1906	17,035,723.61	12,693,256.00	57:43
1907	18,493,097.80	14,517,164.00	56:44
1909	22,579,034.04	16,473,540.00	58:42
1910	22,909,952.89	17,520,164.00	57:43
1911	25,196,631.96	19,608,758.18	56:44
1912	29,123,262.20	28,227,400.40	51:49
1913	29,840,716.74	26,083,313.81	53:47

ANNUAL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO THE ARMED FORCES IN ARGENTINA

Year(s)	Army (in current pesos argentinos)	Navy	Percentage Army:Navy
1914	30,987,199.23	29,533,955.64	51:49
1915	28,334,556.27	23,985,250.18	54:46
1917	28,522,126.37	24,376,287.27	54:46
1918	29,119,337.77	22,779,675.98	56:44
1920	44,145,357.56	36,459,117.45	55:45
1923-26	58,213,781.31	41,351,017.28	58:42
1927-28	61,959,053.31	43,882,062.75	59:41
1929	67,827,321.31	46,823,365.15	59:41
1932	4,000,000.00	1,097,000.00	78:22
1934	72,414,408.00	49,721,874.00	59:41
1935	75,808,915.00	51,581,644.00	60:40

Sources: 1880: *Ley de Presupuesto General de la NaciÂn Argentina para el Ejercicio de 1880* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de "El Nacional", 1879); 1882-1935: *Ley de Presupuesto General de la Republica Argentina* (Buenos Aires: various publishers)

TABLE SIX: ANNUAL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO THE ARMED FORCES IN ARGENTINA: 1945-1976 (Series B)

Year(s)	Army	Navy	Air Force	Percentage Army:Navy:Air Force
	(in current pesos argentinos)			
1945	284,841,688	125,514,484	-	69:31:00
1946	275,498,038	143,384,015	50,426,880	59:31:10
1947	333,746,557	226,465,247	152,274,370	47:32:21
1948	404,181,363	273,237,668	204,993,715	46:31:23
1951-52	638,830,326	384,427,569	246,249,449	50:30:20
1953-54	1,077,110,456	694,682,761	423,539,668	49:32:19
1955-56	1,271,100,981	867,358,319	482,873,104	48:33:19
1957-58	2,968,659,962	2,413,702,120	1,216,927,453	45:37:18
1958-59	6,565,244,632	5,145,499,100	3,389,904,384	43:34:23
1959-60	6,458,456,664	4,783,055,509	3,285,518,964	44:33:23
1961	8,822,841,036	7,122,909,783	3,974,908,750	44:36:20
1962	11,883,132,089	9,064,771,086	5,097,132,812	46:35:19
1963	16,878,349,752	12,098,885,034	8,433,920,000	45:32:23
1964	19,755,721,240	14,769,051,391	8,760,357,532	46:34:20
1965	20,913,256,362	16,211,883,920	9,480,178,885	45:35:20
1966(a)	27,503,828,805	18,126,357,212	11,874,333,360	48:32:20

ANNUAL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO THE ARMED FORCES IN ARGENTINA

Year(s)	Army	Navy	Air Force	Percentage Army:Navy:Air Force
	(in current pesos argentinos)			
1966(b)	32,734,799,928	23,275,141,812	15,888,447,887	46:32:22
1969	59,719,800	42,717,800	38,617,400	42:30:28
1971	828,434,400	589,344,500	510,109,200	43:31:26
1972	1,019,465,900	752,608,100	632,388,300	42:31:27
1973	1,613,232,700	1,281,538,700	915,262,700	42:34:24
1974	2,677,859,200	1,791,367,800	1,380,450,600	46:31:23
1975	4,238,043,900	2,698,061,600	1,984,923,500	48:30:22
1976	21,878,831,000	14,735,804,000	10,633,222,000	46:31:23

Sources: 1945-1956: Presupuesto General de la Nación; 1957-1962, 1964-1965: Presupuesto General de la Administración Nacional; 1963: Presupuesto General de la Nación: Distribución de los Creditos Vigentes, vol. I; 1966(a): Proyecto de Presupuesto General de la Administración Nacional; 1966(b): Presupuesto General de la Administratión Nacional: Distribución Analytica; 1969, 1971-1976: Presupuesto General de la Administración Nacional.

Notes: 1966 (a): Projected budgetary allocation of the Illía administration before the coup;
(b): Actual budgetary allocation by the Revolución Argentina regime of General Ongania.

From 1880 till 1935, it is easy to see that the division of resources between the Army and Navy was relatively stable between the Army:Navy ratio of 55:45 and 65:35. The fluctuation that exists from year-to-year is only to be expected; the ordering of a few warships in 1892, for instance, is bound to be reflected in the figures and push up the naval share relative to that of the Army. For the years 1945 to 1976, it can be seen in Table Six that the Air Force share of the budget come from the erstwhile Army portion of the pie; the naval share remains around the 35% mark, as it did in the earlier series.

It is therefore clear that the issue of budgetary allocations has been kept from becoming a disruptive inter-Force issue in Argentina by keeping the respective shares of the military institutions relatively stable.

Conflictual Competition: Controlling Military Aviation

Air forces and navies throughout the world are constantly attempting to clip the wings of each other. In Argentina, this problem has always been a particularly acute one. Indeed, the Navy and the Air Force have been sniping at each other ever since the latter was established in 1945. Admiral Rivero de Olazábal, who was the Chief of the Naval General Staff in this era, is absolutely certain on this point:

> Desde la creación de la Fuerza Aérea hubo roces con la misma por consequencia de la asignación de tareas específicas; y ellas tuvieron lugar en las conferencias habituales entre los jefes de los Estados Mayores respectivos... La Armada por su parte sostenía que los elementos debían ser asignados no por el medio en que se movían sino para completar la unidad de Comando en cualquier operación que tuvieran que realizar.[37]

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37 Written statement from Almirante (RE) Carlos Rivero de Olazábal, 9 October 1990.

When the Navy first mooted the idea of acquiring an aircraft carrier in 1956, this move was met with firm opposition from the Air Force. As Admiral Rojas, who was then the naval Commander-in-Chief and Provisional Vice-President, recalls:

> [L]a Fuerza Aérea se opuso a los deseos de la Armada de adquirir un portaviones, como también manifestó sus deseos de monopolizar toda la aviación militar. Pero se vió obligada a retroceder ante la firme actitud de la Armada apoyado por el Ejército. Y por supuesto frente al buen tino que demostró en la ocasión el poder político.[38]

Later on, the Air Force conceded that it was acceptable for the Navy to operate carrier-based aircraft while opposing land-based aerial operations by the Navy. Admiral Alvarez feels that during his tenure as naval commander the Air Force "[a]ceptaban la aviación embarcada y tenían ciertas reservas sobre los aviones de exploración y [anti-submarina] con base en tierra... Su presión más fuerte se dirigía a la capacidad de transporte de la Aviación Naval y en especial a la operación de los aviones Electra."[39] Admiral Coda's assessment neatly encapsulates the naval view: "Siempre fué el objetivo de la Fuerza Aérea, monopolizar, no toda, pero si al máximo, la aviación militar."[40]

Every attempt is made by the Navy to differentiate its aviators from those of the Air Force. A glossy brochure produced by the Navy for free public distribution asserts:

> ¿Y los hombre de la AVIACION NAVAL? Son marinos, como el resto del personal de la ARMADA, formados primero como tales y luego como aviadores, de manera tal que sus pensamientos, reacciones y sentimientos sean los de un marino que vuela y no la viceversa.
>
> Este es uno de los pilares en que se sustenta la

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38 Written statement from Almirante Rojas, op.cit.

39 Written statement from Almirante Alvarez, op. cit.

40 Written statement from Almirante Coda, op.cit.

> existencia de la AVIACION NAVAL en la ARMADA, pues es garantía de unidad de comando y doctrina, imprescindibles para el ejercicio de operaciones eficaces.[41]

The rivalry between the Navy and the Air Force was drastically heightened in the wake of the Falklands/Malvinas War of 1982. This was largely due to the vastly different images that their respective war records conjured in the public mind. Both within the country and overseas, the Air Force was seen as the custodian of Argentine national honour through gallantry of the highest order, even in the face of certain defeat. The Navy, on the other hand, suffered from the stigma of defeat far more than the other two military institutions because it was perceived in the public eye that the Navy had pushed for the war and then not fought when the time came. For instance, a book written by three Spanish Army officers as part of a popular military history series categorises the "actuación en todos los órdenes de la Fuerza Aérea argentina" as one of the "estrellas de la campaña", while the "comportamiento de la Armada argentina" is viewed by them in a very poor light.[42]

Since there were a number of British nuclear submarines prowling in the South Atlantic, it made good military sense to order the Fleet back into port, particularly after the sinking of the cruiser ARA *General Belgrano*. Scheina sees the withdrawal of the Argentine fleet in the correct perspective when he points out that the Argentine fleet "remained intact in spite of confronting the third most powerful fleet in the world..."[43] However, among substantial sections of the Argentine public,

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41 A.R.A., Secretaría General Naval, Departamento Información Pública, División Difusión, 'Armada Argentina'.

42 Francisco Bendala Ayuso, Manuel Martín Anguera and Santiago Pérez-Seoane Alvarez de Toledo, La campaña de las Malvinas (Madrid: Editorial San Martín, 1985), p.154.

43 Robert L. Scheina, 'The Malvinas Campaign', Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute, No. 109, May 1983, p. 117. It is important to note that the Supreme Counsil of the Armed Forces took a harsher view of the withdrawal of the Fleet to shore. The Supreme Council held Admiral Anaya responsible for delaying the withdrawal of the Fleet - "puesto que el Comité Militar fue informado ... de la falta de capacidad de la flota para oponerse a submarinos nucleares, era

the Navy was seen in the aftermath of the war as the military institution that had no compunction in fighting a "dirty war" with no quarters given and no holds barred against its domestic enemies, but which turned tail and ran when faced with its *raison d'être*, fighting against the foreign enemy. As far as most individuals within the Navy are concerned, the dramatically contrasting public images of the Air Force and the Navy are a direct result of blatant and undignified self-promotion by the Air Force. This is particularly perceived as being the reason why the performance of the Aviación Naval has been totally overshadowed by the tales of Air Force glory. Ironically, although it was the Super-Etendard aircraft of the Naval Aviation with their Exocet missiles that captured the attention of the world during the South Atlantic Conflict, the air war is irredeemably associated in the Argentine public mind exclusively with the Air Force, much to the chagrin of the naval institution.[44] It is significant that the Air Force has done nothing to disabuse the Argentine public of this misinformation. On the contrary, it has successfully appropriated the aerial conflict for itself by being the only one of the three military institutions to have published an official history of the South Atlantic Conflict. This book, by Comodoro Rubén Moro,[45] has been much criticised within the Navy and has seriously contributed to illwill *vis-à-vis* the Air Force; "todas mentiras" was how a number of naval officers described Moro's

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obligación de Anaya tomar en consideración estas circunstancias a partir de entonces, y no desde el momento en que Londres decidió el envío de una fuerza de tareas o desde el hundimiento del crucero General Belgrano..." - while also criticising him for the withdrawal, since it resulted in the "dominio total del mar por el enimigo, aislamiento de las tropas destacadas en Malvinas y rendición final de nuestra fuerzas." Quoted in La Nación, 14 June 1986, p. 5

44 In the course of my interviews, conflicting views were expressed on this score. One of the professors at the Escuela Naval Militar told me that naval pilots were unhappy with the way the Air Force had appropriated all the laurels for the air war in the South Atlantic. On the other hand, Capitán de Navío Lavezzo, Jefe de Enseñanza at the Escuela de Guerra Naval and himself a naval aviator, dismissed this issue as merely a manifestation of the intense professional competition that exists between Navy and Air Force pilots in multi-force military systems around the world. Interview with Capitán de Navío Julio Italo Lavezzo, 17 September 1987, at the Escuela de Guerra Naval, Buenos Aires.

45 Comodoro Rubén Moro, Historia del Conflicto del Atlántico Sur (La Guerra Inaudita) (Buenos Aires: Escuela Superior de Guerra Aérea, 1985).

book when the subject was raised in conversation. This being the depth of feeling, it is felt appropriate to take a closer look at Moro's book at this juncture.

In 1983 the Air Force appointed Comodoro Moro, who had been a C-130 pilot during the South Atlantic Conflict, as the President of the Comisión Redactora de la Historia de la Batalla Aérea de las Islas Malvinas Argentinas, and in 1985 *La Guerra Inaudita* was published by the Escuela Superior de Guerra Aérea. Although this book contains the standard disclaimer of not representing the institutional views of the Air Force, the process by which it came to be written and published implies a clear institutional backing of its contents. The most controversial aspect of this book is the way it treats the sinking of HMS *Sheffield*,[46] an episode which the Navy quite rightly sees as one of its most important contributions to the Argentine war effort. Largely on the basis of meteorological data, the author propounds the totally untenable thesis that the "Shiny Sheff" was attacked by Argentine aircraft on 1 May rather than 3 May 1982, the implication being that it was sunk by Air Force rather than naval aircraft. According to Moro, the Thatcher government, fearing for its survival on the floor of the House of Commons, concealed the fatal attack on the *Sheffield* until the Argentine cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* had been sunk on 2 May 1982. Little wonder then that this book has so harmed Navy-Air Force relations; the review of *La Guerra Inaudita* in the *Boletín del Centro Naval* scathingly refers to the Moro thesis as an "ejemplo de polarización intelectual y de errores históricos..."[47] Moro himself seems only half-convinced by his thesis: in the table listing British naval losses at the end of the book, the sinking of the *Sheffield*

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46 ibid., pp. 236-256.

47 BCN, Vol. 103, No. 744, January-March 1986, p. 82.

is correctly attributed to an Exocet missile launched from a Super Etendard on 4 May 1982.[48]

It is important to keep in mind that not all Air Force officers are as partisan and biased about this issue as Moro quite clearly is. Military aviators, being good professionals, have a tendency to celebrate *all* exploits of aerial bravado, irrespective of which air force they are committed by, and therefore many Air Force pilots were unstinting in their professional praise of the naval aviators. For example, Andrada, a retired Brigadier, has this to say about the sinking of HMS *Sheffield* in his hugely-popular book: "Para nuestras fuerzas armadas fue una operación históricamente valiosa, en la que quedó demostrada la innegable idoneidad profesional de nuestros aviadores navales y la posibilidad de lograr trascendentes resultados cuando se logra combinar con eficacia los medios de la Armada con los de la Fuerza Aérea."[49] However, in the eyes of most naval personnel it is the book by Moro that has come to represent the institutional view of the Air Force.

The Argentine Army and Navy have been far more circumspect than the Air Force in publicising their respective war records. Apart from publishing a two-volume "informe oficial" of the war,[50] the Argentine Army has also published a "semi-official" history of the war.[51] The Navy has yet to publish an official history of the war, although a number of naval participants have written articles in the *Boletín del Centro Naval*.[52]

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48 Moro, op.cit., p. 529.

49 Benigno H. Andrada, Guerra aérea en las Malvinas (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1983), p. 119.

50 Comisión de Redacción del Informe Oficial del Ejército Argentino sobre el Conflicto Malvinas, Conflicto Malvinas, volume I: Desarrollo de los Acontecimientos, volume II: Abreviaturas, Anexos y Fuentes Bibliográficas (Buenos Aires: 1983).

51 Coronel (R) Carlos Augusto Landaburu, La Guerra de las Malvinas (Buenos Aires: Círculo Militar, 1988).

52 The following Boletín del Centro Naval articles describe the rôle of the Aviación Naval during the South Atlantic Conflict: Capitán de Fragata Jorge Luis Colombo, 'Operaciones de Aviones Navales Super Etendard', No. 733, October-December 1982; Capitán de Corbeta Rodolfo A. Castro Fox, 'La Tercera Escuadrilla Aeronaval de Caza y Ataque', No. 734, January-March 1983; Capitán de Navío Luis F. Anselmi, 'La Aviación Naval en Malvinas', No. 735, April-June 1983; Capitán de Fragata

These articles are brief, professional statements by middle-ranking officers who commanded Infantería de Marina and Aviación Naval units during the war, and are of great utility to military historians, for whom they are intended. The tone throughout is serious, as befits the events being described and discussed in these articles.

Another important factor that has, in defeat, militated against the public image of the Navy *vis-à-vis* that of the Air Force is the ratio of officer to conscript casualties, mistakenly seen by many as *the* index of military leadership. Excluding the personnel of the Gendarmería Nacional, the Prefectura Naval and the Marina Mercante from the casualty figures, we can see that the difference in the number of Army, Navy and Air Force personnel killed-in-action (KIA) is dramatic.[53] The Army had 13 officers, 28 *suboficiales*, and 115 conscript soldiers KIA. The Air Force suffered 36 officers, 14 *suboficials*, and 5 conscripts KIA. The Navy, however, lost "only" 10 officers, of whom 3 were *guardiamarinas* (midshipmen), while suffering very heavy losses in the lower deck, with 204 *suboficiales* and 159 *conscriptos* and *marineros* KIA. The marked divergence in these figures has, understandably, created the image of the gallant officers of the Air Force. There is, after all, one indisputable fact: *there were more Air Force officers killed-in-action during the South Atlantic Conflict than (1) Army and Navy officers put together and (2) all other Air Force fatalties.* The Air Force obviously emphasises this remarkable statistic; its in-house journal notes:

Carlos A. Molteni, 'Malvinas... Así lo viví yo', No. 736, July-September 1983; and Capitán de Fragata Norberto U. Pereiro, 'La Segunda Escuadrilla Aeronaval de Sostén Logístico Móvil', No. 739, April-June 1984. The articles that pertain to the operations of the Infantería de Marina are as follows: Capitán de Navío Cesar Trombetta, 'Ocupación de las islas Georgias', No. 735, April-June 1983; Capitán de Fragata IM Carlos Hugo Robacio, 'El Batallón de Infantería de Marina No. 5', No. 735, April-June 1983; and Capitán de Navío IM Miguel A. Pita, 'Intervención de la Brigada de Infantería de Marina No. 1', No. 739, April-June 1984.

53 This data is derived from a list of Argentine military personnel killed-in-action during the South Atlantic Conflict in Anexos XV - 1, XV - 2 and XV - 3 of Moro, op. cit., pp. 547-552.

> Durante las operaciones, la [Fuerza Aérea Argentina] ofrecio amplio testimonio de su profesionalismo y de su estilo de conducción. Sus bajas consistieron en un 90% de personal de carrera (36 oficiales y 14 suboficiales), y un 10% de personal que cumplía su servicio militar (5 soldados).[54]

While the gallantry of the Argentine Air Force pilot during the South Atlantic Conflict is undeniable and deserves recognition, it is important for us to note that the KIA figures of the three Armed Forces relate closely to their system of operations. In land warfare, officer casualties tend to be much lower than those in the ranks, simply because there are always far fewer officers than men on the battlefield due to the pyramidical command structure. Indeed, in relation to their numbers, officer casualties are always disproportionately higher in land warfare than the men under their command, as officers make prime targets on the battlefield. In aerial warfare, on the other hand, the only combatants are the air crew flying in the aircraft. Since most of the air crew are officers, Air Force casualty figures are always "top-heavy", with far more casualties in the officer corps than in the ranks, who make up the support services on the ground. The distinctive feature of war at sea is that the targets are vessels, not individuals. Thus, there is a close correlation between the composition of the crews aboard the ships and casualties in naval warfare. The profile of Argentine naval personnel KIA is as would be expected in a war in which large ships such as the cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* were sunk, and is in line with the composition of a ship's company in a conscript Navy such as Argentina's. This point is made by Colonel Landaburu:

> [L]a Armada Argentina fue la Fuerza que más alto precio de vidas debió pagar, como consecuencia de las bajas

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54 Aeroespacio, No. 429, Year XLII, September-October 1982, p. 64.

> masivas que produjo el hundimiento del crucero General Belgrano...[55]

In any case, partisans of the Aviación Naval can well argue that KIA figures are, at best, an index of bravery rather than effectiveness. The Navy lost four pilots, the Air Force 36, and yet the aircraft of the two Forces sunk approximately the same amount of Operation Corporate[56] tonnage.

Thus, the reality differs a great deal from the public perception of this issue. As Scheina points out, the Argentine Navy possesses the strongest air arm of any Latin American navy, and it entered the conflict with three attack squadrons, one antisubmarine squadron, one reconnaissance squadron, two helicopter squadrons, two logistic squadrons, and one training squadron.[57] In the immediate aftermath of the war, most analysts of military affairs had a positive word or two to say about the performance of the Aviación Naval, but this appreciation paled in comparison to the praise that was lavished on the performance of the Argentine Air Force. In this regard Adrian English's remarks in 1984 were typical:

> The training and organisation and above all the leadership of the Army proved defective during the brief conflict with Britain although the minor surface units of the Navy, the Marines, Naval Aviation and Air Force all acquitted themselves respectably and the latter quite superbly.[58]

However, as the Navy slowly overcame its institutional reticence to discuss the South Atlantic operations and a good deal more came to be known about the achievements of Argentina's naval aviators in subsequent years, there was a drastic reevaluation of the relative performance of the Air Force and Naval Aviation during the South Atlantic War. Just four years

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55 Landaburu, op.cit., p. 202.

56 The British code-word for the operation to recapture the South Atlantic islands.

57 Scheina, op.cit.

58 Adrian J. English, Armed Forces of Latin America: Their Histories, Development, Present Strength and Military Potential (London: Jane's, 1984), pp. 66-67.

after Adrian English made the remarks quoted above, he rephrased them slightly to indicate a rather different opinion on this issue:

> The training and organisation and above all the leadership of the Army proved defective during the brief conflict with Britain although the minor surface units of the Navy and the Marines acquitted themselves respectably and the Naval [A]viation and Air Force performed quite superbly.[59]

Scheina shares English's opinion that the performance of the Aviación Naval was "superb" - with only four naval pilots killed and moderate aircraft losses, naval attack aircraft hit a number of crucial targets, naval support aircraft completed 75% of their supply runs to the islands and operated up to the last day of the war, and naval reconnaissance aircraft located British units and maintained contact with them throughout the war.[60]

It is interesting to note that the Air Force and the Navy have drawn rather different lessons from the war. Moro states the Air Force position on the salience of aviation:

> En el ámbito aeronaval, la batalla de las Islas Malvinas ha servido para mantener la vigencia y preeminencia de dos fuerzas sobre las restantes: la aviación y las fuerzas submarinas.[61]

The Navy accepts the importance of aviation, but places a rather different emphasis on the *kind* of aviation that is important. As the reviewer in the *Boletín del Centro Naval* remarks:

> [L]a aviación que pudo contribuir a lograr su objetivo fue la embarcada en los portaaviones británicos, no la nuestra basada en tierra, desafortunadamente. Pese al heroísmo y valentía de los aviadores de las [Fuerzas Armadas Argentinas],... y la Aviación Naval y el sobresaliente profesionalismo de los pilotos de los Super

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59 Adrian J. English, Regional Defence Profile No. 1: Latin America (London: Jane's, 1988), p. 35.

60 Scheina, op.cit.

61 Moro, op.cit., p. 541.

> **Etendard**, la cabecera de playa británica fue establecida, sostenida y ampliada y con ello, sellado el final de esa etapa del conflicto. Los **Harrier** tuvieron en los portaaviones el aeropuerto ubicuo y eficaz que les permitió contrabalancear a nuestra aviación y apoyar eficazmente a las tropas del general Moore.[62]

In Argentina the Navy has for many years argued that *it* rather than the Air Force should operate all land-based aircraft that have an exclusively maritime *rôle*, for the simple reason that flying over the sea is a totally different skill from flying over land. This position has, of course, been firmly opposed all along by the Air Force which has always been unwilling to concede a *rôle* to the Navy in non-carrier-based aviation. The problems that maritime air operations created for Air Force pilots and maintenance crew are described at some length in their in-house journal:

> Otro de los motivos que tensionaban a las tripulaciones argentinas eran los largos vuelos a muy baja altura sobre el nivel de las olas para penetrar la vigilancia radar de los buques enemigos sin ser descubiertos. Esta exigencia presuponía la necesidad de volar entre los 3 y los 15 [metros] de altura como máximo, en muchas ocasiones con oleaje peligroso y molesta por la llovizña que se producía al desmenuzarse el agua del mar. Las salpicaduras se pegaban contra los parabrisas, se evaporaban instantáneamente, a causa de la velocidad y dejaban manchas blancuzcas de sal que obstaculizaban la visual. Esa ceguera artificial podría haber provocado accidentes muy graves, puesto que un mínimo error de apreciación en la trayectoria habría sido fatal. Ese era uno de los problemas más dificiles de resolver durante las aproximaciones a la región insular. Pero el inconveniente producido por la presencia de la película de sal no terminaba con el vuelo en sí; al llegar los aviones a su base, el personal de mantenimiento tenía que ocuparse de inmediato de ellos, para evitar la corrosión interna y externa, particularmente en los reactores, por la ingestión de la intensa humedad.[63]

The air and ground crew of the Aviación Naval agree that low-level flights over the sea create all sorts of operational and maintenance problems, and accept that their Air Force counterparts did well to resolve

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62 BCN, Vol. 103, No. 744, January-March 1986, p.82.

63 Aeroespacio, No. 429, Year XLII, September-October 1982, p. 40.

them during the war. They do point out, however, that naval aviators and aircraft engineers deal with these problems on a daily basis, and so this type of operation did not present a special challenge to them in 1982. It is precisely for this reason, they argue, that the Aviación Naval needs to develop separately from the Air Force.

Conclusion

In the foregoing sections, we have analysed inter-Force relations in four totally distinct areas. What clearly emerges from our study is that there is no singular mode of interaction between the Armed Forces in Argentina when it comes to the question of "jurisdictional hegemony". The division of power and influence varies from case to case along a spectrum: in the case of the Navy, from untramelled naval power over the Atomic Energy programme to the constant struggle with the Air Force over the fate of the Aviación Naval.

CONCLUSION

TYING KNOTS: BRINGING THE VARIOUS THREADS TOGETHER

This thesis has been built upon the initial observation that naval institutions have hitherto escaped the attention of political researchers, thereby resulting in an acute paucity, if not a total lack, of both conceptual and empirical studies on naval political behaviour. Our study of the Argentine Navy and its political *rôle* was undertaken at least partially to remedy this general lack of naval political research, which was perceived as a major *lacuna* in our understanding of military intervention in the political process. The other spur to our research was a desire to focus upon a neglected area in Argentine political history. Our research was divided into two parts. In Part One of this thesis, we focused upon the Argentine Navy as a political actor by studying its participation in Argentine political history from 1810 to the present day. In Part Two, an attempt was made to explain the political behaviour and ideological orientation of the Argentine Navy through an analysis of various factors that define it as a military institution and a social group. In this, the concluding chapter, we will attempt to draw together the various threads that have made up this study by addressing three fundamental questions:

(1) Can the Argentine Navy be considered an autonomous political actor? Are there any limits to naval political autonomy in Argentina?

(2) What, if any, are the distinctive features of naval political behaviour and ideology in Argentina?

(3) What factors can be advanced to account for the political behaviour and ideology of the Argentine Navy?

The first part of this thesis will help us answer (1) and (2) above. In order to address the third question, we will have to turn to Part Two of this study.

The Question of Naval Political Autonomy

The central question that this conclusion must address is begged by the very title of this thesis: how can the Argentine Navy be regarded as an autonomous actor if, as we have seen, there have been periods in Argentine history when it has been deprived of virtually all political power?

The central political relationship for the Argentine Navy is clearly that with the Army, and its relations with the dominant military institution have fluctuated along a spectrum of conflict - cooperation - coordination, and occasionally, as during the Onganía period, even subordination. The political power of the Navy is a function of the level of unity within the Army, with naval political power being inversely proportional to Army cohesiveness. During periods when the Army was riddled with divisions, such as in the aftermath of the Revolución Libertadora in 1955, the Navy could exercise its political power with freedom and ease. On the other hand, the Azul-Colorado clashes of 1962-1963 found the Navy opposed to both the Army, over which the Azul leaders had gained total control, and the Air Force, which had sided with the Azules. The only faction within the Army that the naval institution could have aligned itself to had already been defeated, and the result was the total emasculation of naval political power. Thus, while the Argentine Navy was certainly an autonomous political actor during the period that

this thesis has covered, its freedom of political action was always restricted within the confines of one established parameter - *the Navy can never engage a unified and cohesive Army in a political struggle and emerge triumphant*.

Closely related to the issue of naval political autonomy is the question of inter-Force relations. Despite severe fluctuations in naval political power, it is noteworthy that certain issues and institutions, such as the atomic energy programme and the South Atlantic problem, have always been within the naval domain. We have attempted to demonstrate, however, that these naval activities have little to do with the political power of the Navy, *per se*. Instead, they should more properly been viewed as being a manifestation of the division of power and the delimitation of spheres of influence among the three military institutions. This cooperative framework is not always the case, however. Some aspects of inter-Force relations are conflictual, as our study of the rivalry between the Naval Aviation and the Air Force clearly revealed.

Inter-force Political and Ideological Divergence

It is evident from our study of Argentine political history in the first part of this thesis that the political *rôle* of the Argentine Navy has differered significantly from that of the Army on a number of occasions. Since the military institutions have for long been major political actors in Argentina, an analysis of Army-Navy political and ideological differences is essential for an accurate understanding of Argentine politics, even when these differences are constrained within the parameters of naval political autonomy as defined in the preceeding section. It is clear that the most significant inter-Force political divergence has

traditionally been in connection with the attitude towards Peronism; historically, the Navy is the most militantly anti-Peronist actor in the Argentine polity. The Argentine Navy opposed Juan Domingo Perón and the socio-political movement that bore his name right from the time of his emergence in the GOU *coup* of 1943, and has remained viscerally anti-Peronist ever since. In this the Navy differs significantly from the Army, in which there have always existed factions and groups sympathetic to at least some aspects of the political project that the Peronists have espoused.

The second significant political divergence-of the Argentine Navy *vis-à-vis* the Army is in the realm of ideology. Indeed, in terms of ideological perspectives, Army-Navy differences are even more stark than they are in the context of political behaviour. No single ideological perspective can be attributed to the Argentine Army officer corps. The Navy, on the other hand, is determinedly liberal, the word "liberal" being used in a laissez-faire economic sense, which is standard terminology in Argentina. This ideological aspect ties into the anti-Peronist perspective of the Argentine naval officer.

Thus, the Argentine naval officer is "anti-Peronist" in the party-political context and "liberal" in his ideological orientation. What makes these two identities particularly relevant is the third feature of Army-Navy political divergence: institutional cohesion. Unlike the Army, which has always been riddled with secret lodges and fractured on the lines of its various Arms, the Navy has always manifested an impressive institutional unity. Thus, *the three distinctive political and ideological features of the Argentine Navy are its anti-Peronism, its liberalism, and its strong institutional cohesion.*

Reasons for Naval Political Distinctiveness

Of all the reasons advanced by scholars in the past to explain the political distinctiveness of the Argentine Navy *vis-à-vis* the Army, none is more prevalent than the simplified Prussian Army/British Navy dichotomy. This emphasis on the influence of external military institutions dovetailed quite neatly with what one might generically call the "dependency theory", with its emphasis on relations between the centre and the periphery. As we have seen in this thesis, this explanation is untenable. While the Argentine Army has admittedly been influenced by the Prussian/Germanic military tradition, our study of this topic demonstrated quite clearly that the Royal Navy was not the sole, or even the most important, external influence on its Argentine counterpart. Thus, the economic liberalism of the naval institution in Argentina cannot be explained by pointing to the "British Connection".

Another widely prevalent explanation for the economic liberalism and anti-Peronism of the Argentine Navy was rooted in the social origins of Officer Corps. Some scholars in the past had attempted to posit a dichotomy between the respective family backgrounds of Army and Navy officers in Argentina: while Army officers were supposed to hail from an immigrant middle-class background, most naval officers were said to pertain to the patrician upper-class. This theory again in not only unsubstantiated but false. Indeed, as this thesis has attempted to show, the vast majority of naval officers appear to come from the middle-class, and the predominance of Italian *apellidos* within the Naval Officer Corps would signify a relatively recent immigrant family history.

The *rôle* of the military education and training process probably has more to do with the ideological orientation of the naval institution than the two theories above. However, there is not much evidence that ideology is explicitly taught in any of the military academies. Indeed, in the Escuela Naval Militar the emphasis is heavily on the physical sciences and mathematics: naval officers like refering to the *"educación cartesiana"* that is imparted at the naval academy. Thus, the new recruit to the institution appears to be ideologically converted not by active indoctrination but passive socialisation.

The emphasis on socialisation, we saw, was important. The logic of life at sea tends to make the sailor cosmopolitan rather than nationalistic. Also, the impressive institutional cohesion of the Argentine Navy is most satisfactorily explained by refering to the logic of life aboard ship rather than to any other reason.

Thus, the ideological orientation and internal unity of the Argentine Navy have nothing to do with *exogenous* factors, such as the class composition of the naval officer corps, since, as this thesis asserts, the social origins of the Army and Navy officer corps do not differ significantly. Neither do links with external military institutions inform the ideology and politics of the naval officer corps. Indeed, this thesis has argued against the conventional view that the Argentine Navy has been greatly influenced by the Royal Navy of Britain, and has tried to trace instead its contacts with a number of other major naval institutions. Indeed, it is far more likely that the ideological preferences of the Argentine naval officer stem from factors *endogenous* to the naval institution, such as the education process in the naval educational and training institutions, the socialisation pattern within ships at sea and

naval bases on shore (with the tendency to form endogroups), and the cosmopolitan character of the naval career. In other words, *the Argentine Navy differs from the Argentine Army not because of any Argentina-specific reasons but because it is a Navy.*

This conclusion raises questions of comparative study *vis-à-vis* other navies: to what extent is the political behaviour of the Argentine Navy representative of naval political behaviour in general? From one perspective, other navies have much in common with their Argentine counterpart. The rhythms and imperatives of life aboard ship, for instance, are likely to be similar across a broad cross-section of navies simply because the logic of life at sea imposes identical conditions on all naval vessels irrespective of their flags. From another perspective, the political behaviour of the Argentine Navy cannot be representative because it is merely one of the many highly politicised and strongly autonomous political actors that comprise a singularly unrepresentative political system. Clearly, these two perspectives on the representativeness of the Argentine Navy are irreconciliable. The resolution of this question ultimately depends on whether one sees the Argentine Navy as a naval institution that flies the Argentine Flag or as a military institution in Argentina that specialises in operating naval vessels. Only comparative research into the political behaviour of other navies can ultimately determine if the Argentine Navy is representative, and whether its distinguishing characteristic is being Argentinian *or* being a navy.

SOURCES

This list of sources is organised in the following manner:

Primary Sources
- Recorded Interviews
- Unrecorded Conversations
- Written Statements
- Unpublished Manuscripts and Other Material
- Information/Data Received from Official Institutions/Agencies
- Information/Data Received from Private Sources
- Archival Information

Secondary Sources
- Official Documents
- Official Histories/Biographies
- Other Books and Articles
- Journals and Periodicals
- Newspapers

All articles referred to in this thesis, irrespective of whether they were taken from books or from learned journals and periodicals, are classified by author in the section on 'Other Books and Articles'. In addition, this section also includes separate entries, classified by editor, for books containing articles which were consulted. The section on 'Journals and Periodicals' merely lists the various learned journals and periodicals that were consulted while this thesis was being written.

The rank assigned to all individuals, whether military or civilian, is the one they held at the time of my interview/conversation/communication with them. In the case of some individuals, there will therefore be some variance in rank between the text and this list of sources. This is a problem inherent in the study of a military institution over a long time period.

The order in which the various individuals who had shared their experiences and ideas with me were to be listed posed another problem. Instead of a spurious seniority classification based on military rank, age or length of service, or some other system such as an alphabetical ordering, I have opted for the only order of precedence that I consider fair: a chronological ranking based on when I *first* met the person concerned.

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Appendix

RANK EQUIVALENCY: ARGENTINE AND NON-ARGENTINE NAVAL AND NON-NAVAL OFFICERS COMPARED

Argentine Naval Officer Corps Rank Designations			Argentine Non-Naval		Commonwealth Military Officers			US
Current designation	Old designation(s)	Old naval engineers	Army	Air Force	Army	Navy	Air Force	Navy
-	-	-	-	-	Field Marshal	Admiral of the Fleet	Marshal of the Air Force	Fleet Admiral
-	-	-	-	-	General	Admiral	Air Chief Marshal	Admiral
Almirante	-	-	Teniente General	Brigadier General	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Air Marshal	Vice Admiral
Vicealmirante	-	-	General de División	Brigadier Mayor	Major General	Rear Admiral	Air Vice Marshal	Rear Admiral
Contraalmirante	-	-	General de Brigada	Brigadier	Brigadier	Commodore	Air Commodore	Commodore
Capitán de Navío	Coronel	Ingeniero Inspector	Coronel	Comodoro	Colonel	Captain	Group Captain	Captain
Capitán de Fragata	-	Ingeniero Subinspector	Teniente Coronel	Vice Comodoro	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	Wing Commander	Commander
Capitán de Corbeta	Teniente de Navío/Mayor	Ingeniero Principal	Mayor	Mayor	Major	Lieutenant Commander	Squadron Leader	Lieutenant Commander
Teniente de Navío	Teniente de Fragata/Capitán	Ingeniero de Primera	Capitán	Capitán	Captain	-	Flight Lieutenant	-
Teniente de Fragata	Alférez de Navío/ Teniente Primero	Ingeniero de Segunda	Teniente Primero	Primer Teniente	Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Flying Officer	Lieutenant
Teniente de Corbeta	Alférez de Fragata	Ingeniero de Tercera	Teniente	Teniente	Second Lieutenant	Sub-Lieutenant	Pilot Officer	Second Lieutenant
Guardiamarina	Subteniente de Marina	-	Subteniente	Alférez	-	Midshipman	-	Ensign