

WORKING-CLASS ORGANIZATION AND POLITICS IN ARGENTINA*

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The political expression of the Argentine working class has been a subject of concern to social scientists and other interested observers for some time. The country was one of the first in Latin America to have autonomous trade unions and political parties or ideological groups dedicated to the defense of labor interests. During the 1940s a major reorientation took place associated with the advent of Peronism. How did this change come about? Was it a totally new departure, or was it rather an adjustment of tactics on the part of the existing structures? How different is the Argentine labor movement—both in its trade unions and its political expressions—from others in comparable countries? This article seeks to explore this problem, based on a theoretical reassessment of the issues involved in working-class organizations as they emerged in the Argentine historical experience.

THE PROBLEM OF ORGANIZATION

Any organization of the working class is handicapped by its position in what may be called social space. In order to exert political power it is necessary to fill positions high up in the pyramid, which are at a great distance from the majority of the population. This is not the case to the same degree for other social classes (except the peasantry, of course), whose normal niches in social space are almost coterminous with those from where political power, social influence, and mass persuasion can be exerted. In order to reach those heights, representatives of the working class ipso facto become rather estranged from their own grass roots. This estrangement is not eased if a radical revolution abolishes private capitalism. On the contrary, the chasm becomes even wider, as the erstwhile representatives of the workers become absorbed by the newly

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established bureaucracy. At least this is what the historical experience has shown until now.

It takes a long time for a working class to organize itself adequately in order to act in the economic or political spheres and, eventually, to exercise power or share it with others. Apart from a moderate amount of freedom, it needs some preconditions: a minimum of education and understanding of public issues, discipline in attending meetings and electing representatives, a habit of analyzing facts and deciding among alternative courses of action, and a good crop of men and women drawn from its own ranks and endowed with the capacity to occupy leadership positions in the trade union, the party, the cooperative, the press, the cultural institution, and so on. It is not that it is impossible or undesirable to fill some of those positions with people of a different social origin; but if an organization is to be considered representative of the interests of the working class, it must be manned to a very large extent by members of that class and, above all, it must be responsive to its wishes, desires, and opinions. However, the expression of the wishes, desires, and opinions of a large mass of people is such a complex affair that it can outdo the best-intentioned organizer, or play into the hands of the more skillful demagogue. This problem was perceived by the first theoreticians of the working-class movement, although they had different solutions for it.

The social democratic tradition has always put great emphasis on the need to fill positions of responsibility with actual workers, using their spare time if possible, except for the higher echelons of the representative structures of the trade union, cooperative, or party, where permanent officers may be employed. It was taken to be evident that the higher strata of the working class, due to their educational and factory experience, had greater chances of fulfilling those positions adequately. At the same time the danger of forming an aristocracy of labor, only preoccupied with bread-and-butter questions, was also present. The problem was how to make sure that the upper sector of the workers would have a political conscience beyond their professional interests, while at the same time involving the lower strata, who often "constitute a sort of social ballast, a mass of people incapable of sustaining generous ideals," to use Kautsky's words.¹ Under this perspective, both education and the shortening of the working day should have as one of their main effects the liberation of many individuals for political and trade union activism and for controlling the operation of their own organizations.

Manning the diverse expressions of the working-class movement implies an immense amount of associationist activity, among whose tasks are the maintenance of the values and traditions of the movement, the socialization of new recruits, and the control of mass meetings so as to avoid sudden outbursts of enthusiasm or infiltration by rival groups.²

An organization of this type has a tendency to become integrated in the society it is trying to change; hence the many "left-wing" criticisms against social democracy, beginning with those in the anarchist tradition, which puts great hopes on the spontaneity of the masses. As a political program written by Bakunin said, "What we understand by revolution is unleashing what are known as dangerous passions and destroying what the same jargon refers to as 'public order.' We do not fear anarchy, but invoke it convinced as we are that anarchy, meaning full affirmation of unfettered popular life, must inaugurate liberty, equality, justice."³ In his rejection of the Germanic meticulousness of the social democrats, Bakunin went to the length of recommending to a Russian friend that political work be based on "the enormous number of vagabonds, both 'holy' and otherwise, . . . 'pilgrims' . . . thieves and brigands—the whole of that widespread and numerous underground world which, from time immemorial, has protested against State and sovereignty. . . ."⁴

Before the turn of the century the disciples of the various socialist and anarchist currents were already well established in the Rio de la Plata, and trade union activity had also started. Some of the anarchist groups were particularly violent, directing their energies not only against the bourgeoisie but also against rival political groups, notably the Socialist party⁵ and the more moderate trade unionists.⁶ As an early socialist militant, Enrique Dickmann, said, "It was necessary to organize the defense against these perturbing elements, and trade unions and socialist centers organized it. Against the violence of the aggressors the violence of the attacked was opposed, and soon violence stemmed violence."⁷

This new element of "defensive violence" could only complicate the already complex problem of organizing a representative structure for the activity of the working class. The defense was necessary not only against intervention from the police or from employers' agents, but also from a type of agitational politics that—in the opinion of the social democratic leaders—could only lead the movement to suicide if left unchecked. Not all the anarchists used the same violent tactics, and many, particularly those active in trade unions, were aware of the dangers of agitation and the unreliability of the socially marginal elements who occasionally gathered around union locals.⁸ The presence of the unemployed—who had nothing to lose—packing union meetings where a strike had to be voted was, in the same vein, decried as detrimental to an effective strategy.⁹

The problem of possible contradictory tendencies arising between the elected authorities and the mass meetings (*asambleas*) was, as can be expected, quite present.¹⁰ Anarchists generally tended to consider mass meetings as more representative of rank-and-file feelings, but what they

were exalting was spontaneity and immediacy rather than representativity. Among their own ranks some voices could be heard against this approach;¹¹ the main argument was expressed by Juan B. Justo in his *Teoría y práctica de la historia*. In an important passage he describes two instances—one in Great Britain, the other in Germany—where a local branch had decided to go it alone in a strike, against the opinions of the national leadership. Justo comments on the foreseeable defeat of the militants, and the whole episode, saying that “the irritated proletarian feeling of a section of the union had overcome the experience and the judgement of the organizers of the whole union.”¹² In Justo’s perspective this could be solved by a process of continual adaptation and accumulation of experience, via internal conflicts, which could be kept under control through adequate political ability on the part of the leadership. For the leadership, adequate *representation* involved the capacity to *oppose*—if necessary strenuously—important sectors of the represented class.¹³

MILITANTS AND BUREAUCRATS

The organization and representation of the working class involves a widespread structure of small-scale geographic units of association of varying types: trade union locals, party branches, cooperatives, cultural institutions, and so forth. These may be federated at city, regional, or trade or industry levels, and develop some bureaucratic apparatus, mostly in the unions and the co-ops and less in the party itself. Here it is that representation sets in as a principle and a method; otherwise—as common sense indicates and Justo pointed out—“in multitudes, the opinion of men with thunderous voices and preposterous gestures would predominate.” The main policies must be set by the “congress of the federation, formed by representatives with wide powers, not by simple delegates with imperative mandate.”¹⁴ The people who have the time and the dedication to man these representative structures, and who elaborate the ideology, have of course a greater say in the setting of policies than the rank-and-file members.

An important part of a structure of this sort are the militants who are recruited from the more passive members. What mechanism and what social forces are in operation here? There is little evidence to show what distinguishes the militants from the others, but a combination of observation, interviews, and some survey findings suggests three main components, which I would call, for simplicity, the *ideological*, the *emotional*, and the *personal ambition* factors. To them one might add a complementary one, *group pressure*.¹⁵

We may say that the ideological factor operates on a given individual if he is preoccupied with understanding the way society works

and generally tries to approach problems from an intellectual or ethical point of view. It does not imply necessarily a refined interest in the minute problems of ideology, but it does require a sensitivity to them.¹⁶ People high in this factor should be the "thinking" type, oriented towards discussion, and victims of the habit of reading books or other printed material. What is meant here is not a contemplative outlook, but a preoccupation with analysis and understanding, which can lead to militancy if associated with certain other aspects of the personality. One might say that, given the operation of the ideological factor on a given individual, there is a fair chance that he will develop militancy, depending on other aspects of his psychological make up, which for the present purposes we may consider normally distributed in the population.

The presence of such individuals among the ranks of the militants is essential if the organization is to be, in any sense of the term, an expression of workers' interests. They provide a conduit between the attitudes of the ordinary members of the class and the higher echelons of the representative organization. This conduit operates in both directions, conveying influences from the grass roots to the leadership, and vice versa. The complexity of this conduit, upwards and downwards, can obstruct its operation. This had led many—not only in the anarchist tradition—to believe that the "real" interests of the working class are only expressed in moments of agitation through direct action, mass meetings, street demonstrations, and the like.¹⁷ Actually, these situations express much more the attitudes and feelings of minorities of militants rather than the sentiments of any large section of the population.

This leads to the second force posited as capable of recruiting militants, the emotional factor.¹⁸ There are always some people who feel more strongly the antagonisms implicit in an objective situation. This greater intensity of feeling, due to whatever cause—previous experience of antagonism, frustration-aggression, greater sense of justice, personal bellicosity, or what not—can be channelled into trade union or other political activities.¹⁹ Logically enough it is a source of recruitment of militants, whether associated or not with the ideological factor. Under conditions of greater social antagonisms and potential or actual violence, this type of person is stimulated and promoted to the fore. When the main social contenders are aggressive and violent, the political struggle becomes much more emotionally charged, and therefore particularly appealing to those who are seeking an outlet for their pent-up feelings. On the other hand, under conditions of more established unionism, collective bargaining, or parliamentary politics, people high in the emotional factor will find it less attractive to participate.

In the typical social democratic organization it is not easy to mobilize the emotional factor. Apathy develops, which might tend to weaken the organization or consolidate bureaucratic control. Potential activists

are “wasted,” or they get involved in other, nonrepresentational activities taking up their leisure time. By contrast, Communist parties, even when quite reformist in outlook, are more capable of mobilizing the emotional factor. The very rigid ideology to which they subscribe and their identification with one of the world powers increase the dichotomous perception of reality which attracts emotional commitments. Heterodoxy being heavily penalized, a very solid discipline is created and imposed upon those who have once entered the fold, for whom it is not easy to get out without heavy psychological and social wounds. An equivalent situation does not exist in social democracy, as its ideological commitment is more lax, heterodoxy rampant—or rather orthodoxy nonexistent—and sectional influences very strong. An immediate consequence is that it is easier for the leadership of the Communist working-class organization to impose discipline among its ranks than it is in a social democratic structure. The representative leaders of the latter have a hard time in keeping their dissidents under control: they need to enroll apathy on their side, and to use the resources of the political power or influence which they often have to “deliver the goods” to the rank and file and thus maintain their support, as well as the loyalty of a good portion of the militants.

The third mechanism hypothesized as responsible for activist recruitment—namely, personal ambition—means the disposition, on the part of a given individual, to make the effort to better his own or his family’s position in society. It is not so clear whether this orientation leads to activism. A preoccupation with economic advancement might result in shunning union participation, looking for openings in the occupational ladder, or trying to become independent and set up shop on one’s own. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that union and political activities of the working class respond, among other things, to economic determinations: after all, they are means of increasing the workers’ welfare, apart from bringing about the ideal society. In fact, a worker who is more preoccupied than others with increasing his economic well being might be led to joining his union simply because he believes that in this way his paycheck will be fatter. He may decide—given certain environmental conditions—that rather than trying to be on good terms with his boss or foreman, he might as well join the union, perhaps even become a shop steward, in order to get what he expects. A trade union career may also lead to positions of power, particularly when bureaucratic posts exist. If graft is rampant, this is much more the case and it will operate to select very different individuals from those whose recruitment results from the operation of ideological or emotional forces.²⁰

A further factor considered potentially responsible for the recruitment of militants is group pressure. This can be present in important

degrees—particularly in homogenous environments, whether neighborhoods or isolated communities—where working-class group pressure becomes a dominant element in the local culture. In this case, going to the union, participating in its affairs, joining the party become almost rituals of a working man's life, imposed by family tradition and friends, and therefore operate on many who are not particularly high either in their own preoccupation with ideology, or in their capacity to identify emotionally with the cause, or in their desire for personal advancement.

A trade union or political movement can be viewed as a structure where these social psychological mechanisms of selection are at work. They operate with particular strength on some individuals and determine the type of leaders that will emerge, as well as their connection with the rank and file. Depending on how these processes operate, we may have either a strong movement, capable of resisting external interventions, or an insecure one, liable to "destabilization" from the outside.

Another requirement of a representative working-class organization is that it must rely heavily on its own sources of financing, i.e., trade union funds and individual members' quotas. There may be some help from the state, via legislation that permits or even encourages such things as closed or union shops, once they have been obtained by union action. But if unions are organized directly or indirectly by the state, as in the Brazilian case with Vargas or in many instances in Mexico, their character is changed radically, and they become mostly agencies of the integration of workers into the dominant society, rather than representative ones. This is not to deny that to some extent they can convey the feelings and demands of the workers through their imposed leadership. As a matter of fact, it is even possible that under favorable conditions some unions, started as appendages of the state, might evolve into more seriously representative institutions.²¹

Something similar must be said about the participation of middle- and upper-class individuals in the organizations that purport to represent the working class. When this happens beyond a certain degree, the representative nature of the organization is altered. It either becomes a multi-class structure, representing interests from various strata of the population, or it might become a manipulative outfit, where the workers or peasants involved play a supporting role, with little or no say in policymaking. Not that the direct influence of the rank and file can be very intense in any type of organization. In a large-scale structure, it is likely that the average member will feel somewhat alienated from the centers of power and decision making. But if the organization is of the type that can be called representative, what will exist is a system of selection and promotion of some individuals from roles as simple members to interested participants, campaign supporters, committee members, and finally leaders; in other words, a sort of circulation of elites.

This circulation, in turn, will be the basis of a two-way system of communication. It is by working on this network of communications that the leadership develops its ability to obtain the vote in internal elections, or to have its decisions regarding strikes accepted by the rank and file.

However, to the extent that a working-class movement becomes more capable of managing its own affairs and sharing in the administration of society it inevitably multiplies the causes of internal friction, as the difference in perspectives between leaders, activists, and voters creates numerous occasions for protest among discontented militants. The possession of a certain bureaucratic machinery, plus the appeal to the mass of passive members against possible minorities of militants, is one of the typical resources the leadership has. Of course it needs also a certain number of militants on its own side. But the usual situation is for militants—who, after all, are aspirants to positions of leadership—to feel rather frustrated with the established officers, and therefore they are a source of internal opposition. Under “normal” conditions they are counterbalanced by other, officially oriented activists, and by the bureaucratic apparatus anchored in the somewhat passive acquiescence of the majority of members.

Representation, then, always involves some manipulation. It is the result of a tug of war between officers, militants, and passive rank and filers. Social psychological forces maintain the confidence and the mutual connections between the different elements of the whole system. For most individuals, their everyday private concerns—family, job, recreation—are uppermost, and the ideas and feelings with which they operate are to a large extent drawn from the dominant, or “hegemonic,” culture. To establish, within this context, a representative structure with some independence involves a very delicate blending of the “private” and the “public” components in the life perspective of each individual. However independent and autonomous it may be, a working-class organization is rooted in the everyday practices and prejudices of the people who form it. And those everyday characteristics of the life style of the working class are the result of centuries of absorption of the dominant culture. This applies, in different ways, as much to Kautsky’s self-taught workingmen as to Bakunin’s vagabonds and marginals; as much to Justo’s disciples as to Cipriano Reyes’ followers in the packing houses. There is no such thing as a totally spontaneous and genuine working-class way of looking at things, so any working-class organization must to some extent deviate from what is common and usual in the milieu from which it comes.

THE ARGENTINE LABOR MOVEMENT BEFORE PERÓN

The first ten years or so of this century were a period of agitation,

violence, and repression for the Argentine labor movement, under strong anarchist influence. This began to change by the time of the First World War, although a flare-up—the *Semana Trágica*—occurred in Buenos Aires in 1919, as a result of a strike in a metallurgical plant, leading to violence partly spontaneous and partly fanned by the more radical anarchists.²² But the representatives of what probably must be considered the main sector of the organized working class in Argentina, the FORA of the IXth Congress, did not associate themselves with the violent aspect of the strike.²³ At any rate, during the 1920s, anarchist influence dwindled and was replaced by that of the revolutionary syndicalists, also calling themselves, simply, syndicalists.²⁴ This group began being active about 1905, as a division of the Socialist party, though later on they also recruited from the anarchists. They followed the traditions of the French working-class movement prior to the First World War. They believed more in organization than did the anarchists, but did not wish to have anything to do with the non-working-class allies of the unions. They were the enemies of the political wing of the Socialist party, and did not think that it was necessary to replace it with anything else.²⁵ The unions should prepare to take over society, via the general strike, after which there would be workers' control of industry. There was a certain anti-intellectualist, antirationalist, and violent trend in this way of thinking, which had in Georges Sorel one of its non-working-class friends. In practice, though, syndicalists tended to be quite pragmatic in their dealings with governments: for them it didn't make much difference whether they had to confront a *patrón*, a Radical minister, a Socialist deputy, or a military intervenor. These were omens of things to come. In a sense, it was easier for a syndicalist to become a labor boss, as he did not have above him the control of an ideologically sensitized party apparatus.²⁶

The labor movement in Argentina, before Perón, was not dissimilar from its European counterparts in Latin countries at similar stages of industrialization or urban and cultural development. This meant a genuine working-class component in the trade unions, very moderately bureaucratized, based on local branch activity,²⁷ with a bit of rough handling of opponents but nothing approaching the more recent phenomena.²⁸ In the political parties (Socialist and Communist), the cooperatives, and the cultural and press activities, a sizeable participation of middle-class elements, teachers, intellectuals, and others was present. It is probable that this latter component was stronger than in the European cases, due to the relatively lesser degree of industrialization, the comparatively greater difficulty of reaching the lower strata of workers, and to the less secure political conditions, which made organizing more dangerous. It has been claimed that because of this the Socialist party really represented the middle classes, and that it made no

effort to organize beyond the Buenos Aires area and a few other enclaves. In fact, socialists, anarchists and syndicalists²⁹ tried to go to the "interior," but they found the going hard, due to the differences in social structure, the limited resources at their disposal, and the constraints of their antiauthoritarian ideology. In the organ of the Unión General de Trabajadores, a socialist and syndicalist union federation of the first decade of the century, there are interesting comments on the situation in the sugar areas of Tucumán. Gregorio Pinto, an organizer from the Socialist party, sent by the federation in 1905 to bring order to the Cruz Alta Tucumán section, observed that, due to ignorance, local people "without a 'man to lead them' believe that they can do nothing. . . . A lot of moral force is required to avoid performing the role of monarch of an authoritarian state." He thought that as long as "there are no people to teach them the contempt for idols and a love for the proletariat as a whole, the class struggle will be an unknown article. . . ." ³⁰

The syndicalist newspaper, *Acción Socialista*, with a similar attitude, inveighed against "idols," caring little about antagonizing popular feelings: "The imbecility of the people creates him, and therefore the caudillo cannot but be the prototype of imbecility."³¹ In a more philosophical vein, Pinto wrote in the *Revista Socialista Internacional* that "we ourselves have unwittingly contributed to the demise of labor organization in Tucumán. With the trade union practices we have learned, we have been incapable of ordering the *peons* to 'go there' or to 'remain here.' Instead, we have told them: 'the membership meeting will decide' . . . 'there are no bosses among us. . . .' I believe that in so doing I have fulfilled my duty, but I am sorry to say that sugar peons continue to be monotheists. Without an idol there is no struggle."³²

The labor movement in Chile, led by Luis Recabarren, also developed quite early this century, and with a strong emphasis on grass-roots organization. Contrary to the Argentine case, political and trade union activity were more widespread throughout the country, mostly due to the conditions in the mining North, which provided massive concentrations of the working class too large to ignore. Union activity in the North was potentially very dangerous and it met with strong repression from the government, which reached a high point during the famous Iquique strike and killings of 1907. In the small port towns of the North, and the larger cities like Santiago and Valparaiso, socialist activity was not so different from the Argentine pattern, with a combination of syndicalist and social democratic methods based on artisans, port workers, and middle-class elements trying to establish mutual aid institutions, cooperatives, and a press to complement union and party activities. In the mine fields—mostly *salitreras*—a different model had to operate, with more mobilizational traits.³³ *Salitre* workers, though not exactly like Bakunin's marginals, looked more like them than Justo's disciples in

Buenos Aires. It can be suggested that the greater capacity of the Chilean socialist movement to deal with populism, resisting its surge by partly adopting its methods, derived from this early character of the birthplace of the organization.³⁴ The social distance between the miners in the North and the organizers from party or union was not so great, maybe due to the fact that cultural and ethnic differences were less evident, and that "trade union practices," having been to a large extent generated in that North itself, were not so alien to paternalism or caudillismo.

It is suggestive to compare the Argentine situation with that in Peru, where, at a somewhat later date, the Aprista party was successful in organizing the workers in the sugar estates of the North, as well as other popular and middle-class elements in the cities. Its ideology, though, was not socialist, and it appealed largely to the impoverished provincial middle classes. Paradoxically, it was the more middle-class nature of the Aprista party that allowed it to extend its influence over the country, based on an acceptance of the personality and cultural traits of local intermediaries capable of translating the central ideology into more comprehensible terms for the masses. In a sense, the Argentine situation was not underdeveloped enough to allow for this. Militants and organizers had to conform to the norms emanating from a quite secularized and modernized working class living in the large cities, especially Buenos Aires. And this mentality had great difficulty in reaching the "interior" or, as a matter of fact, the lower sectors of the Buenos Aires working class.³⁵

During the years of the military government of Uriburu (1930–32) and the early period of General Agustín P. Justo, the leadership of the Confederación General del Trabajo (C.G.T.) followed "apolitical" or syndicalist lines, with the partial acceptance of a sector of the Socialist party.³⁶ This produced internal conflicts, expressed in the *Anuario Socialista* of 1934 by trade-unionist Alfredo López, who complained that "union leaders have exchanged their role for that of simple agents, usual visitors of public offices." He then goes on to make it clear that he has never shared the position, made official at some time by the party, of "independence of trade union organization from other expressions of the social struggle," adding that this was not the attitude of the party at an earlier date.³⁷

In fact, the party was trying to make an effort to maintain the loyalty of union leaders, increasingly in command of important resources due to the consolidation of union organization, recruitment, and some legislation during the thirties. The official leadership of the party had to shield these leaders from interference from the more *principista* and rigid rank and filers, influential in the party centers. The Italian experience was there to show that a good number of union leaders, both socialist and syndicalist, had gone over to fascism.³⁸ The case

of socialists, particularly left-wing socialists, going over to fascism was not uncommon in those days; Oswald Moseley, in Great Britain, was a well-known example.

In 1935 a reorganization of the C.G.T. was undertaken, as a result of a sort of internal coup engineered by the socialists and their loyal railway unions. The syndicalists were set aside and slowly withered away as an organization, though their mentality did not disappear. In their resentment against the Socialist party, or the expanding communists, they were fertile ground for new political alliances or unorthodox combinations.³⁹

In Chile, during the Ibañez dictatorship from 1927 to 1931, particularly at the beginning, some sectors of the labor movement also had tried to see whether they could get something out of this new order which promised to break the deadlock into which parliamentarians and politicians had fallen.⁴⁰ The first wave of Ibañismo having passed, the labor movement reemerged under socialist and communist leadership and prepared itself for the Frente Popular, which led it to office in 1938. A similar approach was under way in Argentina during the early forties, with great possibilities of success. A Unión Democrática was being organized with all the main parties from the Radicales to the left, excluding, therefore, mainly the ruling Conservatives, who maintained themselves in power by rigging the elections. It could have been expected that with the wave of democratization that might accompany the end of the war, a peaceful change towards democracy and social reform might get under way. This was not to happen, as the political and social map of the country was changing too fast for this strategy to be successful.

THE PASSAGE TO MASS ORGANIZATION

During the Second World War, Argentine economy and society were growing ripe for a change towards further industrialization and large-scale labor unionism. This type of transition, which has happened at various speeds in different countries, is often accompanied by alterations in ideology. When the evolution is slow, the results are less radical, as was the case in Great Britain. Still, even there, towards the end of the last century, there was a certain discontinuity, leading to the so-called new unionism, which reached to the lower strata of the laboring population. The new unions were more oriented towards labor politics than the others, often because the low status and skills of their members enabled ideologically motivated militants to help in organizational tasks. These politically oriented organizers had less competition from economically motivated worker activists than in the case of the craft unions.⁴¹ On the other hand, craft unions also had their own tendencies toward the generation of ideologically oriented leaders, so the various waves of this

process intermingled, and the result was a gradual evolution of the whole movement in the direction of social democracy, with minor waves of radicalization. But at no moment was the political formula of the Labour party, once established at the beginning of the century, seriously challenged.

In France conditions were quite different. Unionization had to contend with a greater degree of persecution, so when a friendly government was established by the Popular Front in 1936 there was a sharp increase in membership. Something similar, but on a smaller scale, had happened during the First World War and the years immediately following. These sudden increases involved a consolidation of the Communist party influence. This party, in the thirties, had an advantage over its rivals, as it could rely on international support from the Soviet Union, important not only materially but as a provider of an emotional appeal of great visibility for the new entrants into the ranks of the unions.⁴²

In the United States there was also an expansion of union coverage with the New Deal. This expansion was accompanied by a certain change in political allegiances: from the craft unions of the old American Federation of Labor to the new Congress of Industrial Organizations, sympathetic to the Democratic party or to the communists. Anyway, in the United States the labor movement had never had a very definite political expression as did the British, so the change, though not trivial, was not fundamental. Unionism remained a junior ally of progressive politicians in nonsocialist parties.

In Argentina, the Second World War and the advent of Peronism (since the army coup of 1943) saw an increase in the number of union members from some four hundred thousand to about three million in a period of four or five years.⁴³ The majority of the working class passed from a social democratic and communist orientation to a populist one, involving in fact an alliance with a sector of the dominant classes. This alliance is quite different from that of the Democratic party in the United States. It is not mainly the result of conscious bargaining but is accompanied by an intense political mystique and identification with common symbols of a high emotional content. From a moderate commitment to socialism there has been a change to nationalism and redistributive social welfare, accompanied by corporatist sympathies. It is true that on the fringes of the peronista movement—both in the union and in the political wing—a trend towards revolutionary socialism and violence developed later, but it was strenuously opposed by most of the leadership. How did this happen?

One must begin with a historical view of the various attempts on the part of the Argentine governments to take control of the labor movement. These attempts, before Perón, were unsuccessful and therefore not too well known or studied, but they did exist. Yrigoyen, after com-

ing to power through free elections in 1916, was the first to try to cope with the rather violent working-class temper of his time. He used strong repression when necessary (the *Semana Trágica* of 1919 and the Patagonia killings of 1922), but he also looked for alliances among union factions. As the election results show, the majority of the native-born lower classes nationwide favored the Radical party. Strangely enough, although they also often represented a majority among union members, they supported the socialists, the anarchists, or the syndicalists in their unions. Those ideologies could muster enough numbers of adequately motivated militants to control the labor movement, and to obtain the acquiescence of the Radical rank and filers. Apparently Yrigoyen tried to use some of the "syndicalists," less linked to a party structure of their own than the socialists, less violent or extreme than the anarchists;⁴⁴ but nothing came of this.

After the 1930 military coup, which had fascist leanings, some members of the government tried a "new deal" with labor. A mixture of harsh repression against the more violent anarchists and compromise with the moderate socialists or syndicalists was tried. It was planned even to have some well-known unionists (one of them Bernardo Becerra) of the *Unión Ferroviaria* and the C.G.T. as candidates to the *Cámara de Diputados* for the conservative party (*Demócrata Nacional*), which was to be the heir to the 1930 revolution.⁴⁵ This also came to nothing.

Roberto Ortiz, who had been as a young man a lawyer for the British railways and knew the unionists quite well, also tried his hand at controlling parts of the movement while he was a minister with President Agustín P. Justo and during his own presidency (1938–41). He supported a group of disgruntled syndicalists, led by Antonio Tramonti, who had been displaced from the *Unión Ferroviaria* and the C.G.T. by socialists and others. An attempt was made to invade the *Unión Ferroviaria* building, but resistance was successful, the defense being organized with the help of the water hydrants of the building. The defenders claim to this day that they did not use guns, though some shots were heard and one of the invaders got hurt. The police openly disregarded calls for help from the besieged unionists. The attempt failed.

At about the same time the Socialist party suffered a left-wing division with the formation of the *Partido Socialista Obrero*, where several Trotskyites were involved, as well as others who afterwards joined the communists. It has been argued that the *Radicales*, via the newspaper *Crítica*, were active in supporting this dissension, so as to reduce the very great electoral weight the Socialist party had in the capital city. But, again, nothing much remained of all this.⁴⁶

In spite of the tensions and divisions within the ranks of the unions, and the amenability of many leaders to come to compromises with the government in exchange of some immediate benefits—usually

for the union, not for themselves—the labor movement had not been destroyed by the unrelenting pressure from a series of governments both democratic, semidemocratic, or actually dictatorial. When a new military coup took place in 1943, one could expect the same thing would happen. As a matter of fact, one of the first things the new government did was to intervene the main unions (Unión Ferroviaria and Fraternidad), dissolve one of the two C.G.T.'s existing at the time, and generally persecute political militants of the democratic and leftist parties.

Things started to change with the policy of the new Labor secretary, Juan Domingo Perón. The story has been told often, but some aspects should be pointed out here:

1. The war had produced a deep division among the dominant classes by the automatic protection it conferred upon industry, creating many newly enriched entrepreneurs who faced disaster if, after the war, a radical policy of protection were not adopted, a thing not to be easily expected from the ruling conservatives.

2. The process of industrialization, and the stoppage of European immigration, was attracting great masses of internal migrants, coming from environments with little or no union or leftist political traditions and not easily absorbed into the existing union structure, with its complex array of institutions, local meetings, balloting, committees, and so forth.

3. The government decided to support a program of social welfare and industrialization, which meant the maintenance and expansion of employment. The division among the capitalist sectors of Argentine society induced many people among their ranks to oppose the majority of their class and support the risky plans proposed by Perón, which involved an alliance with labor.⁴⁷

What we should now consider is the impact of all this on the existing organization, which included not only the unions but also the leftist parties, the cooperatives, and the cultural and recreational institutions closely connected with this system. Given the historical experience of the country, a combination of repression plus attempts at cooptation was to be expected. Quite likely, also, some people in the labor movement would favor open resistance while others would prefer compromise. If the government was going to attack with iron fist on the one hand and velvet glove on the other, it was only natural, and very effective, to resist with a similar strategy. It should be said that no unified policy could be established, because of the rivalries between the various groups and the notable independence of many organizations, especially some unions. But the movement as a whole had enough experience, enough internal cohesion, to act as a social whole in its defense with very good prospects of resisting the onslaught. There would be victims, there would be "traitors," there would be changes of position, all of

them probably forgotten after some years, as had been the case before. But this did not happen. The onslaught was, for once, successful. Why?

The new military government, with Perón first as secretary of labor and afterwards as vice-president (that is, from 1943 to 1946), made concessions to the workers. After a short spell of persecution, a better deal was offered to unions and individuals who had problems pending in the Departamento del Trabajo, a predecessor to the Secretariat of Labor. Later, more concrete and massive measures were taken in the fields of remuneration, social services, and relations with management at the work place. This has led some students of the process, notably Miguel Murmis and Juan C. Portantiero, to argue that, given the new possibilities opened up by the labor secretary and taking into account the previous practice of "reformism" on the part of the workers, it was only natural that the latter should decide to join hands with a government that was helping them so liberally.⁴⁸ According to this view, decades of economic growth without redistribution had produced so many pent-up demands that it was easy now for the new authorities, particularly under conditions of prosperity and full employment, to deliver the goods.

This interpretation has been developed polemically against the earlier studies of Gino Germani, which point to the great influx of internal migrants coming into the larger cities, bringing with them traditional attitudes, and therefore not easily involved in the more "modern" or "European oriented" culture of the labor movement.⁴⁹ Among these traditional attitudes one must include the tendency to participate in paternalistic political systems. According to this approach, the new migrants would be the main support of Peronism, and one should expect to find most of the old leaders and activists among the resisters to it. However, quite a number of old labor leaders went over to Perón. It is not easy to know how many and in what proportions, seen from the depleted ranks of the anti-peronistas as well as from those of the new movement. But the assertion that the numbers of those who actively supported Perón is much larger than what has been traditionally believed is one of the main foundations upon which the revisionist thesis rests. Further research is necessary in order to clarify this subject, distinguishing between national, regional, and local leaders, and taking into consideration the very important group of anonymous activists. It is also necessary to consider what happened to the political allies of labor, that is, the Socialist and Communist parties. The fact that after the event they remained in a weak position does not justify ignoring the very central role that they played before.

The crux of the revisionist interpretation is that it sees the process of *peronización* as a natural one of adaptation to new alliances on the part of a labor movement basically intact in its cadres and internal structure.

The formation in October 1945 of the Partido Laborista—one of the main supports of Perón's electoral victory in February 1946—by many of the old union leaders is given as an example of the autonomy of the decision. The fact that this party was dissolved a few months after the electoral victory is glossed over as being the result of "other factors." Equally glossed over is the fact that most Laborista union leaders had to accept the verdict without discussion, while those who opposed the decision were quickly set aside or more seriously persecuted.⁵⁰

The revisionist approach, dissatisfied with an interpretation based on the demographic changes due to internal migration, attempts to shift the emphasis to the evolving attitudes of labor leaders and union activists, who are supposed to have decided, in their greater numbers and quite autonomously, to join a class coalition. The object of attention of this approach is correct, but its optics distort and ignore some of the more important prerequisites of an autonomous labor movement.

What is necessary, if research and theoretical thinking on this subject are to make further strides, is to analyze in greater detail the internal dynamics of what constitutes a system of representation of working-class interests, and the many ways in which it can be distorted. I would suggest that the system of working-class representation as it was constituted before peronismo, was not able to defend itself adequately against what was obviously an *attack*, because it was suffering from a crisis in its connections with its own environment. This crisis was partly due to the effects of mass migration, the proportions of which are difficult to challenge.⁵¹ This does not mean, though, that one should expect to find most of the old established workers as anti-peronistas, or that Perón's electoral support was confined to the new entrants. What the massive influx of new entrants produced was a radical change in the social environment of the workplace and neighborhood, and therefore in what constitutes the source of union and political party activity. Unions were accustomed to having a few militants, a larger though not too great number of members coming to meetings, and a somewhat larger number—but still a minority of the class—taking up membership. When Perón, as secretary of labor, began his policy of redistribution and social welfare, masses of previously passive workers suddenly started demanding results—not only new migrants, but also old apathetic members. People who did not even know where the union local was suddenly came to the meetings or participated in shop steward elections, and disrupted the existing structure. Still, if it had been only a question of increased activity, of new entrants into the industrial labor force, the situation would have been much easier to handle. The new entrants certainly would have created problems, they might have produced an increase of not necessarily wise militancy, but the change would not have been so great. The strategic fact was that, at the same

time, the government was making a concerted effort to control the labor movement, with a combination of force, persuasion, and corruption.

This combination had been used before, and has been used often afterwards, with next to no results. Yrigoyen, Uriburu, Ortiz, had failed, as Frondizi and Onganía would later fail. Why did Perón succeed? Partly, of course, because his policy was more clearly pro-labor. The deep divisions within the Argentine dominant classes created many supporters among those in power for his "risky" pro-labor policy, which otherwise would have been smothered or kept within more moderate and therefore ineffectual limits by the pressure of the establishment. Also, economic conditions were better than ever before or after, so there was a greater cake to share. But this fails to explain the repression and persecution of so many components of the old labor movement and its political allies.

I have said that efforts to control the labor movement before Perón and since were unsuccessful: they did win some friends who genuinely believed in the program, they bought out others, and they intimidated quite a few. But the working-class organizations reacted, resisting the attempt, because they were adequately connected with their social environment. During the war years, when Perón's onslaught came, the environment was changing so fast that the movement lost its capacity to fight back. The balance of forces that kept the movement alive, making for circulation and mutual understanding between union or party officers, activists, and rank and file, was radically altered.

Though more research is necessary, I believe it is safe to say that the majority of the top level and experienced trade union and political leadership of the working class were opposed to getting involved in the peronista movement. This is particularly true at the political party level (Socialist and Communist) and more moderately so but still true for the trade unions.⁵² It would seem, though, that as one moves down the level of leadership—from old to new unions, from national to provincial levels, from elected office holders to militants and shop stewards—the percentage favoring Perón increased, both among the trade unions and the political parties. The only qualification is in the type of militants recruited by peronismo. The more ideologically motivated activists, one can surmise, got the brunt of official persecution and lost their sources of influence and patronage. Those more preoccupied with economic results, who had been traditionally held at bay by the former, could now have the upper hand. A large number of previously passive workers—old or new entrants into the labor force—were demanding an emotional stimulus that could be easily understood and felt. Not that the old system was constitutionally incapable of providing this emotional commitment. But it was of a different sort, less clear cut, and the images of identification it provided were tarnished by decades of political bargain-

ing and compromise. By contrast, the new "idols" that the populist formula provided, to the extent that they were further removed from everyday working-class life, were ideal objects for the crystallization of collective sentiments.

The combination of pressure from government, the cooperation of quite a few leaders and militants, and the demands created by the new entrants effectively liquidated the old system. The old active minority was partly coopted and partly replaced by another minority more closely connected with the newly activated mass feelings. The result was a transition from what can be called a system of representation to one of *caudillismo*, with mobilizational links between leadership and followers. It was stated earlier that *any* system of representation involves some manipulation and distortion of rank-and-file attitudes and interests. It can be added now that a *caudillista* type of organization increases the element of manipulation while at the same time maximizing the feeling of spontaneity. For either representation or *caudillismo* to be successful it is not enough that it should be dedicated to the interests of the membership; it must be anchored in complex cultural and social psychological mechanisms at the level of the rank and file.

During most of the 1970s political speculation was centered about the chances of the peronista movement turning from its populist and reformist channels into more revolutionary ones. This was both the hope of the extreme left (inside and outside the peronista fold) and the fear of the center and right. It turned out that the wave of radicalization that swept the country was not so much rooted in the working class as in other sectors of the population, notably insecure layers of the middle classes and students. The working class, by and large, whether due to passivity, conservative leadership, or lack of conviction, failed to respond. I would suggest that in the years to come the focus of attention should move to the less dramatic subject of the type of organization prevalent in the labor movement, where the alternatives are not "reform versus revolution" but rather "representation versus caudillista mobilization." It is not realistic to expect a total shift from one to the other of these polar extremes. A whole gamut of intermediate possibilities exists, and about them major political confrontations will probably take place. It is to their study that research and theoretical thinking should now turn.

NOTES

1. Karl Kautsky, *La defensa de los trabajadores y la jornada de ocho horas* (Spanish translation, Barcelona, 1904), p. 50. For Kautsky, one of the main objectives of the reduction of the working day was to free workers for "attending adequately the development of the associations. . . . Free time can and should be employed not in frivolous or unhealthy pleasures but in the service of civilization and social progress" (pp. 141-44).

2. Lucio Bonilla, Argentine textile unionist, recalls how "older people included us in internal committees, but always in a slight minority . . . we always wanted more action, but they were a sort of containment dam, passing on to us the experience they had accumulated." Oral History Program, Instituto Di Tella, Box 1, No. 2, p. 6. Interviews of this program, taken during the years 1970–72, will hereafter be referred to as OHP plus the numbers of box and file.
3. In M. Bakunin, *Selected Writings* (London, 1973), p. 170.
4. Letter to Sergei Nekeev, 2 June 1870, in *Selected Writings*, pp. 185–86.
5. *La Anarquía*, an anarchist newspaper published in La Plata, commenting on a trade union sponsored meeting where socialists had been harassed and some not allowed to speak, said that in the future "instead of cat calls and protests we should go against them with a dagger, already stained with bourgeois blood, so as not to leave any one of those scoundrels alive" (26 October 1895).
6. After an unsuccessful bakers' strike in 1902, the anarchist paper *El Rebelde* argued that the defeat had been due to the legalistic character of the movement (in spite of the fact that the leaders of the union were anarchists also). According to its report, strikers just gathered at the Casa del Pueblo (an anarchist union and cultural center) playing games and idling, rather than "employing violence and destroying the interests of the bourgeois." The paper went on to argue that the numerical superiority of strikers over policemen guarding the bakeries made a resort to violence practical (13 September 1902). After the defeat of a previous strike, the anarchist-controlled bakery union newspaper ridiculed the more radical *La Nuova Civiltà*, which had published an editorial under the self-explanatory title "O tutto o niente." The bakers argued that this motto was easy for "those who have ample private means. . . . If the writers of *Nuova Civiltà* had blisters in their hands they would soon change their way of thinking" (*El Obrero* [ex *Obrero Panadero*], 13 April 1901).
7. Enrique Dickmann, *Recuerdos de un militante socialista* (Buenos Aires, 1949), p. 68.
8. The bakers union newspaper, after the defeat of the 1902 strike, carried an article by F. Falco, who argued that drunkenness was the main enemy of organization. In the old Andes local "there was scarcely a day when the 'Moreiras' didn't start some fight. . . . Something similar happens in the [new local of calle Rincón] where there is even gambling." In union locals it was easier, according to him, for people to give vent to their "alcoholic fury," because they are tolerated by comrades who do not exert the same control as do tavern keepers (*El Obrero* [ex *Obrero Panadero*], 29 April 1902).
9. *El Obrero* (ex *Obrero Panadero*), 6 October 1901.
10. Events relating to the bricklayers union, where a dispute was raging between the president, F. Balmelli, the Comisión Directiva, and the Asamblea, can be followed in the trade union paper (published by various trade unions, gathering anarchists and socialists) *La Unión Gremial*, Nos. 15 to 20 (1895–96). The anarchist president was ousted by the Comisión Directiva, but finally reinstated by the Asamblea.
11. *El Obrero* (ex *Obrero Panadero*) published extensive reappraisals of trade union tactics after the defeat of the 1902 strike. An editorial argues that though it is true that "energetic and revolutionary strikes" are necessary, they must be backed by organization. The authors go on to admit that "we have also had those [more violent] beliefs, but the frustrations we have undergone have served us as an experience." They add that "the charlatans who say that [the sort of people who are usually found] in *fondas*, in *plazas*, in the market place, in other words, the nonmembers, are as good fighters as those who are organized, are telling a solemn lie. We do not think that a fighter is one who rises when he hears that there is a strike, maybe only because of fear of getting a thrashing" (3 July 1902). See also the following number, of 5 August 1902.
12. Juan B. Justo, *Teoría y práctica de la historia* (Buenos Aires, 1969; first edition 1909), pp. 351–54. For a description of more recent similar events see Branco Pribicevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Controls 1910–1922* (Oxford, 1959) and V. L. Allen, *Trade Union Leadership* (London, 1957).
13. José Domenech, socialist leader of the Unión Ferroviaria and the C.G.T. in the thirties and early forties, describes the way he managed an "intervention" against a local branch of the railwaymen union, in Córdoba, which had fallen under the control of

- the Communist party and was, allegedly, violating statutory norms (OHP 1/11, pp. 48 and following).
14. Justo, *Teoría*, pp. 347–48, 351.
 15. In T. Di Tella, L. Brams, J. Reynaud, and A. Touraine, *Sindicato y comunidad* (Buenos Aires, 1967), chaps. 6 and 7, an attempt is made to study the operation of these factors in two Chilean union settings. See also Luis Chaparro, "Industrial Workers and Labor Unions in Colombia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1972).
 16. To use Lucio Bonilla's words, "people with ideas, with principles, they knew what they wanted. . . . This is what [the revolution of 1943] tried to stop" (OHP 1/2, p. 65).
 17. Manuel Fossa, an independent left winger turned peronista, refers to the mass meetings of the communist controlled building union, where "elections were held by acclamation; generally those conventional elections with [ballot box] voting were not held, there was a permanent contact through the daily struggle . . . in *ollas populares* [during strikes], there were also several locals in the districts, so democracy was expressed in that way, practically by acclamation in mass gatherings in the Luna Park" (OHP 4/6, p. 6). He then goes on to argue that the same thing happened in the Partido Laborista he helped to create in 1945, and which he divided after breaking with Perón.
 18. It is difficult to illustrate this process better than with the words of foodworker Rafael Ginocchio, who, referring to Perón's speeches, says that "he expresses what I feel but which due to lack of capacity I cannot express; it would seem that he would have become reincarnated in me to say what I have been feeling since I was born" (OHP 5/5, p. 23). This feeling can certainly also operate in a less personalized fashion. As for the ideological orientations of the same man, they are quite wide, blending his early socialist sympathies with an admiration for fascism, "one of the political movements which will have a lot of followers in the world" (p. 30), while at the same time proclaiming himself a democrat. His opinions about the way to exert authority are also tolerant. Speaking of Hilario Salvo, peronista metallurgical leader, he says that he "used to take his revolver and put it on the table, saying 'here I am the boss,' that's a true fact, he was a good leader, a man who gained a lot of things for the metallurgical union" (p. 59).
 19. Juan Pallas, writing in the intellectually oriented anarchist paper *Ideas y Figuras*, referred to this type of phenomenon when he regretted that in Argentina "the greatest success . . . was for those who spoke more to feelings than to reason. . . . Pure agitation, of a demagogic type, proposing an 'immediate social revolution', which in Europe has already been abandoned, is still here in its heyday" (28 May 1915). See also, in the same paper, an article by Alcides Greca, "Psicología de la Bohemia" (8 September 1915) for a perceptive treatment of some psychological traits that can lead to political involvement.
 20. Speaking of the great influx of new union members "sent from the Secretaría de Trabajo" in 1945, Lucio Bonilla, at that time in charge of the socialist textile union, said that "we scarcely had the time to make the *carnets* . . . they didn't understand anything else, logically, than the material side, they didn't have principles or idealism" (OHP 1/2, p. 81). Though Bonilla—who lost his position as a result of this influx—is not an impartial observer, the fact is that those people who were flocking to the union had not taken the trouble to do it before, when conditions were more difficult. They were not all recent migrants but many belonged to the large majority of the textile labor force that had not been unionized.
 21. About recent events in Brazil in this direction see the special number of the journal *Ensaio*, Año II, No. 4, 1978, São Paulo, dedicated to "O poder sindical."
 22. A participant in the events, Mateo Fossa, leader of the furniture makers, of left socialist sympathies, describes an instance of the confrontation of different attitudes as follows: "I saw the secretary of the carpenters [a noted anarchist union] with a big stick . . . breaking shop windows. [I said to him] but what, is this the way you make the revolution. . . . Because when there are those nonorganized movements, control is lost. Particularly the young ones. . . . [In another place] they were burning two flour carts of the Rio de la Plata mills. They had taken off the horses . . . and the people were carrying away the flour sacks to their houses" (OHP 1/1, p. 10–11).

23. See Julio Godio, *La Semana Trágica de enero 1919* (Buenos Aires, 1972); David Rock, "Lucha civil en la Argentina. La Semana Trágica de enero de 1919," *Desarrollo Económico* 11, No. 42–44 (July 1971–March 1972); and Rock's comments on Godio, in *Desarrollo Económico* 12, No. 45 (April–June 1972).
24. See *Acción Socialista*, 16 April 1906, for a description of the breakaway, by the official organ of the new group.
25. Luis Gay, admirer of Yrigoyen and later on founder of the pro-Perón Partido Laborista in 1945, was one of the important syndicalist leaders. Others were Tramonti, Cerrutti, Marotta, and Lotito.
26. Syndicalists, according to Domenech, "deep down in their hearts were *Radicales*, all *Radicales*." He believes the majority of union members—not to speak of the working class as a whole—were *Radicales*, particularly in the Unión Ferroviaria, with its many locals in the interior of the country (OHP 1/11, pp. 75 and 166). During Yrigoyen's government it became ever more tempting for union leaders to try to get concessions from the government, as they often found support for their demands, but this was not very compatible with a revolutionary stance. The railwaymen's *Obrero Ferroviario*, syndicalist controlled at that time, defended Yrigoyen's intercession on behalf of some dismissed workers, on whose behalf the Federación Obrera Ferrocarrilera had made an appeal (*El Obrero Ferroviario*, 1 June 1919). In a later issue the newspaper said that it opposed reformism and long *antesalas* in government offices, but that it would be a mistake to refuse interviews with the authorities. *Bandera Proletaria*, official organ of the Unión Sindical Argentina, a syndicalist dominated trade union federation, condemned Tramonti (who was also a syndicalist, though of a more moderate orientation) for his alleged compromises with the employers (28 November 1922). The militant *Batalla Sindicalista* carried many attacks against "syndicalists" who believed that only hours and pesos mattered, and who made transactions in order to defend their organizations (see issue of 6 March 1922).
27. Luis Gay, syndicalist leader of the telephone workers, estimates that in the early thirties some 14,000 people worked in his industry, of which some 3,000 to 3,500 were affiliated with unions, and the militants were not more than 200. Even so he thinks that "in these moments [1970] in the labor movement there are less activists than in those days" (OHP 1/4, pp. 41–42). According to Mateo Fosca, craft unions allowed greater participation of members, both because of their smaller size and due to the fact that the problems which had to be considered affected more directly the everyday work experience of their members (OHP 1/1, p. 27). Socialist party leaders were quite conscious about the moderating influence trade union organization had on the temper of the working class. Thus unionist Martín Casaretto claimed that "conflicts are more frequent precisely in trades where trade union strength is little developed. Workers who permanently overlook the union, who 'only remember Saint Barbara when it thunders', tend to appeal to strikes in enthusiasm and suddenly, without stopping to think about the difference of forces at stake" (*Anuario Socialista*, Buenos Aires, 1929, pp. 166–71). Similarly, another unionist, Alfredo López, argued that "as a result of trade unions, workers have left behind tumultuary practices, understanding the laws of technological progress" (*Anuario Socialista*, Buenos Aires, 1937, pp. 33–38). The Unión Ferroviaria was very proud of its "legal" statute, which restricted its objectives to the amelioration of the living conditions of workers, making it easier for company officials and government to deal with that union. See interview with Camilo Almarza, socialist railwayman and collaborator of José Domenech in the C.G.T. (OHP 3/8).
28. See declarations by Domenech (OHP 1/11, pp. 20–21) and Juan Rodríguez, socialist railwayman turned peronista, who refers to the "gente matoncita" Tramonti, a syndicalist leader, had in his local area (OHP 3/9, p. 36), and to the "few shots exchanged, but nothing happened," when Tramonti tried to recover the Unión Ferroviaria from Domenech's control (p. 37).
29. Luis Lotito, a syndicalist leader, wrote a series of articles on the "Proletariado tucumano," in *Acción Socialista*, Nos. 58 to 62 (1907–8). See also comments by Domenech about the difference between people in the North and those he was more familiar with in the Buenos Aires-Rosario area (OHP 1/11).

30. *La Unión Obrera*, February–March 1906.
31. *Acción Socialista*, 29 January 1910.
32. *Revista Socialista Internacional*, Año I, No. 7, 25 May 1909, p. 451.
33. See Hernán Ramírez Necochea, *Historia del movimiento obrero en Chile: antecedentes, siglo XIX* (Santiago, 1956); Julio César Jobet, *Recabarren: los orígenes del movimiento obrero y el socialismo chilenos* (Santiago, 1955); Luis Emilio Recabarren, *Obras escogidas* (Santiago, 1965).
34. See Paul Drake, *Socialism and Populism in Chile, 1932–1952* (Urbana, 1978).
35. See Peter Klarén, *Modernization, Dislocation and Aprismo* (Austin, 1973) for an account of social classes in their connection with Aprismo in the “solid North.”
36. The classical Socialist party argument in favor of a separation between politics and trade unionism was that otherwise divisionism would set in. As for the forms for establishing connections between the party and the trade unions, see Juan B. Justo, *La realización del socialismo* (Collected Works 5 [Buenos Aires, 1947], pp. 276–77, 280 and following, and 301–3).
37. *Anuario Socialista* (Bs. As., 1934), pp. 149–51.
38. See, among other works, F. F. Ridley, *Revolutionary Syndicalism in France* (Cambridge, 1970); Leo Valiani, “Le mouvement syndical ouvrier italien entre le fascisme et l’antifascisme,” in International Institute for Social History (collective work), *Mouvements ouvriers et depression économique de 1929 a 1939* (Assen, Holland, 1966); Claudio Schwarzenberg, *Il Sindacalismo Fascista* (Milano, 1972); Ernest Nolte, *I Tre Volti del Fascismo* (Milano, 1974); Renzo de Felice, *Mussolini* (Rome, 1965—several volumes, others forthcoming). Hubert Lagardelle, first editor of Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence* ended up with life imprisonment, a victim not of the bourgeoisie but of the French liberation, after being Vichy’s secretary of state for labor.
39. The syndicalist-controlled C.G.T. of 1930 had to face the new military government with what Luis Gay, one of the leaders at the time, termed “a bit of *equilibrio*” (OHP 1/4, p. 18). Tramonti’s connections with Ortiz, in the attempt to regain control of the Unión Ferroviaria, are described in detail by José Domenech, according to whom “in the union movement, in those days, something of what it is today was already there” (OHP 1/11, pp. 151, 109–14). In 1938, the left-wing division of the Socialist party, the Partido Socialista Obrero, was supported by the newspaper *Crítica*, in order to help the electoral prospects of the Radicales, according to Mateo Fossa, a member of that party. One of its leaders, Ernesto Janin of the shopworker union, was in charge of the trade union section in *Crítica*, as he himself declares (OHP 1/8).
40. See Ernesto Wurth Rojas, *Ibáñez, caudillo enigmático* (Santiago, 1958); René Montero, *La verdad sobre Ibáñez* (Buenos Aires, 1953); Elías Lafertte, *Vida de un comunista* (Santiago, 1961); and Drake, *Socialism*.
41. See Hugh Clegg, *General Union: A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers* (Oxford, 1954); Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (London 1963), and John Lovell, *Stevedores and Dockers: A Study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London, 1870–1914* (New York, 1969).
42. See Annie Kriegel, *La Croissance de la C.G.T., 1918–1921* (Paris, 1966) and Antoine Prost, *La C.G.T. à l’époque du Front Populaire, 1934–1939* (Paris, 1964).
43. Affiliation figures are not very reliable, particularly after the consolidation of Perón’s government, when they are obviously inflated and approximated. A detailed analysis can be found in Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Portantiero, *Estudios sobre los orígenes del peronismo* (Bs. As., 1971), pp. 77 ff.
44. Yrigoyen, as leader of a mass-based party, always had some labor following. There was no strong organized Radical sector among unionists, though. In this sense, *yrigoyenismo* is markedly different from such other populist parties as peronismo or aprismo. For alleged support from Yrigoyen to the syndicalist U.S., see interview with socialist municipal worker Francisco Pérez Leirós (OHP 3/12, p. 25).
45. See interviews with Pérez Leirós (OHP 3/12) and Domenech (OHP 1/11).
46. *Ibid.* Also Félix Luna, *Ortiz: Reportaje a la Argentina opulenta* (Buenos Aires, 1978) who refers to the good connections between Ortiz and Tramonti, though not in connection with the above episode.
47. To attempt fully to support these three statements would take me beyond the limits of

- this article. I have argued these points at greater length in *El sistema político argentino y la clase obrera* (Buenos Aires, 1964).
48. To use their words, "the new elite that proposes a populist project finds an already organized working class, which also has a social project of its own, and to whom it expressly proposes an alliance" and therefore "There would not be a dissolution of labor's autonomy in favour of heteronomy in the initial moment of peronismo in Argentina but rather, if at all, at a later stage," *Estudios*, pp. 112, 123. This seems a better description of Roosevelt's than of Perón's tactics, if one takes into account the very strong repression to which many members of the old working-class movement in Argentina were subjected by the military government of 1943–46, including interventions of unions and jailing of leaders.
 49. Two of the latest statements by Germani on this subject are to be found in his "El surgimiento del peronismo: el rol de los obreros y los migrantes internos," *Desarrollo Económico* (Oct.-Dec. 1973), and in *Autoritarismo, Fascismo e Clase Social* (Bologna, 1975), Chap. 4. A polemic has developed about this subject in the pages of several journals, with various historians criticizing his emphasis on internal migrants. See notes by Peter Smith, Eldon Kenworthy, and Tulio Halperin Donghi, in *Desarrollo Económico*, Nos. 54 and 56; also by the latter, *La democracia de masas* (Bs. As., 1972), and Walter Little, "The Popular Origins of Peronism," in David Rock (ed.), *Argentina in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1975).
 50. The Partido Laborista was certainly an innovator in political methods. Luis Gay, in describing its lightning electoral campaign tells how "central mass meetings [were] transmitted to the whole country through the radio . . . in each locality where the radio network reaches another meeting is held . . . just before or after the transmission of the central act. . . . Those long, tiresome . . . electoral campaigns no longer exist; the Partido Laborista holds 3, 4 or 5 [central] acts in total, but always with the same character" (OHP 1/4, p. 91). According to Mariano Tedesco (OHP 5/7, p. 45) the idea of the Partido Laborista "was generated in the Consejo de Asesores . . . of Trabajo y Previsión" (secretaries of trade unions, who had been invited by Perón to become advisers to the ministry). For Rafael Ginocchio "the C.G.T. was not an appendage of the government, it was the government itself" (OHP 5/5, p. 35). Many who became peronistas were recruited after being called from jail to have an interview with Perón, as was the case with Cipriano Reyes (OHP 7/6).
 51. See figures given by Germani in his *Desarrollo Económico* article (p. 448), on the basis of a 1960 census sample, according to which in Greater Buenos Aires 76.9% of unskilled, 57.8% of semiskilled, and 44.6% of skilled workers were internal migrants. Through statistical considerations explained in that article one can come to the conclusion that the situation in 1945 was not too different. As for the participants in the events, of all shades of opinion, the impact of mass internal migration seemed quite obvious. For Mariano Tedesco, textile peronista, it was "a flood coming from the interior" (OHP 5/7, p. 10); for Mateo Fossa it was based on "cabecitas negras" and "people from the interior" (OHP 1/1, pp. 33, 53, 61); for Lucio Bonilla it was "the famous landslide," made up of people "coming in flocks" (OHP 1/2, pp. 56, 77); for Oscar Tabasco, a political friend of Luis Gay "in 1945 it was a flood, no one remained without being organized" (OHP 1/4, p. 42). Tedesco himself says, not only that he was quite inexperienced (he was only 22 at the time), but that so were most of the people who acted with him, and that Perón "had to rely on leaders, almost all of them novatos" (OHP 5/7, pp. 30, 47, 76). On the other hand, José Domenech and Francisco Pérez Leirós, both very bitter antiperonistas, point to the large numbers of old unionists who joined the bandwagon (OHP 1/11, p. 177 and OHP 3/2, p. 165).
 52. It is necessary to recall that on 16 October 1945 the C.G.T. supported the plan of a general strike (for the 18th) by only 21 votes against 19. Several important antiperonista unions like the Fraternidad were outside of the C.G.T., which, on the other hand, was heavily influenced by some newly created and state-sponsored peronista unions. The events of 17 October happened more as a result of direct conconvocation by Perón and his mobilization structure, than by the efforts of the trade union leaderships. See Gino Germani, op. cit.