

## THE “ARGENTINE FRANCO”?: *The Regime of Juan Carlos Onganía and Its Ideological Dialogue with Francoist Spain (1966–1970)*

**ABSTRACT:** The article examines the ideological character of Juan Carlos Onganía’s dictatorship by exploring its ties and dialogue with Francisco Franco’s Spain. Known as the “Argentine Revolution,” Onganía’s regime (1966–70) was, the article shows, one of the first Cold War Latin American dictatorships to overtly use Francoist ideology as its point of reference. While building on the conventional wisdom that the legacies of the Spanish Civil War informed right-wing thought in Latin America, the study then shifts its focus to Spain’s 1960s “economic miracle” and technocratic state model, observing them as a prominent discursive toolkit for authoritarian Argentine intellectuals. Drawing on newly discovered correspondence and archival sources, the article first excavates the intellectual networks operating between Franco’s Spain and the Argentine right during the 1950s and 1960s. Once handpicked by Onganía to design his regime, these Argentine Franco-sympathizers were to decide the character of the Argentine Revolution. Second, the article sheds light on the intimate collaboration between the two dictatorships, and further explores the reasons for Onganía’s downfall. In doing so, the study adds to a burgeoning historiographic field that underscores the significance of the Francoist dictatorship in the Latin American right-wing imaginary.

**KEYWORDS:** Juan Carlos Onganía, Francoism, The Argentine Revolution, Opus Dei, Hispanidad

**O**n October 21, 1966, Argentina’s new dictator, Juan Carlos Onganía, wrote a letter to Spain’s long-standing despot, Francisco Franco, to be handed to him by Argentina’s education minister, Carlos María Gelly y Obes, during a visit to Madrid. “The Argentine Revolution,” it read [referring to the regime’s official name], “has emphasized in its founding documents the singular value it attributes to the spiritual community with Spain, and its willingness to translate this appreciation into concrete lines of its

I would like to thank professors Pablo Piccato, Nara Milanich, Caterina Pizzigoni, José Moya, Amy Chazkel, Alberto Medina (Columbia University), and Federico Finchelstein (The New School for Social Research) and my peers at Columbia University; Alfonso Salgado, Elizabeth Schwall, Marianne González, Sara Hidalgo, Paul Katz, Rachel Newman, Fabiola Enríquez Flores, Andrei Guadarrama, and Mariana Katz for their advice and encouragement. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers of *The Americas* for their insightful comments and suggestions. Last, I am grateful to the Social Science Research Council, the Doris G. Quinn Foundation, the Minerva Stiftung, and Prof. Stefan Rinke of the Free University of Berlin’s Institute for Latin American Studies for supporting the research on which this article is based.

foreign policy.” Next, Onganía declared Argentina’s “adhesion” to a Spain-based international education institute, the Office of Ibero-American Education (OEI). “We believe that this initiative will contribute to the orientation of our youth according to the spiritual tradition that has guided our nation’s creation,” he clarified. Last, and suggestively, Onganía stated that to constitute a “richer plot” in Spanish-Argentine relations, “the Spiritual requires the support of the Economic and Political,” and that the two countries’ “intimate position” in the international arena “must crystalize . . . in an ever-closer collaboration in these fields.”<sup>1</sup> In his four years in power, Onganía approached no other foreign leader in such adulation, that we know of.

This article explores the ideological dialogue between Onganía’s dictatorship and the late Francoist regime (also known as the “Segundo Franquismo”). That Onganía had betrayed Francoist sympathies has been a recurrent observation of his close followers throughout the years.<sup>2</sup> Operating between 1966 and 1970, his regime was, this article further argues, one of the first South American Cold War regimes to celebratedly link itself with the Spanish dictatorship. Nevertheless, I do not seek simply to classify Onganía as Franco’s impersonator but rather to contextualize his authoritarian brand against the background of Argentina’s fraught democratic experiment of the 1940s and 1950s, and, equally important, its troubled economic modernization of the 1960s. By exploring who Onganía and his followers were, and by examining the nature of their linkages with Franco’s Spain, the article sheds light on the political myths undergirding Onganía’s conservative modernity. In so doing, it lays bare the European-Latin American networks propelling Latin America’s authoritarian turn of the 1960s at large.

Throughout the Cold War (c. 1946-91), Latin America witnessed its newly born democratic order giving place to a host of military dictatorships that strove to jettison parliamentarism and, more often than not, the Enlightenment’s legacies entirely. Understood as an embryo for communist takeovers, democracy became, in fact, unpopular during the 1960s, not only among military leaders but within large swaths of Latin America’s elites and middle classes. Indeed, political scientist Guillermo O’Donnell notably used Onganía’s regime as a case study for “bureaucratic authoritarianism,” understood as the moment when Latin America’s oligarchies, frustrated from the masses’ political

1. J214: Información, October 21, 1966, Archivo General de la Nación, Presidencia de la Nación, Secretaría de Prensa y Difusión, Partes de Prensa [hereafter AGN.DAI/PN.SPD.pp], box 102.

2. Nicanor Costa Méndez, oral history with Robert Potash, 1986–1987, Robert Potash Papers (FS 020), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries [hereafter Robert Potash Papers], 14; Mariano Grondona, oral history with Robert Potash, 1986–1987, Robert Potash Papers, 8; Historians have referred to Onganía as the “Argentine Franco.” See Alain Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 1984), 259.

power, embraced military dictatorships that fostered pro-market economic policies.<sup>3</sup> This article takes issue with some aspects of this scholarly legacy. Onganía and his ideologues, it argues, had a more ambitious program than merely boosting economic growth: namely, the institution of a post-fascist modernity in Argentina, marked by strict social hierarchies, an authoritarian model of collective action, and a salient Catholic-moralist project.

Of course, they were not the first to do so. Cold War Latin America, historians have shown us, was rife with political movements aiming to transcend both communism and liberalism. This first became clear in the late 1940s, as democratically elected populists such as Juan Perón and Getúlio Vargas championed a “third position,” characterized by “vertically conducted” politics and economic state intervention.<sup>4</sup> Soon thereafter, Latin America saw the emergence of pro-market dictatorships that, while allying with the Western Bloc in the struggle against communism, also defied the liberal-democratic ethos. Typically, they entertained instead the idea of inaugurating novel modes of civil representation that, at first glance, fall under the category of what political scientist António Costa Pinto labels “political corporatism.”<sup>5</sup> The Argentine Revolution belonged to the latter trend. Still, Onganía was not a fascist, and there was hardly any form of corporatism, much less bureaucracy, in his policies. In effect, he and his followers presented themselves as modernizers who sought to transcend Perón’s statism and benefit from the economic order set out in Bretton Woods in 1944, that is, as those who would finally liberate Argentina from post-fascist populism.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, this analysis makes the case that the Argentine Revolution was Argentina’s *second* post-fascist moment, akin to what scholars have recently defined as “Hispanic technocracy” and analogous to historian Benjamin Cowan’s concept

3. Guillermo O’Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966–1973, in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1–39. On these regimes’ ideologies, see Hector E. Schamis, *From Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism to Neoconservatism: Reassessing the Military Regimes of the Southern Cone* (New York: Columbia University, ILAS, 1988); and Thomas Davies and Brian Loveman, *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

4. Federico Finchelstein “Corporatism, Dictatorship, and Populism in Argentina,” in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America: Crossing Borders*, António Costa Pinto and Federico Finchelstein, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 247.

5. Political corporatism, explains Costa, is a “political representation . . . in which organic units (families, local powers, professional associations and interest organizations and institutions) replace the individual-centered electoral model of representation.” Costa Pinto, *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 5.

6. On the rise of the global economic order after 1945, see Kamran Dadkhah, *The Evolution of Macroeconomic Theory and Policy* (New York: Springer, 2009), 29–44; Eric Helleiner, *States and the Reemergence of Global Finance: From Bretton Woods to the 1990s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Joanne Gowa, *Closing the Gold Window: Domestic Politics and the End of Bretton Woods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

of “moral technocracy.”<sup>7</sup> However, while it is tempting to apply Cowan’s terminology to Onganía by deeming him an anticommunist “Cold Warrior,” the picture might be more complicated. As the following pages will illustrate, Onganía was a conscious actor in the Cold War who nonetheless framed his worldview in response to its two contenders’ modernizing projects.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the article also aligns with historian Marcelo Casals’s recent call to complicate the “hemispheric narrative” according to which the Latin American right obeyed US foreign policy trends and followed its anticommunist doctrines.<sup>9</sup> How Onganía’s authoritarian experiment unfolded owes much to the two fundamental fantasies underpinning its emergence. First, he and his followers believed that Argentina needed a dramatic modernizing phase so as not to be dominated by the Cold War powers—an endeavor that could be attained only by replacing democracy with an authoritarian Leviathan and a team of pro-market technocrats.<sup>10</sup> Second, as its name implies, this dictatorship was not to be a temporary phase but a final “Revolution” against modern ideologies as such. As far as Onganía’s pipe dreams went, this alternative modernity within Western society’s realms could be realized peacefully—as the collective effort of a nation that would opt to substitute mass-based politics for material abundance and western secularism for a restoration of its supposed pre-modern spiritual harmony.

It was within the context of this worldview that Franco’s Spain loomed large. Leaving behind its traumatic Civil War legacies and having replaced its fascist-autarchic economic model for market-based development, the Spain of the 1960s could justly propagate itself internationally as a country that had “changed its skin.”<sup>11</sup> Years before Brazil and Chile could boast similar economic achievements, Franco’s so-called “economic miracle” had already proven that a dictatorship could benefit economically from opening itself to global markets without being dependent on Western powers or compromising its alleged spiritual essence, let alone its austere social and patriarchal hierarchies. Consequently, Francoism served as a source of legitimation and a discursive toolkit for Latin American dictators who rose to power in historical

7. Antonio Cañellas Mas, *La tecnocracia hispánica. Ideas y proyecto político en Europa y América* (Gijón, Asturias: Trea, 2016); Benjamin A. Cowan, *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 111–144.

8. He was thus one of those who, in historian Odd Arne Westad’s words, “framed their own political agendas in conscious response to the two models of development presented by [the Cold War’s] two contenders.” See Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

9. Marcelo Casals, “Which Borders Have Not Yet Been Crossed? A Supplement to Gilbert Joseph’s Historiographical Balance of the Latin American Cold War,” *Cold War History* 20:4 (May 18, 2020): 4.

10. For a theorization of technocracy in Latin America, see Eduardo Dargent, *Technocracy and Democracy in Latin America: The Experts Running Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–19.

11. On this discourse, see Tatjana Pavlovic, *The Mobile Nation: España Cambia de Piel (1954–1964)* (Chicago: Intellect, 2011).

contexts rather different from Spanish fascism, within the framework of what historian Tanya Harmer has defined as America’s “inter-American Cold War.” True, in this “multisided contest between regional proponents of communism and capitalism,” by the 1960s, there was little leeway for anti-US “third paths.”<sup>12</sup> Even so, Onganía’s links with Francoism disclose a conscious motivation to flex the Cold War’s ideological dichotomy. Moving chronologically, this article will first touch on how the Francoist regime propagated itself to its Latin American right-wing interlocutors during the 1960s. Next, it will analyze Argentina’s political crisis of the early 1960s and elaborate on the intellectual networks that operated between Spain and the Argentine right—and decided the character of Onganía’s regime. Thereafter, I will illustrate how, once in power, Onganía collaborated with Franco in multiple fields, ranging from building on Spain’s development plans and education system to economic and diplomatic collaboration. Last, I will account for the downfall of the Argentine Revolution, in the wake of Onganía’s failure to fully follow Franco’s footsteps.

### THE FRANCOIST STATE MODEL, AND THE REGIME’S RELATIONSHIP WITH LATIN AMERICA (1939-66)

In recent years, historians have begun excavating the nexus between the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1936-75) and Latin America’s right-wing regimes, highlighting, among other things, the centrality of the Spanish Civil War in Latin American right-wing historical consciousness.<sup>13</sup> The present article builds on this literature but also sets out to broaden our understanding of the Latin American right’s fascination with Francoism by shifting the attention from the legacies of the Civil War toward the original conservative modernity that Francoism exhibited during the 1960s. True, throughout its four decades of existence, Franco’s Spain never ceased to promote itself triumphantly as Christian civilization’s paramount anticommunist bastion. Furthermore, in the 1940s, Franco concealed neither his neo-imperial aspirations in Latin America nor his will to extend Spain’s anti-modern “Crusade” to its progeny.<sup>14</sup> After all, America, stated the Francoists, “begins at

12. Tanya Harmer, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 1.

13. See for example Kirsten Weld, “The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet’s Chile,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 98:1 (2018): 77–115; Kirsten Weld, “The Other Door: Spain and the Guatemalan Counter-Revolution, 1944–54,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51:2 (May 2019): 307–331; and Isabel Jara Hinojosa, *De Franco a Pinochet. El proyecto cultural franquista en Chile 1936–1980* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2006).

14. Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, *Imperio de papel. Acción cultural y política durante el Primer Franquismo* (Madrid: CSIC, 1992); Manuel Espadas Burgos, *Franquismo y política exterior* (Madrid: Rialp, 1988); Rosa María Pardo

the Pyrenean Mountains.”<sup>15</sup> Still, to fully understand Onganía’s motivations for associating with Franco’s idiosyncratic regime, a closer look at the political myths the latter championed during the years of the “Spanish miracle” is due.

That Francoism was an anomaly in the Cold War’s ideological panorama is not only a regular scholarly assessment but was the regime’s own conspicuous public narrative. Franco and his followers believed their country to be “different”—a proud alternative to the “materialist” Cold War blocs.<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, Spain was thus a hotbed of multiple far-right associations, many of which branched out to Latin America. Until the mid 1940s, Spain’s hegemonic ideological group was the filo-fascist party Falange (FET). Taking its cue from Italian fascism, Falangism defined itself in terms of a totalitarian “national-syndicalist” revolution.<sup>17</sup> After 1945, however, the regime abandoned its initial fascist proclivities, returning instead to a more Catholic and traditionalist ideological core.<sup>18</sup> A clear indication of this was Spain’s return to the discourse of *Hispanidad*—an anti-modern neologism born in the 1920s through Spanish-Argentine collaboration—that advocated the restoration of the alleged political and spiritual harmony of the Spanish empire.<sup>19</sup> As I have explained elsewhere, Franco’s Institute for Hispanic Culture (ICH) served as the central apparatus whereby Spanish and Latin American intellectuals jointly propagated this ideology.<sup>20</sup> With the zealous propagandist Alfredo Sánchez Bella at its helm, and consisting of copious branches, journals, and annual congresses, the ICH in the 1950s thus blatantly posited a joint Latin American

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Sanz, *¡Con Franco hacia el imperio! La política exterior española en América Latina, 1939–1945* (Madrid: UNED, 1995); Javier Tusell, *La España de Franco. El poder, la oposición y la política exterior durante el Franquismo* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1989).

15. See Informe reservado presentado por Alfredo Sánchez Bella tras su viaje por Hispanoamérica, Archivo General Universidad de Navarra [hereafter AGUN], doc. 15/102/6; and Archivo General de la Administración [hereafter AGA], box 82/11114.

16. Justin Crumbaugh, *Destination Dictatorship: The Spectacle of Spain’s Tourist Boom and the Reinvention of Difference* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 76–86.

17. The Falange held offices in Latin America until 1945, but thereafter diminished considerably as an international apparatus. On the Falange, see José Luis Jerez Riesco, *Voluntad de imperio. La Falange en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Nueva República, 2007); Joan María Thomàs, *La Falange de Franco. Fascismo y fascistización en el régimen Franquista, 1937–1945* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 2001); Ismael Saz Campos, *Fascismo y Franquismo* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2004); and Álvaro de Diego, *José Luis Arrese o la Falange de Franco* (Madrid: Actas Editorial, 2001).

18. On this transformation, see Javier Tusell, *Franco y los católicos. La política interior española entre 1945 y 1957* (Madrid: Alianza, 1984); Carme Molinero and Pere Ysàs, *La anatomía del Franquismo. De la supervivencia a la agonía, 1945–1977* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2008), 9–35; and Paul Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the Military in Twentieth-Century Spain* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 105–126.

19. Coined in Argentina by the Spanish-born priest Zacarías de Vizcarra in 1926, the term *Hispanidad* was adopted by the Spanish thinker Ramiro de Maeztu, who brought it to optimal levels of publicity during the years of Spain’s Second Republic. See Ramiro de Maeztu, *Defensa de la Hispanidad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poblet, 1941). For a recent discussion on the meaning of *Hispanidad*, see Ilan Stavans and Iván Jaksic, *What Is La Hispanidad?: A Conversation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011). See also Marisa González de Oleaga, *El doble juego de la Hispanidad. España y la Argentina durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid: UNED, 2001).

20. Daniel Gunnar Kressel. “The Hispanic Community of Nations: The Spanish-Argentine Nexus and the Imagining of a Hispanic Cold War Bloc.” *Cahiers des Amériques latines* 79 (December 2015): 115–33.

anticommunist and anti-US mobilization. In fact, it even sought to constitute a “Hispanic bloc” that would defy the Cold War power structure.<sup>21</sup>

Other prominent, if unofficial, institutions linking Spain with the Americas in the late 1950s were the Catholic societies Opus Dei (“The Work of God”) and Cursillos de Cristiandad (“Short Courses in Christianity”). While the former proposed to Catholic laymen a method of “sanctification in everyday life through ordinary work,” the latter advocated the Christian man’s evangelization through a system of retreats designed to lead one to an “intimate and personal friendship” with Christ.<sup>22</sup> Beyond this mysticism, these associations’ importance stemmed from their flair for rallying conservative elites toward reactionary political action.<sup>23</sup> Established in Spain against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, and recognized by the Vatican as a Secular Institution in 1947, the Opus Dei, in particular, would become immensely influential in Latin America as an intellectual apparatus operating by way of soft power. Or, as Álvaro de Portillo, the Opus Dei’s secretary-general, explained it to Franco: “The external action of our members has been directed, primarily, to the intellectual field. We seek to work . . . always through discreet and quiet personal intervention, which we consider the most effective.”<sup>24</sup> Ideologically, the Opus Dei proclaimed a sophisticated post-fascist state ideology—a “middle-of-the-road” solution between the Falange’s “fascist totalitarianism” and the “lame democracy” of the West.<sup>25</sup> While anti-modern in its ideological underpinnings, it nevertheless took pride in its alleged aptitude for assimilating modern technical knowledge into the Hispanic domain. In the words of Opus Dei ideologue Florentino Pérez Embid, this protected cultural sphere was to be “European in means, but Spanish in the ends.”<sup>26</sup>

21. See also Antonio Cañellas Mas, *Alfredo Sánchez Bella. Un embajador entre las Américas y Europa. Diplomacia y política informativa en la España de Franco* (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2015).

22. This was how the Opus Dei first appeared in the Spanish press. See “El primer instituto secular de la Iglesia,” *ABC* (Madrid), March 15, 1947, 7; and Clemente Sánchez and Francisco Suárez, *Cursillos de Cristiandad abiertos al futuro* (Madrid: Euramérica S.A., 1971), 10.

23. The two movements relied heavily on Jesuit theology, but also sought to transcend it. See Oscar H. Wast, *Jesuitas, Opus Dei, Cursillos de Cristiandad* (Mexico City: Editorial Luz, 1971). The Cursillos’ “leaders’ manual” from 1964 vowed to attract the “best people from each locality so that once these were well trained, they, being the ferment of Christianity, would elevate and transform the masses.” See Juan Hervás, *Leaders’ Manual for Cursillos in Christianity* (Madrid: Euramerica, 1964), 29–30.

24. 1952, Julio 14: el Opus Dei por mediación del procurador general D. Álvaro del Portillo, Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco [hereafter FNFF], doc. 10868. On the Opus Dei, see Jesús Ynfante, *La prodigiosa aventura del Opus Dei. Génesis y desarrollo de la Santa Mafía* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico, 1970); Daniel Artigues, *El Opus Dei en España: 1928–1962* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico, 1971); Alberto Moncada, *Historia oral del Opus Dei* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1987); and Joan Estruch, *Saints and Schemers: Opus Dei and Its Paradoxes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

25. Rafael Calvo Serer, *Teoría de la restauración* (Madrid: Rialp, 1956), 106. In the 1960s, the Falange and Opus Dei emerged as two distinctive ideological schools, struggling bitterly for hegemony in the Francoist political arena. See Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923–1977* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 431–468.

26. Florentino Pérez-Embid, *Ambiciones españolas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1953), 12.

Opportunistic as ever, Franco ultimately recognized in the Opus Dei a capacity to direct his dictatorship's adaptation to Cold War circumstances. In 1957, following a period of economic crisis deriving from the regime's semi-autarchic economic model, he replaced his Falange leadership with a team of Opus Dei administrators, later to be nicknamed the "technocrats." Operating under the auspice of Franco's powerful deputy, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, figures such as Laureano López Rodó were granted the liberty to alter Spain's economy as they saw fit. In turn, Spain's 1959 stabilization plan, comprised drastic administrative reforms and a host of "economic rationalization" measures ranging from slashing subsidized industries to a steep currency devaluation. Later (1964-75), López Rodó was the designer of Spain's development plans, which, building on French and Italian precedents, included further economic simulation methods, such as industrial development poles.<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, with the flow of investments from the United States and other Western European nations, Spain underwent a decade of rapid industrialization, thereby reaching levels of economic growth rarely seen before in Europe. Immediately narrated by the regime as the "Spanish miracle"—and despite harrowing social consequences such as high unemployment, migration, and dislocation of entire communities—these accomplishments would resonate in Latin America throughout the 1960s.<sup>28</sup>

Strikingly, 1960s Spain showcased not merely a model for development but the realization of the Opus Dei's theory of the state. As the designers of Franco's two constitutional reforms of 1958 and 1967, López Rodó, and even more so Opus Dei sympathizer Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, succeeded in reducing the influence of the Falange's "national-syndicalist" ideology to a minimum, all the while defining Spain as an "organic democracy" committed to a unique form of public representation through "intermediary societies," namely "family, guild, and municipality."<sup>29</sup> However, with Franco's corporatist chamber (the Cortes) detached from executive, legislative, or judicial power, one should consider these maxims as political theatre rather than a representation system.<sup>30</sup>

27. On López Rodó's ideological inspirations, see Antonio Cañellas Mas, *Laureano López Rodó. Biografía política de un ministro de Franco (1920-1980)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2011). See also Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, *El pensamiento político de la derecha española en el siglo XX* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2005), 338-339.

28. This narrative appeared in Waldo de Mier's propaganda book *España cambia de piel*, from 1964. See Mier, *España cambia de piel (Nuevo viaje por la "España del Milagro")* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1964). On the Spanish economic miracle and its consequences, see Sima Lieberman, *Growth and Crisis in the Spanish Economy: 1940-1993* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Antonio Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939-1975* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Andreu Mayayo, *Economía Franquista y corrupción* (Barcelona: Flor del Viento, 2010); and Julio Gil Pecharrormán, *Con permiso de la autoridad. La España de Franco (1939-1975)* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2008).

29. The first was Spain's May 1958 Principles of the National Movement Law; the second was the January 1967 Organic Law of the State. See "Ley de Principios del Movimiento Nacional," *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 119 (Madrid), May 19, 1958, 4511-4512; and "Ley Orgánica del Estado," *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 9, January 11, 1967, 466-477.

30. On Franco's way of "faking politics," see Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress*, 49-56.

In actuality, at least until the late 1960s, Spain’s technocracy was characterized by a swift deregulatory process, orchestrated by an administrative control center in the hands of spiritually oriented technicians. This so-called “directing elite”—synonymous with the Opus Dei—was the de facto group navigating the regime’s overhaul.<sup>31</sup> Tellingly, by 1965 these intellectuals portrayed Spain as a society that had transcended ideologies via consumption, that is, a country whose citizens had been *freed from* politics, and, as such, having achieved a final condition of social peace and spiritual perfection.<sup>32</sup>

This ideological makeover also signaled the ushering in of a new era in Spain’s international relations. In the global spirit of the Détente, Franco gradually softened his bellicose anticommunist rhetoric, allowing Spain’s cooperation with the Eastern Bloc, Castro’s Cuba, and Allende’s Chile.<sup>33</sup> This notwithstanding, Franco’s Spain never ceased backing Latin America’s far-right affiliations and dictators.<sup>34</sup> More important, it now captivated the imagination of Latin America’s right in more complex ways, as it exemplified how a traditionalist dictatorship could maintain symbiotic relationships with the Western Bloc while preserving its alleged Hispanic “physiognomy and character,” in López Rodó’s words.<sup>35</sup> For Onganía, rather than Spain’s Civil War legacies, this unique “change of skin,” and the putative mentality change it had in store for the working classes, were the crucial lessons to be learned from Franco’s authoritarian development.

### ARGENTINA POST-PERÓN AND THE ADVENT OF THE ARGENTINE REVOLUTION (1955–66)

Unlike many Latin American military dictatorships, the *Onganiato* emanated not from the threat of communism—be it real or illusory—but from the overwhelming grip of the Peronist movement on Argentine politics. Ever since September 1955, when Juan Perón was ousted from the presidency and sent to exile, Argentina had exhibited a restricted parliamentary democracy in perpetual

31. In the words of one Opus Dei intellectual, the operation of this “élite politique” means that a few selected individuals direct all public affairs while the rest of the population “grazes like a flock of sheep.” See Andrés Vázquez de Prada, “Don Quijote, caballero político,” *Nuestro Tiempo* 15 (Madrid), September 1955, 4–5.

32. Fernández de la Mora’s book *El crepúsculo de las ideologías*, from 1965, presented Francoism as a land of experts, consumption, and leisure. See Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, *El crepúsculo de las ideologías* (Madrid: Rialp, 1965). López Rodó’s texts likewise displayed a comprehensive technocratic theory of state and society. See Laureano López Rodó, *Política y desarrollo* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1970); and López Rodó, *Nuevo horizonte del desarrollo* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1972).

33. Celestino del Arenal, *Política exterior de España hacia Iberoamérica* (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1994), 29–68; María José Henríquez Uzal, *¡Viva la verdadera amistad!: Franco y Allende, 1970–1973* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 2014).

34. Franco’s material assistance to the Chilean right is a case in point. See Weld, “The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness,” 103–108; and Memorandum sobre Chile, FNFÉ doc. 14870.

35. López Rodó, *Nuevo horizonte del desarrollo*, 32–33.

turmoil, the result of Peronists' control of Argentina's main labor unions and electoral system. This state of affairs hindered the country's integration into global financial markets, causing uneven economic performance, which, in turn, further marred the image of democracy in the eyes of the anti-Peronist elites and middle classes.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, this political impasse provided the incentive for Argentina's armed forces and conservative sectors to join forces in configuring a regime that would quell parliamentary politics infinitely.

A grave indication of Argentina's descent toward authoritarianism occurred on March 29, 1962, when commanders of the armed forces overthrew elected president Arturo Frondizi for letting Peronist candidates partake in Argentina's municipal elections. Shortly afterward, the public became privy to two epithets that represented opposing sides of an ideological struggle within the armed forces: the Colorados ("reds") and the Azules ("blues"). Whereas the former aimed to purge Argentina from Peronism through the extensive operation of a "revolutionary" military dictatorship, the latter was a self-proclaimed "legalist" faction, and as such, sought more sophisticated ways to do away with Perón's dominance.<sup>37</sup> The Azules' emergent leader, Juan Carlos Onganía, held that the armed forces should intervene in politics only when necessary to defend the country from falling into the hands of a populist "criminal regime."<sup>38</sup> Born in 1914, and serving as a soldier during the military interventions of the 1930s, Onganía also believed that generals did not have the skills to govern and should let experts manage the executive branch.<sup>39</sup> Following two deadly showdowns, in September 1962 and April 1963, Onganía's faction overpowered the Colorados, thereby paving the way for its control over the democratic process and an ever more restricted democracy.<sup>40</sup>

Simultaneously, the political crisis further stimulated the activity of Argentina's antidemocratic right. Self-branded the "*nacionalistas*," Argentina's unique fascist

36. Mónica Peralta-Ramos, *The Political Economy of Argentina: Power and Class since 1930* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); Roberto Cortés Conde, *The Political Economy of Argentina in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 194–243; Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); James W. McGuire, *Peronism without Perón: Unions, Parties, and Democracy in Argentina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Carlos Altamirano, *Bajo el signo de las masas (1943–1973)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2001), 50–69.

37. According to Alain Rouquié, the Azules "identified with the ruling classes, the oligarchy of the owners of the land and builders of the country." See Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina*, 214.

38. Onganía was the initiator of the Campo de Mayo Communiqué No. 150 that pledged to prevent Perón's return to power. See Juan Carlos Onganía, oral history with Robert Potash, 1984. Robert Potash Papers; and Robert Potash, *The Army & Politics in Argentina, 1962–1973: From Frondizi's Fall to the Peronist Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 73.

39. On Onganía's alleged "obsession" to keep the military out of politics, see Tomás Sánchez de Bustamante, oral history with Robert A. Potash, 1985, Robert Potash Papers, 7.

40. Marvin Goldwert, *Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930–1966: An Interpretation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 188–203; Rodolfo Pandolfi, *Azules y Colorados. El conflicto político y militar a comienzos de los sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría, 1994).

movement led this trend, as it had done since the 1930s.<sup>41</sup> Not by coincidence, the nacionalistas had also been Franco’s main partners in the attempt to lead Latin America’s “Hispanic” counterrevolution. In particular, in the 1950s, the amity between Alfredo Sánchez Bella and the nacionalista Mario Amadeo set the contours for the dialogue between the dictatorships in the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> The early 1960s saw the nacionalistas splintering into two ideological schools. On one hand, they acted from a violent neofascism that demanded to replace democracy with an anti-imperial corporatist-totalitarian regime and that often dovetailed with the fringes of the Peronist movement.<sup>43</sup> Here one can include anyone from intellectuals such as Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo and Julio Meinvielle to paramilitary bands such as the Movimiento Nacionalista Tacuara.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, other nacionalistas began rejecting the fascist legacies of the 1930s, pursuing instead collaborations with transnational organizations such as Ciudad Católica, Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, Cursillos de Cristiandad, and the Opus Dei, all of which offered more sophisticated approaches to authoritarian political action.<sup>45</sup> Amadeo spearheaded this clique and was the key promoter of a market-friendly authoritarian “synthesis.”<sup>46</sup> His post-fascist ideological position was clarified further when, in 1960, he met Franco in Madrid, later to express his disappointment at the latter’s “anachronistic” corporatist jargon.<sup>47</sup> Rather than the neofascists, it was this new ideological spectrum that drew the attention of the Azul faction. Indeed, Onganía himself participated in the Cursillos de Cristiandad’s retreats.<sup>48</sup> Given the secrecy surrounding these ceremonies, it is

41. Several historians have studied this movement throughout the years. See Fernando Devoto, *Nacionalismo, fascismo y tradicionalismo en la Argentina moderna. Una historia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno de Argentina, 2002); Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Alberto Spektorowski, *The Origins of Argentina’s Revolution of the Right* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); and David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History, and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

42. During the 1950s, Amadeo and such nacionalistas as Juan Carlos Goyeneche, Máximo Etchecopar, and José María de Estrada were among the most important promoters of the Hispanidad ideology in Latin America. See Mario Amadeo, *Por una convivencia internacional. Bases para una comunidad hispánica de naciones* (Madrid: Cultura Hispánica, 1956), 218.

43. For more on the nacionalistas’ “Peronization,” see Daniel Lvovich, *El nacionalismo de derecha. Desde sus orígenes a Tacuara* (Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2006), 76–77.

44. On the paramilitary neofascists, see Leonardo Senkman, “The Right and Civilian Regimes, 1955–1976,” in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, Sandra McGee Deutsch & Ronald H. Dolkart, eds. (Wilmington, DE: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 126–130.

45. On Ciudad Católica and the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, see Elena Scirica, “Visión religiosa y acción política. El caso de Ciudad Católica – Verbo en la Argentina de los años sesenta,” *PROHAL Monográfico, Revista del Programa de Historia de América Latina* 2 (2010): 33–36; and Isabela Cosse, “¿Una teología de la familia para el pueblo latinoamericano? La radicalización del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano en Argentina (1968–1974),” *Iberoamericana* 18:68 (2018): 57–75.

46. Mario Amadeo, *Frente a los hechos. Conferencia pronunciada en el Teatro Cómico, el 20 de agosto de 1956*, Biblioteca Nacional Argentina, Archivo Que [hereafter BNA-ARCH-CEN-ARQué], Mario Amadeo folder. See also Cosme Beccar Varela, *El nacionalismo* (Buenos Aires: Tradición, Familia y Propiedad, 1970), 15.

47. Mario Amadeo to Alfredo Sánchez Bella, April 2, 1960, AGUN, doc. 15/35/219.

48. The retreats consisted of three days of liturgical seminars (or “rollos”) and exercises in obedience, including one in which the participants’ free will was broken by being coerced to imitate the posture of the Crucifix, whereby they

difficult to infer whether he underwent a considerable ideological radicalization as a result. It is beyond doubt, however, that to his followers Onganía expressed not only pride in being a “*cursillista*” but a determination to deploy functionaries from among the *Cursillos* circles.<sup>49</sup>

Following Frondizi’s downfall in 1962, Amadeo founded a colloquium named Ateneo de la República (Athenaeum of the Republic). Led by eminent ICH members and Franco sympathizers, it aimed to coordinate Argentina’s authoritarian turn, a fact that Amadeo addressed openly at the association’s inauguration.<sup>50</sup> The Ateneo featured a younger generation of technocratic theorists, many of whom were Amadeo’s protégés and intimately associated with Franco’s Spain.<sup>51</sup> Mario Díaz Colodrero, Mariano Montemayor, and Enrique Pelzer, for instance, studied together in Madrid under Sánchez Bella.<sup>52</sup> Other examples were Nicanor Costa Méndez, Jorge Mazzinghi, and Samuel Medrano, all of whom studied at the ICH and were to reach high-ranking positions in Onganía’s regime.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, Díaz Colodrero, Mazzinghi, and Medrano joined the Opus Dei in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, there was a recurring pattern in these men’s biographies, starting with a Francoist ideological education and ending with a distinctive form of political activism in the 1960s.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the Ateneo served as a nexus with Franco’s Spain, as its intellectuals were the founders and directors of the Buenos Aires ICH branch, which opened in November 1965 in the presence of Franco’s ICH director, Gregorio Marañón Moya.<sup>55</sup> As for the contact between Onganía and the Ateneo, by 1963, they were already collaborating in a short-lived attempt to form a conservative “national front” ahead of that year’s July 7 general elections.<sup>56</sup> This meant that

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discovered “the joy experienced on finding oneself like Christ on the Cross.” See Hervás, *Leaders’ Manual for Cursillos in Christianity*, 54.

49. Mariano Grondona claimed that Onganía was “greatly influenced by the *Cursillos de la Cristiandad*” but did not quite elaborate in what sense. See Grondona, oral history with Potash, 19.

50. “Por una solución nacional. Discurso pronunciado en la comida del Ateneo de la República, el 21 de diciembre 1962,” *Cuadernos del Ateneo de la República 2* (Buenos Aires), BNA-ARCH-CEN-ARQué, Mario Amadeo folder. The Ateneo’s other leading figures were Hispanistas such as Máximo Etchecopar, Santiago de Estrada, Eduardo Roca, and Basilio Serrano. Author interview with Enrique Pelzer, March 15, 2016.

51. Mario Amadeo to Alfredo Sánchez Bella, November 1, 1966, AGUN, doc. 15/35/264.

52. Sánchez Bella even wrote to the Argentine ambassador on their behalf. See Alfredo Sánchez Bella to Perdo Radío, February 2, 1949, Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Culto [hereafter AMAEC], Embajada en Madrid II, box 25; and Interview with Enrique Pelzer, March 15, 2016.

53. Interview with Enrique Pelzer.

54. In 1965, these men all arrived in Madrid as the official guests of the ICH. See Jorge Mazzinghi, *Ni memorias ni olvido* (Buenos Aires: El Autor, 2015), 104.

55. Mazzinghi was one of the branch’s first directors, while Amadeo, Díaz Colodrero, and José Mariano Astigueta were among the board members. Additionally, the ICH maintained intimate contacts with the Spanish embassy, as Spain’s ambassador, José María Alfaro, and his cultural attaché José Ignacio Ramos as well, served as board members. See *Instituto Argentino de Cultura Hispánica. Veinticinco años de labor cultural* (Buenos Aires: Cultura Hispánica, 1990), 12–13.

56. Costa Méndez, oral history with Potash, 3–4. See also “Frente: ¿Llegó el momento de elegir candidatos?” *Primera Plana* (Buenos Aires), April 2, 1963, 6.

the interim administration of prime minister José María Guido witnessed the presence of several Ateneo members, most prominently José Mariano Astigueta, Guido's minister of education.<sup>57</sup>

With the Peronist electorate casting blank ballots, Arturo Umberto Illia's center-left party, Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo, won the 1963 elections with only 25 percent of the popular vote.<sup>58</sup> Illia's lack of a majority in parliament and his efforts to reduce the Azul faction's power meant further political uncertainty. As a result, the Argentine media now saw a mounting number of publicists openly discussing replacing democracy with a civil dictatorship. Salient within this panoply of voices was Mariano Grondona, who, in the popular magazine *Primera Plana*, stressed that "a refined Roman-styled dictatorship" was not only legitimate but mandatory.<sup>59</sup> "Everyone, myself included, contributed to creating a kind of myth about Onganía," he would admit later.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, Mariano Montemayor, by now a columnist in the magazine *Confirmado*, proclaimed that Argentina was ready to "cross the Rubicon, leaving behind its fictitious legitimacies and incompetent management."<sup>61</sup>

The Opus Dei, for its part, launched a journal named *Cuadernos del Sur*, which was later to become Onganía's ideological mouthpiece.<sup>62</sup> A brainchild of Opus Dei priests José Miguel Ibáñez Langlois and Ernesto García Alesanco—both of whom had been Pérez Embid's apprentices in Spain—the Opus Dei's technocratic theories appeared here in their purest form.<sup>63</sup> Parliamentary (or "ideological political life"), these intellectuals argued, is "a theoretical fabrication" that is "divorced from reality" and for which Latin America "pays a high price."<sup>64</sup> The future, they asserted, demands a regime "undoubtedly

57. That Guido appointed his authoritarian education minister reluctantly can be inferred from the way he ultimately sacked him. "You do not seem to share [my] way of directing this process, and even express what seems like a lack of positive conduct leading to a deterioration of the electoral process," Guido wrote to Astigueta. See Texto de la carta enviada por el presidente de la nación al Dr. José Mariano Astigueta, June 25, 1963, AGN.DAI/PN.SPD.pp, box 97.

58. Following the banning of his front's candidate, Perón called his followers to cast blank ballots. Twenty-one percent of the population did so. See Potash, *The Army & Politics in Argentina*, 76–81. Illia, a physician from Córdoba province, was neither unfit politically, nor did he lead Argentina into economic crisis. If anything, the opposite is the case: a tenuous economic growth characterized his tenure. See Rodolfo Pandolfi, *La democracia derrotada. Arturo Illia y su época* (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2008), 1–12.

59. Mariano Grondona, "La dictadura," *Primera Plana*, May 31, 1966, 11.

60. Grondona, oral history with Robert Potash, 1986, Robert Potash Papers, 36.

61. Mariano Montemayor, "Al: El señor presidente," *Confirmado* 26 (Buenos Aires), October 23, 1965, 5.

62. Onganía's ministers wrote in *Cuadernos del Sur* regularly, and in the case of Díaz Colodrero, even served on the board of directors. The same goes for Eugenio Brusa, the journal's editor, a member of both Opus Dei and the Ateneo who in 1968 became head of the political department at the Ministry of the Interior. See "Opus Dei/Ateneo," *Inédito* 49 (Buenos Aires), August 7, 1968, 5.

63. In 1964, Ibáñez Langlois wrote to Pérez Embid to discuss the journal's ideological line. See José Miguel Ibáñez Langlois to Florentino Pérez Embid, AGUN, box 003/016. Ibáñez Langlois, a Chilean, maintains that the journal was primarily an Argentine project. Author interview with José Miguel Ibáñez Langlois, April 25, 2016.

64. Ernesto García Alesanco, "En defensa de la libertad," *Cuadernos del Sur* 10 (Buenos Aires), May 1965, 382.

authoritarian, albeit not despotic, that renounces the formal values of democracy but preserves its essential content.”<sup>65</sup> To be sure, this regime was not to rest on the expertise of specialists alone. To avoid provoking the proletariat to alienation and rebelliousness, it would deploy religious experts (“spiritual force”) to instruct the workers how to “use the tools of power and technology without collective self-destruction,” Ibáñez Langlois explained.<sup>66</sup>

The more the popularity of Illia withered, in the face of disappointing economic performances, the more clearly Onganía, then his chief of staff, emerged as Argentina’s actual leader.<sup>67</sup> Not only did Onganía not bother denying this, but he also refused to pledge allegiance to his president, when on August 6, 1964, in a speech at West Point, he vowed to defend Argentina from “political parties circumstantially in power” and from “exotic ideologies.”<sup>68</sup> Seeking to attain international recognition, in 1965, Onganía also toured Europe and Brazil. Tellingly, he opened this trip with a week-long visit to Franco’s Spain, where he encountered several high-ranking figures, most importantly Franco’s vice president, Agustín Muñoz Grandes. Later, Onganía would admit not only that he was profoundly impressed by his host but also that he had told Muñoz Grandes that “Spain is the essence of Argentina’s interior and exterior politics.”<sup>69</sup> To the local press, Onganía underscored his alleged Basque ancestry and demanded that the Argentine, Spanish, and Brazilian armed forces form an anticommunist alliance, indicating once more who he saw as his foremost ideological allies.<sup>70</sup>

On November 22, 1965, Illia ostensibly forced Onganía into retirement.<sup>71</sup> In turn, in January 1966, Onganía met with Amadeo and his men—a fateful encounter in which the dictatorship’s configuration took place.<sup>72</sup> Amadeo was

65. José Miguel Ibáñez Langlois, “El futuro de la revolución social,” *Cuadernos del Sur* 15, October 1965, 898.

66. José Miguel Ibáñez Langlois, “Planificación y libertad,” *Cuadernos del Sur* 6-7, January-February 1965, 16. Ibáñez Langlois alluded here to the Opus Dei’s methods of attaining “enjoyment through work.” How this was to be exercised on a national scale he did not say. If anything, his words should be considered a principal guideline for the establishment of a spiritualist technocracy in Latin America.

67. A person who wanted to talk about issues of power, Díaz Colodrero reflected, “wasted time not speaking with Onganía.” In Mario Díaz Colodrero, oral history with Robert Potash, 1986. Robert Potash Papers, 4. On this process, see Liliana de Ríz, *La política en suspenso, 1966–1976* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000), 30–42.

68. “Sin ninguna fe en el gobierno,” *Primera Plana*, June 1965, 12; “Palabras pronunciadas por el comandante en jefe del ejército el día 6 de agosto en West Point en oportunidad de realizarse la Conferencia de los Ejércitos Americanos,” *Boletín Público de la Secretaría de Guerra* (September 10, 1964).

69. Audiencia presidida por el presidente de la Nación Argentina, General Onganía y el comisario del Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social, don Laureano López Rodó, August 19, 1966, AGUN, doc. 005/397/22.

70. “Los ejércitos de Argentina y Brasil estarán unidos frente a cualquier acción comunista,” *ABC* (Seville), September 2, 1965, 23. See also “Un nuevo Onganía,” *Primera Plana*, September 21, 1965, 10.

71. According to Potash, while Illia appointed brigadier general Eduardo Castro Sánchez—an officer senior to Onganía—as secretary of the army, thereby provoking Onganía’s resignation, he did not deliberately cause his departure. See Potash, *The Army & Politics in Argentina*, 151.

72. Díaz Colodrero, oral history with Potash, 7.

the “person who spoke,” promoting the idea “that a coup was necessary” and that this government “of mediocracies” should be replaced by “capable men,” Costa Méndez recalled.<sup>73</sup> His memory matches what Amadeo wrote to Sánchez Bella at the time: “I believe that the Ateneo can fulfill a great role of nucleation and civil orientation in the uncertain times ahead,” he told his Francoist ally.<sup>74</sup> Put differently, when laying the foundations for his regime, Onganía sought out the expertise of the Ateneo’s Hispanophile technocrats over that of neofascist figures such as Sánchez Sorondo—whose journal *Azul y Blanco* Onganía even closed in later years.<sup>75</sup> As significantly, Onganía’s ideological references were evident to his followers. “Onganía’s ideal was Franco, but he realized quite well that Argentina was not Spain and that Franco was anachronistic,” Costa Méndez remembered.<sup>76</sup> In other words, to his men, Onganía was candid about his Francoist inspirations but also purported to push the Spanish model and move toward a somewhat different authoritarian format—one that would overcome Perón’s mass-based movement by spurring swift economic growth, in “peace and liberty.”<sup>77</sup>

## THE ARGENTINE REVOLUTION: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE (1966-69)

On June 28, 1966, generals Pascual Pistarini, Adolfo Álvarez, and Benigno Varela, overthrew Arturo Illia in a bloodless coup d’état. The following day they granted complete extra-constitutional powers to Onganía. Therefore, technically Onganía did not seize power militarily, which allowed him to present himself as a civil administrator who answered neither to a military Junta nor to any political group. Still, Onganía’s regime was, by all standards, a dictatorship. Little did this bother the mainstream Argentine press, which could barely hide its enthusiasm in expectation for economic stagnation to be replaced with decisive action.<sup>78</sup> On August 5, 1966, the famous exiled Spanish philosopher Salvador de Madariaga even published an open letter to Onganía in the daily *La Prensa*, declaring that democracy did not suit the “Hispanic character.” A liberal thinker, but evidently no big democrat, Madariaga then mused about a new

73. Costa Méndez, oral history with Potash, 3–10.

74. Mario Amadeo to Alfredo Sánchez Bella, December 30, 1965, AGUN, doc. 15/35/260.

75. On this journal, see Valeria Galván, *El nacionalismo de derecha en la Argentina posperonista. El semanario Azul y Blanco (1956–1969)* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2013).

76. Costa Méndez, oral history with Potash, 8.

77. Mario Díaz Colodrero, *Dos políticas, dos argentinas. Palabras pronunciadas por el Secretario de Gobierno de la Nación, Dr. Mario Díaz Colodrero por la red de radio y televisión, el 15 de marzo 1968* (Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Estado de Gobierno, 1968), 10.

78. “Exigencias de la vida actual,” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires) July 1, 1966, 6; “Política educativa, para nuestro tiempo,” *La Nación*, July 14, 1966, 6.

post-ideological society wherein “both the employers’ anarchy and the workers’ anarchy will be replaced with a regime of authority.”<sup>79</sup>

No sooner had Onganía come to power than he began linking himself with the Francoist regime. On July 13, 1966, he published a text titled “Políticas del Gobierno Nacional” pledging to “strengthen Argentina’s traditional relations with Spain and the other European nations.”<sup>80</sup> Further efforts to establish a bond between the regimes ensued when in August 1966 Laureano López Rodó arrived in Buenos Aires to meet with Onganía and his cabinet.<sup>81</sup> López Rodó’s memorandum indicates that Onganía was full of pathos when speaking about Spain’s role in Argentina. “Nations need more than just material progress. They require the spirit to inspire them. Here they need *Argentinidad*. Spain must give this spirit its form,” he told Franco’s technocrat.<sup>82</sup> Even more striking, López Rodó’s minutes depict Onganía expressing “his interest in the Spanish formula of the Economic and Social Development Plan,” and suggesting sending officials to Spain to “study the Argentine problems with the Spanish experts.” To further impress his guest, Onganía voiced technocratic slogans of his own. The future “participation of the community” in politics was hazardous, he said, given that Argentina’s political parties are “divorced from reality.”<sup>83</sup>

Several weeks later, Onganía wrote his previously mentioned letter to Franco, in which he explained his regime to his peer, and in so doing, to his followers. This can be deduced from yet another suggestive line in his letter: “I am convinced that Your Excellency will interpret the meaning of this message, dictated by the desire . . . that the substantive values that have given meaning to our national movements would translate into the effective action of our governments.” Here, Onganía was alluding to the sacred values of Hispanidad and Catholicism that, in his view, were the ethical backbone of the Argentine Revolution.<sup>84</sup>

Regardless of these gestures, there is no evidence that Onganía ever publicly pledged to walk in Franco’s footsteps, or that the Argentine mainstream press seriously considered their connection.<sup>85</sup> In truth, one could notice distinct

79. Salvador de Madariaga, “Carta abierta al general-presidente,” *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), August 5, 1966, 1.

80. Políticas del Gobierno Nacional, AGN.DAI/PN.SPD.pp, box 101.

81. López Rodó stated that Onganía “had been so affectionate with Spain, he esteems our country so much, that I was really excited about this meeting.” See Declaraciones del ministro sin cartera del plan de desarrollo económico social de España Dr. Laureano López Rodó luego de su entrevista con el presidente de la nación, August 19, 1966, AGN.DAI/PN.SPD.pp, box 101.

82. Audiencia presidida por el presidente de la Nación Argentina, August 19, 1966.

83. Audiencia presidida por el presidente de la Nación Argentina, August 19, 1966. See also Laureano López Rodó, *Memorias* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janes, 1990), 68–69.

84. J214: Información, October 21, 1966.

85. Mariano Grondona did ponder whether Onganía should walk in the footsteps of French, Spanish, and Brazilian personalist regimes, but never identified Onganía with Franco. See Grondona, “Los tres modelos,” *Primera Plana*,

differences between the leaders’ styles. For one, Onganía did not instate a cult of personality around himself by referring to his authority as stemming from the “Grace of God,” as Franco had done.<sup>86</sup> For another, despite relying on sporadic police brutality—most famously during oppressive actions at the University of Buenos Aires, the Argentine right’s *bête noire*—Onganía refrained from systematically terrorizing his opponents, let alone assassinating them.<sup>87</sup> In fact, he saw himself as embodying a consensual “state of exception,” which by outlawing all political activity—which he perceived as a voluntary “renunciation” of an entire “political generation”—aimed to avoid civil war at all costs.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, by permitting the uninterrupted function of Argentina’s labor unions and free press, Onganía could contend that his regime protected, rather than eliminated, civil liberties.<sup>89</sup> Or, as his supporters in the press explained, given that the Argentines’ “fundamental human rights” remained in place, Onganía’s regime was entirely “not despotic.”<sup>90</sup>

Thus, the Spanish-Argentine ideological link was, at least initially, discreet. It became more explicit, however, once Onganía began appointing his officials. By making Costa Méndez foreign minister, and Díaz Colodrero secretary of government, Onganía proved that Amadeo’s circle was the regime’s ideological powerhouse. Echoing López Rodó’s function, Díaz Colodrero, the Opus Dei affiliate and *Cuadernos del Sur* editorial board member, was to be the regime’s chief administrator, bringing together all branches of government toward rapid economic development.<sup>91</sup> The government fully stabilized in January 1967, when Onganía appointed Adalbert Krieger Vasena as minister of the economy, along with the Ateneo’s own José Mariano Astigueta as minister of education and Guillermo Borda as minister of the interior. For Amadeo, these

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November 1, 1966, 14. Similarly, a *Primera Plana* editorial noted that for Onganía the “Spanish experience after 1939 is not disposable,” but nonetheless did not link the two dictatorships. See “Una nube de incógnitas,” *Primera Plana*, July 5, 1966, 14.

86. On Franco’s “political theology,” see William Vinstenz, *By the Grace of God: Francoist Spain and the Sacred Roots of Political Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

87. In what came to be known as “the night of the long batons,” on July 29, 1966, the federal police stormed the University of Buenos Aires violently repressing protests against the regime’s revocation of academic freedom. On these events, see Sergio Morero, *La noche de los bastones largos. 30 años después* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Página, 1996); On the Argentine right and the “university question,” see Beatriz Sarlo, *La batalla de las ideas (1943–1973)* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 2007), 85–146.

88. “It would have been easy for the Revolution to use force. . . . But this was not our way,” Onganía said. See Discurso pronunciado por el Señor Presidente de la Nación Teniente General Juan Carlos Onganía en la comida de camaradería de las Fuerzas Armadas realizada el 6 de julio de 1967 (Buenos Aires: Presidencia de la Nación, 1967), 10–11.

89. The press, he said, could “help the common man understand contemporary processes.” See Discurso pronunciado por el Señor Presidente de la Nación en la XIV comida anual de la asociación de la prensa extranjera, August 18, 1967, AGN.DAI/PN.SPD.pp, box 104.

90. Mariano Grondona, “Definiciones,” *Primera Plana*, July 5, 1966, 11.

91. “The State Secretariat was to take over everything that had to do with executive action from the Interior Ministry,” he said. See Díaz Colodrero, oral history with Potash, 8.

appointments confirmed that Onganía had made the Ateneo his regime's hegemonic ideological core. "The revolutionary government, because of its political, social, and spiritual orientation, could not have found a more suitable and coherent team in the civil sphere than ours," he bragged to Sánchez Bella.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, Onganía appointed numerous functionaries with "spiritual" credentials, almost all affiliated with Opus Dei, Cursillos de Cristiandad, and the ICH—apparatuses intimately linked with Spain, as we have seen.<sup>93</sup>

The exceptional figure in this cabinet was Krieger Vasena. While not a devout Catholic, he and his team of economic "technicians" were chosen to administer what was, in essence, a process identical to Franco's 1959 stabilization plan. Through a series of drastic practices, ranging from a currency devaluation to a national salary freeze, Krieger Vasena sought to curb Argentina's chronic inflation, paving the way for a rapid increase of foreign investment.<sup>94</sup> This economic shock treatment also meant eliminating collective bargaining and subsidized economic activities, most infamously the sugar industry in Tucumán province.<sup>95</sup> Believing that only an authoritarian regime could orchestrate so profound a shift in the economy, Krieger Vasena actually believed that the working classes would willingly endure a "state of mind of austerity" for better-paying jobs and "modernized manufacturing."<sup>96</sup>

In a parallel vein, Argentina was to undergo its own "decentralization" process, based on a system of "development poles."<sup>97</sup> In the words of Díaz Colodrero, its architect, this plan sought to "correct the concentrated growth distortion in the metropolitan area."<sup>98</sup> That these formulas emulated Spain's development plans was a fact he admitted proudly.<sup>99</sup> All things considered, the outcome of

92. Mario Amadeo to Alfredo Sánchez Bella, January 28, 1967, AGUN, doc. 15/35/266.

93. On these figures' affiliations, see Gabriela Gomes, "Las trayectorias políticas de los funcionarios nacional-corporativistas del Onganiato," in *Trayectorias de intelectuales en el estado. Actas de jornadas de discusión*, Gabriela Gomes and Martín Vicente, eds. (San Fernando [Argentina]: Edición de la autora, 2016), 33–57.

94. As in France and Spain, the plan consisted of "one big devaluation," thereby achieving currency stabilization. See Adelbert Krieger Vasena, oral history with Robert Potash, 1984. Robert Potash Papers, 43.

95. Roberto Pucci, *Historia de la destrucción de una provincia: Tucumán, 1966* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Pago Chico, 2007); Silvia Nassif, "La lucha obrera en Tucumán. Del ingenio Los Ralos a la fábrica Textil Escalada (1966–1973)," *Coordinadas: Revista de Historia Local y Regional* 3:1 (2016): 30–52.

96. Krieger Vasena, oral history with Potash, 57–58. For more on Krieger Vasena's notions of "the role of international capital markets" in Latin America, see Adalbert Krieger Vasena and Javier Pazos, *Latin America; A Broader World Role* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 131–147.

97. "Discurso pronunciado por el Dr. Mario Díaz Colodrero el 16 de Mayo 1968 en la unión industrial Argentina," *Cinco discursos y una revolución* (Buenos Aires: Publicaciones Movimiento Humanista de Derecho, 1968), 33–34.

98. Díaz Colodrero, *Dos políticas, dos argentinas*, 32.

99. "Argentina necesita grandes contingentes de mano de obra latina y especialmente española," *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona) June 14, 1967, 56. On Argentina's development poles, see Patricio Narodowski, *La Argentina pasiva. Desarrollo, subjetividad, instituciones, más allá de la modernidad. El desarrollo visto desde el margen de una periferia, de un país dependiente* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros Editorial, 2007); and Martín Fiszbein, "Crecimiento desbalanceado y estructura productiva desequilibrada en Argentina (1945–1976). Problemas e ideas del modelo industrial en retrospectiva," *Estudios sobre la Industria Argentina* 3:3 (2013): 49.

Onganía’s economic reforms was not dissimilar from that of the Francoist precedent: between 1967 and 1970, Argentina witnessed a period of economic stabilization and impressive GDP growth—for Krieger Vasena, this was the “Argentine miracle.”<sup>100</sup> However, the social consequences of these policies were undeniably severe. As even Onganía admitted then, his “Plan of Ordering and Transformation” hurt the more “humble sectors” of society.<sup>101</sup>

Throughout this process, a discussion burgeoned inside the regime regarding the precise authoritarian state model that should replace Argentina’s parliamentary system. This deliberation, too, included an intimate dialogue between Amadeo (by then, Argentina’s ambassador in Brazil) and his Francoist counterpart, Sánchez Bella. “We are in an extremely critical moment for the implementation of a democratic and representative system,” Amadeo wrote to Sánchez Bella, “based, not on political parties . . . but natural institutions.”<sup>102</sup> As expected, Franco’s ideologue backed these formulas and defined them further for his friend: the Argentine dictatorship “should rely on natural institutions—the family, municipality, and unions—to create a *politics of things*, pragmatic rather than ideological,” he told Amadeo. Even more striking, Sánchez Bella addressed the Ateneo’s specific role. “What is important is that the Ateneo does not dissolve now that it is in power . . . but succeed creating a new mentality in Argentina, more appropriate than the present one for the technological society in which we live,” he urged.<sup>103</sup> Assuredly, for these men, the Ateneo symbolized how civil representation was to be practiced, in actuality, in the age of authoritarian technocracy. Rather than a fascist-styled corporatist chamber, participation in executive power in Onganía’s Argentina would be exercised via elite societies—those the dictator regarded as the most technically and spiritually adept for the job, to be precise.

At first, the regime maintained its political plans undisclosed. Sure enough, from the start, Onganía’s speeches were replete with anti-modern slogans. For instance, on July 4, 1966, commemorating the 150 years since Argentina’s Declaration of Independence, he affirmed that “a cycle in Argentine history has now reached its

100. Krieger Vasena, oral history with Potash, 57–58. On this period of economic growth, see Cortés Conde, *The Political Economy of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 230–240.

101. Discurso pronunciado por el Presidente de la Nación Teniente General Juan Carlos Onganía, en el acto de clausura de la Primera Junta de Gobernadores de la Patagonia (Buenos Aires: Presidencia de la Nación, 1967). On the winners and losers of these reforms, see Rubén M. Perina, *Onganía, Levingston, Lanusse. Los militares en la política Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1983), 131–151.

102. Alfredo Sánchez Bella to Mario Amadeo, September 20, 1966, AGUN, doc. 15/35/263.

103. Alfredo Sánchez Bella to Mario Amadeo, February 22, 1967, AGUN, document 15/35/268. Italics in the original text.

conclusion.”<sup>104</sup> Even so, during his first months in power, Argentina’s political future was hardly addressed. In May 1967, when Díaz Colodrero finally tackled the question, all he would say was that Argentina should enjoy the current “rest-cure” from its political “anachronisms.”<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately for Onganía, this vagueness meant that throughout 1967 his leadership came under increasing public criticism.<sup>106</sup> Subsequently, and with the Peronist labor unions still cooperating with the regime, he made public an evolutionary strategy consisting of “economic,” “social,” and “political” phases.<sup>107</sup> If the “economic phase” was synonymous with Krieger Vasena’s reforms, then the last “political phase” was intended to signify the advent of an original and yet-to-be-defined model of political representation, based not on a “party system” but a new “concept of community.”<sup>108</sup>

Most enigmatic of the three phases was, however, the “social phase.” As Amadeo and Sánchez Bella’s correspondence lays bare, it signified a resolve to alter the Argentines’ “mentalities” toward obedient and integrated collective action. Naturally, public morality was one prominent concern of the “social phase.” A new patriarchal civic code, followed by restrictions on cultural expression and municipal laws banning miniskirts and preventing men from growing long hair, showcased a regime railing against the alleged detriments of the Western cultural revolution of the 1960s—a process that, in a way, preceded the Brazilian dictatorship’s “moral technocracy” period.<sup>109</sup> With the youth’s mentality now at the center of attention, the education system became a stage for moralist theorization, and an arena in which the collaboration with Franco’s Spain became ever more apparent. Following the passing of Law 16,981 of October 14, 1966, as Onganía had promised Franco, Argentina began an intimate partnership with Spain’s Office of Ibero-American

104. Discurso pronunciado por el Presidente de la Nación teniente general Juan Carlos Onganía en la comida de la camaradería de las fuerzas armadas, July 6, 1966, AGN, PN.SPD.pp, box 101.

105. “Gobierno: el plan político,” *Primera Plana*, May 23, 1967, 12–13.

106. While the liberal magazine *Inédito* condemned him for being a “fascist,” the neofascists harshly attacked Krieger Vasena’s economic policies. See “Plagio?” *Inédito*, January 25, 1967, 2; “Si se va Onganía . . .” *Azul y Blanco*, October 23, 1967.

107. On the Peronist unions and the reasons for their collaboration with Onganía, see Darío Dawyd, “El nuevo autoritarismo burocrático y el sindicalismo peronista. Análisis de la ‘participación’ junto al gobierno militar de Onganía en la Argentina de los años sesenta,” *Confluente* 4:2 (January 2013): 17; James, *Resistance and Integration*, 215–228.

108. Discurso pronunciado por el Señor presidente de la Nación Teniente General Juan Carlos Onganía en la comida de camaradería de las Fuerzas Armadas realizada el 6 de julio de 1967.

109. Cowan, *Securing Sex*, 111–144; There is little to show that the two dictatorships influenced one another when formulating these policies. Still, the collaboration between Brazil and Argentina throughout the late 1960s should indeed be explored further in historiography. Onganía’s Civic Code allowed Argentines to divorce but conditioned this on the verdict of special “judicial decree” (Art. 66), and further granted any “relatives of the future spouses within the second degree of consanguinity” the right to oppose new marriages (Art. 21). See *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 21554 (Buenos Aires), November 4, 1968. For more on Onganía’s “Cinema Law,” see Ley 17.741, *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 21.550, October 28, 1968. For more on these public morality campaigns, see Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina*, 259; and Mala Htun, *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67.

Education.<sup>110</sup> Education minister Gelly y Obes's speech at the OEI headquarters clarified what this bond meant for him and his leader: "Spain is once again our example, as an expression of a strong and prolific nation; it is reborn from its crises with new vigor and impulse," he asserted, thereafter to avow that "Spanish America's spiritual cohesion is enhanced by having as a contemporary example the means of development performed by the Mother Nation."<sup>111</sup>

In 1967, Argentina even hosted the OEI's Conference of Technical Education, an occasion that featured Onganía and his newly appointed education minister Astigueta yoking economic development to technical education and "respect to order and spiritual and moral values."<sup>112</sup> Shortly afterward, Astigueta promulgated an education reform that set out, among other things, to rid the youth of nonconformity, or in his words, encourage it to "return to interiority."<sup>113</sup> In what was the regime's most salient indoctrination effort to date, he deployed a think-tank of Catholic intellectuals to restructure the Argentine secular education system according to Catholic guidelines. Tellingly, a celebratory *Cuadernos del Sur* issue dedicated to the reform saw Spanish thinker Víctor García Hoz, perhaps the Opus Dei's most illustrious pedagogue of the 1960s, presenting the introductory message. One can elude modern alienation and rebelliousness, he stated, by "stimulating man's spiritual development so that he does not become a mere means of production," and by inspiring in him the "divine calling to work."<sup>114</sup> It is still unclear how these words translated into concrete policy, given that the reform ended in 1969, as we shall see shortly. What is certain, however, is that for Onganía and his followers the "social phase" was tantamount to gradually indoctrinating the Argentines to Catholic morality and obedience.<sup>115</sup>

By that time, the affinity between Spain and Argentina had begun revealing itself in other realms. For one thing, the regimes made outstanding efforts to grant one

110. The OEI financed and directed the Argentine "middle school" reform, implemented in the province of Buenos Aires and in place until 1971. See OEI, balance de actividades 1964-68, Biblioteca del Ministerio de Educación, OEI/SG/IME15.

111. "Incorporación de la Argentina en la OEI," *Plana* 110 (Madrid), October-November 1966, 3.

112. *II seminario iberoamericano de enseñanzas técnicas* (Buenos Aires: Oficina de Educación Iberoamericana) September 14, 1967, 10-15.

113. Mensaje a la juventud. Discurso pronunciado por el Secretario de Estado de Cultura y Educación, Dr. José Mariano Astigueta, durante el homenaje a los congresales de Tucumán, July 8, 1968 (Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Estado de Cultura y Educación, 1968).

114. Víctor García Hoz, "La problemática perspectiva de la educación actual," *Cuadernos del Sur* 42-43, January-February 1968, 5-11.

115. For more on Catholicization of the Argentine education system during the reform and the opposition to it, see Laura Rodríguez, "La reforma educativa del gobierno de Juan Carlos Onganía. Adhesiones y resistencia," in *Política y cultura durante el "Onganiato."* *Nuevas perspectivas para la investigación de la presidencia de Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970)*, Valeria Galván and Florencia Osuna, eds. (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2014), 157-176.

another their highest of honors.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, following the closing of the British market to Argentine beef in 1967, Spain was the first to come to Onganía's aid by purchasing some 20,000 tons of Argentine meat, in what seemed a reverse version of the famous 1946 Perón-Franco treaties.<sup>117</sup> The Argentine Revolution also attracted the attention of Franco's intellectuals. In 1967, Fernández de la Mora visited the country, presenting his theory on the "twilight of ideologies" to a sympathetic audience.<sup>118</sup> Another visitor from Spain, although not a Spaniard himself, was Fredrick D. Wilhelmsen. A reactionary Opus Dei sympathizer, in 1967 he gave a series of lectures in Buenos Aires that drew the contempt of the liberal newspaper *Inédito*. The "*opusdeísta* Wilhelmsen," it reported, "spoke at the Ateneo de la República, in parishes, and Catholic universities . . . all these new promoters of communitarianism, *cursillismo*, corporativism, names behind which clericalism and extreme right-wing fascism are hidden."<sup>119</sup> Regardless of its alarmist tone ("fascism"), and despite failing to highlight the Argentine-Spanish nexus, the report was nonetheless correct in pointing to the antidemocratic ideological project that had been flourishing openly in Argentina. Yet another instance was an event that took place at the Buenos Aires ICH branch: in May 1968, it witnessed further public Argentine-Spanish cooperation in the shape of a Congress for Scientific, Cultural, and Economic Development. Once more, Spain's ICH director Marañón Moya, Onganía, and Costa Méndez attended this festive event and pledged to educate Latin American youth to "have the ability to ask questions about the worlds of matter and spirit."<sup>120</sup>

In a parallel vein, Onganía's ministers traveled to Spain, issuing telling statements regarding their mission. In November 1967, as a part of an effort to amass foreign credit in Europe, Krieger Vasena arrived in Spain.<sup>121</sup> Accompanied by a team of experts, he purported to explore "Spain's system of administrative decentralization," which, the Spanish dailies explained, had already been

116. In 1967, Franco decorated Onganía and Costa Méndez with the Spanish Navy Medals of Honor. In return, Onganía honored three Spanish ministers, most tellingly López Rodó himself. No German, French, Brazilian, British, Mexican, or US official received any such honors from Onganía. See Decreto 7999/1967, *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 21306, November 3, 1967; and Decreto 1319/1970, *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 21964, July 6, 1970.

117. "Firmóse un acuerdo de carnes con España," *La Nación*, August 6, 1967, 1. On this crisis, see Roberto Roth, *Los años de Onganía. Relato de un testigo* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones La Campana, 1981), 240–241. On the Perón-Franco treaties that saved the Francoist regime in the 1940s, see Raanan Rein, *The Franco-Perón Alliance: Relations between Spain and Argentina, 1946–1955* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993).

118. "Conferencia de Fernández de la Mora en Buenos Aires," *ABC* (Madrid), September 24, 1967, 93.

119. "La banca del señor Palanca o la palanca del señor Labanca," *Inédito*, September 27, 1967, 3.

120. *Desarrollo. Publicación del Congreso para el Desarrollo Científico, Cultural y Económico de Iberoamérica* 1, September 1968, 13.

121. According to Spanish news agencies, Spain's banks granted Argentina "up to twenty million dollars" in loans. See FNFE doc. 20159.

applied "as an initial experiment in the Argentine province of Córdoba."<sup>122</sup> Next, Argentina's minister of tourism and the press, Federico Frischmacht, arrived to study Spain's tourist economy. "I must admit that I feel overwhelmed by the weight of trying to emulate the actions developed by the Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism," he stated. The encounter with Spain's model of a "free press" brought Frischmacht to other revealing conclusions. "The one concept necessary to guide the politics of governments and private activity is Christianity," he said, in yet another repudiation of Argentina's bygone parliamentary past. Then, he begged God "to continue enlightening" Franco and Onganía, "who have done so much to lead our peoples together in the path of historical destiny."<sup>123</sup>

Last, Costa Méndez visited Spain in April 1969. Meeting with Franco, the Argentine foreign minister discussed the similarities between the British occupations of Gibraltar and the Falklands Islands, and the "need for the respective governments to continue to lend each other mutual and unyielding diplomatic support until they have obtained due justice." He, too, could barely reign in the impulse of declaring himself and his hosts the guardians of Latin America's "Hispanic truth."<sup>124</sup> In short, when visiting Spain, Onganía's ministers sought to obtain financial and diplomatic assistance, as well as to study the Francoist methods of development, representation, and tourist economy. And they did so while voicing pathos-laden expressions on the shared "Hispanic" crusade their regimes supposedly spearheaded.

## ONGANÍA'S "POLITICAL PHASE" AND THE REGIME'S DEMISE (1969-70)

In 1968, as the Argentine Revolution neared its third year, the "political phase" was still undefined, leaving the press to constant speculation.<sup>125</sup> Even the regime's supporters in *Cuadernos del Sur* appeared perplexed when contemplating Argentina's future "organic" democracy, and whether it could be rendered "corporatist." For Edmundo Carbone, the journal's editor, there was little doubt that Argentina had transcended its ideological past and was ready

122. "El ministro argentino de economía esperado hoy en Madrid," *ABC* (Seville), November 12, 1967, 66; Among them was the Argentine minister of social security, Alfredo Manuel Cousido. For more on the Argentine-Spanish Social Security treaty, see *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 269, November 10, 1967, 15513-15515.

123. (Document without title) AGA, box 42/08973, 4.

124. "La verdad hispana ha de ser divulgada por nosotros dijo el canciller argentino," *ABC* (Madrid), April 15, 1969, 29.

125. "Argentina: ¿Empezó el tiempo político?" *Primera Plana*, January 30, 1968, 32; "Gobierno: la ilusión del consejalismo," *Primera Plana*, August 20, 1968, 20; "Participacionismo: ¿una mala palabra?" *7 Días* (Buenos Aires), August 12, 1968, 19.

for an authoritarian model, based not on corporatist chambers but rather on councils consisting of “representatives from different sectors of society extracted from their freely constituted groupings.”<sup>126</sup> Another Opus Dei publicist named Roberto Bosca, on the other hand, spoke of a “democratic corporative system” that would be “neither fascist nor medieval” and thus capable of “alleviating the errors . . . of liberalism, neoliberalism, and statism.”<sup>127</sup> In the spring of 1968, further public confusion ensued as Borda and Díaz Colodrero were both quoted as supporting the replacement of parliament with an entirely novel system of representation.<sup>128</sup>

Unlike his intellectuals, Onganía was neither keen to elucidate his “political phase” nor to frame it legally the way Franco had done in 1958 and 1967. Alternatively, he set in motion minor projects that seemingly promoted public participation in governance. The Ministry of Social Welfare, for instance, sponsored the Promotion of Community Assistance (SEPAC) as a cornerstone of “social participation.”<sup>129</sup> Apart from this, for Onganía, the only vital civil councils were the National Security Council (CONASE) and the National Council of Development (CONADE).<sup>130</sup> Procrastination along the route to the “political phase” was an invitation to the regime’s local echelons to take further initiative. In one such “pilot” project, in August 1968, Carlos Caballero, the nacionalista governor of the city of Córdoba, established his own “community council,” which the liberal media immediately deemed “a preamble for a proper fascist-like corporative chamber.”<sup>131</sup> Still, taken as a whole, there is little evidence that either Onganía or his Ateneo ministers ever envisioned introducing a truly nationwide system of public representation in Argentina.<sup>132</sup>

126. Edmundo J. Carbone, “Una política maniquea,” *Cuadernos del Sur* 52, November 1968, 999.

127. Roberto Bosca, “Un problema explosivo: La representación política,” *Cuadernos del Sur* 61-62, August-September 1969, 680-683.

128. “Expuso el doctor Borda la idea política del gobierno,” *La Nación*, April 25, 1968, 1; “Declaraciones en Jujuy del Dr. Díaz Colodrero,” *La Nación*, May 19, 1968. Ever since 1967, Díaz Colodrero had denied that his ideology was corporatism, as the latter “political formula” was “a thing of the past.” See “La revolución argentina cumplirá dos etapas,” *ABC* (Madrid), June 27, 1967, 72.

129. For more on these initiatives, see Gabriela Gomes, “El Onganiato y los sectores populares. Funcionarios, ideas y políticas de la Secretaría de Estado de Promoción y Asistencia a la Comunidad (1966-1970),” *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Históricos* 11:11 (2011): 279-302; and Guido Giorgi, “Refundar la sociedad. El comunitarismo como política de Estado en el Gobierno de Onganía,” in Galván and Osuna, *Política y cultura durante el “Onganiato,”* 105-118.

130. Onganía, oral history with Potash, 17-18. On CONASE and CONADE, see Aníbal Jáuregui, “El CONADE: organización y resultados (1961-1971),” *Anuario IEHS* (2014): 141-158; and Aníbal Jáuregui, “La planificación en la Argentina: El CONADE y el PND (1960-1966),” *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Históricos* 13 (2013): 243-266.

131. “Próximas novedades,” *Inédito*, August 7, 1968, 5. For more on this episode, see James P. Brennan, *Córdoba rebelde. El Cordobazo, el clasismo y la movilización social* (La Plata: De la Campana, 2008), 88-101.

132. Onganía, for his part, denied that these bodies represented a corporatist ideology. See Onganía, oral history with Potash, 14.

Even so, the very prospects of inaugurating a "corporatist" political system proved harmful for Onganía. Indeed, by then, the Argentine press was taking jabs not only at this forthcoming authoritarian state model but at the ideological groups propagating it and their unmistakable political influence, in both Onganía's administration and provincial governments. This began as early as 1967 when a damaging report on the Opus Dei's position of power in government appeared in the weekly *Análisis*. "One should consider the Opus Dei a secret/semi-secret political association and attribute to it an ever-growing, albeit nonvisible, power," the report stated.<sup>133</sup> In early 1969, *Primera Plana* followed suit in exposing the Cursillos de Cristiandad's political control of Tucumán—a fact that the province's non-elected governor and Cursillos leader, Roberto Avellaneda, hardly denied.<sup>134</sup> If these reports reflected the political power of these movements, rather than their Francoist linkage, then in 1969 several conspicuous pamphlets circulated in Argentina alleging that the country was headed toward a "communitarian state" that "will rely on bodies similar to those existing in Spain and Portugal, under the Opus Dei's influence."<sup>135</sup> In brief, by the spring of 1969, Onganía's regime, the ideological agencies backing it, and its avowed links to the Iberian peninsula had become subject to critical public scrutiny.

Ultimately, this public criticism fueled the civil resistance that led to Onganía's downfall. On May 29, 1969, a conjuncture of circumstances—including new tax increases, continuous student mobilization, and the intransigence of several labor unions gathered under the name CGT de los Argentinos—brought this unrest to the surface in the city of Córdoba. Following an alliance between the city's students and the Light and Auto plant unions, demonstrators took over the city for hours, to be overrun by the police later on the same day and suffer up to 30 fatalities.<sup>136</sup> The events rendered manifest that Onganía was neither a consensual dictator nor capable of sustaining "peace and liberty" without lethal brutality. Furthermore, they bore witness that the regime's plans to instigate a conservative modernization reminiscent of Francoism had led Argentines of

133. The report presented Díaz Colodrero, Jorge Mazzighi (sub-director of the Foreign Ministry), and Samuel Medrano (Ministry of the Interior) as examples of the group's power. See "El Opus Dei, aquí y ahora," *Análisis* (Buenos Aires), February 6, 1967, 16–20. As mentioned, *Inédito* also reported regularly on these organizations. See "Próximas novedades"; and "Opus Dei/Ateneo".

134. "Tucumán: reino del cursillismo," *Primera Plana*, February 4, 1969, 1.

135. Similitud de organismos, AGA, box 42/08972.

136. According to Daniel James, the regime's determination to control the unions meant a "weakened and divided union movement," torn between pragmatism and calls for aggressive opposition. Once the situation in Córdoba escalated, the Peronist unions joined the mobilization. See James, *Resistance and Integration*, 220–223. Córdoba was only one of several uprisings, in the cities of Rosario, Tucumán, and Corrientes, indicating that this was a national uprising rather than a local outburst of frustration. See Emilio Ariel Crenzel, *El Tucumanazo* (Tucumán: Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 1997); Riz, *La política en suspenso*, 67–80; Beba Balvé, *El '69 huelga política de masas. Rosariazo, cordobazo, rosariazo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1989).

different ideological hues to conclude that authoritarianism could be ousted only through civil disobedience, and later, urban guerilla action. Indeed, even Franco's agents reported back to their superiors that Córdoba's "effervescence" did not derive from any "political orientation" but from Onganía's austerity measures and his reluctance to oppress the public sphere. "Everyone here enjoys the absolute and total freedom of the press," they remarked in exhortation.<sup>137</sup>

Interestingly, *Cuadernos del Sur*'s response was not dissimilar, as its editorial admitted that the uprising had resulted from Onganía's "economic mistakes" and pleaded that he reveal his "political plan." But what was the Opus Dei editors' desired plan? Certainly not a return to parliamentarism. In truth, *Cuadernos del Sur* still argued that the Argentine Revolution had created a final "supra-constitutional order," reiterated that the regime relied on a "tacit consensus of the population," and ended by stating that "one cannot go back to the system concluded on June 28, 1966," since political parties "are unable to carry out the colossal [economic] task that the country needs."<sup>138</sup> In other words, even at this dramatic moment, rather than an anticommunist action, the meta-narrative of authoritarian development was the Opus Dei's principal justification for the regime's continuation.

Onganía struggled to stay in power for another entire year. While using oppressive measures, which included the closing of several news outlets, he also sacked the Ateneo ministers, shelved his education reform, and altered somewhat the course of his economic policies, proving that he was attentive to the fundamental causes of the "Cordobazo." And yet, markedly, he refused to moderate his collaboration with Franco and in January 1970 even sent his new education minister, Dardo Pérez Guillhou (yet another ICH intellectual), to meet the Spanish dictator and study Spain's new education reform.<sup>139</sup> Little did this gesture impress the commanders of the armed forces. Finally, in May 1970, the Azul high command sent Onganía a memorandum blaming him for "the absence of concrete ideas about the culmination of the revolutionary process and its exit."<sup>140</sup> Ergo, the armed forces surmised that regardless of its economic achievements, by utilizing unpopular authoritarian figures and presenting the public with evasive political schemes, the Argentine Revolution had reached the limits of its effectiveness. The murder of the general Pedro Aramburu on May 29, 1970, was yet another grim signal of the dictatorship's

137. La subversión argentina, AGA, box 42/08972.

138. "Balance de tres años," *Cuadernos del Sur* 60, July 1969, 531–533.

139. Pérez Guillhou stated that this reform, also known as the "White Book," might serve as the basis for educational reforms "in other countries in the Spanish-speaking community." See Dardo Pérez Guillhou, oral history with Robert Potash, 1984, Robert Potash Papers, 8-9/29. See also "Llega el ministro argentino de cultura y educación," *ABC* (Madrid), January 27, 1970, 27.

140. Onganía, oral history with Potash, 25.

ineptness in the face of left-wing mobilization turning to violence. On June 5, 1970, when the generals demanded that Onganía present the public with a concrete political plan, he returned to them with a statement of "political theory" comprising an incoherent mixture of technocratic jargon that ignored issues such as the separation of powers and the principles of parliamentarism.<sup>141</sup> Three days later, led by Alejandro Agustín Lanusse, the generals ousted Onganía, paving the way for Juan Perón's return to power in 1973.

## CONCLUSION

The ideological character of the Argentine Revolution has puzzled scholars ever since Onganía's downfall in 1970. Overshadowed by the state-led terror of the second Peronist administration (1973-76) and the Last Dictatorship (1976-83), Onganía's authoritarianism brand has been, understandably perhaps, somewhat overlooked in historiography. Still, this regime was a decisive chapter in Argentina's history of political radicalization. Reading Onganía's state ideology through the lenses of the dialogue and its links to its Spanish counterpart allows us to evaluate not only what Onganía and his followers sought to achieve, but also their perception of the threats and opportunities of the Cold War international setup. Like Franco before him, Onganía wanted to initiate an internationally respectable protected society of material abundance and Catholic spirituality at the heart of the Western Hemisphere. Herein, he believed, a new post-ideological Argentine subject could be molded; one who would disdain plebian revolutionary movements, be they Peronism or Communism. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that political representation was never meant to materialize during the Onganiato, given that the regime expected the masses to become docile and spiritually elevated consumers, and, as such, disinterested in politics. In this sense, Onganía's dictatorship mirrored technocratic Spain's narratives and fantasies to the fullest.

As this article demonstrates, the Argentine-Spanish dialogue became possible thanks to an intricate network of intellectuals and apparatuses. By offering their service to Onganía at the right moment, and by continually promoting and theorizing his regime in the public sphere throughout the 1960s, these agents ultimately decided the Argentine Revolution's ideological character. In other words, Onganía's state model was not haphazard or improvised but the outcome of a genealogy of ideological production that led back to the 1930s

141. Potash, *The Army & Politics in Argentina*, 298–300.

and the rise of European fascism. As the correspondences between Amadeo and Sánchez Bella illustrate, the very essence of the 1930s Hispanidad ideology did not disappear during the Cold War. Instead, these men readjusted their joint “Hispanic” spiritual movement against the Enlightenment to the economic, political, and cultural circumstances of the 1960s. Building on these ties, Onganía subsequently pursued a special relationship with Franco’s Spain in a manner that was in no way covert. He and his ministers traveled to Spain, and, as significantly, Spanish technocrats appeared in Buenos Aires at key moments in the timeline of the Argentine Revolution, in what became a fruitful dialogue between two Hispanic technocracies.

Even so, the story of Onganía’s regime was hardly that of Spanish intervention in Argentine affairs but rather of the former’s misinterpretation of Francoism, and miscalculation of the popularity of Argentina’s democratic ethos. By believing his dictatorship could seamlessly implement a handful of “techniques” employed in Spain at the time, Onganía also grossly overlooked the crucial importance of the memory of the Spanish Civil War in Spain and Franco’s ongoing state-led terror. Moreover, the Argentine Revolution’s movement from rhetoric to action occurred gradually, if not hesitantly, first with an economic shock treatment, then with the Civic Code and educational reform, and lastly, with the muddled design of civil participation. A far cry from Franco’s ruthless methods of government, this meant that Argentina’s civil society had ample time to grasp this change and react. In brief, Onganía’s downfall resulted from his self-perception as a consensual leader and unwillingness to murderously repress civil society—the unspoken ingredient of Franco’s “social peace.” These lessons have not been lost on the neofascists who were to resurge and overtake Argentine politics in the 1970s, all of whom readily evoked the legacies of the Spanish Civil War as they assassinated their allegedly subversive enemies.<sup>142</sup>

More broadly, examining the predominance of the “Hispanic technocracy” of the 1960s invites a reappraisal of the image of the “inter-American Cold War” as a dichotomous struggle between local agents of communism and anticommunism. Sure enough, Onganía was a fierce anticommunist. Nevertheless, we overlook an entire spectrum of critical ideological phenomena by merely seeking to identify anticommunist attitudes within the Argentine right. If the Argentine Revolution’s ideology teaches us anything, it is that, for its designers, communism was one ill within an array of old and new anxieties.

142. The discourse of “civil war” returned to the center of the Argentine far-right ideology in the 1970s, in neofascist journals such as *El Caudillo* and *Cabildo*, in the face of the activity of Argentina’s revolutionary “urban guerrilla.” For more on the rise of Argentina’s neofascist movements in the wake of Onganía’s downfall, see Daniel Gunnar Kressel, “Technicians of the Spirit: Post-Fascist Technocratic Authoritarianism in Spain, Argentina, and Chile, 1945–1988” (PhD diss.: Columbia University, 2019), 300–324.

Symptomatic of their time and place, Onganía and his technocrats fretted over the prospects of lagging behind the West in a new era of economic expansion, as well as over Western cultural trends they deemed detrimental to the Hispanic social and spiritual essence. Thus, exploring how Argentines looked to Spain for ideological guidance and symbolic ratification opens a host of new questions regarding the nature of the Spanish and Argentine anti-US mindset, and their reciprocal nostalgia for the lost Spanish Empire. After all, as the self-proclaimed custodians of Latin America’s “Hispanic truth,” Franco, Onganía, and their ideologues envisioned their *sui generis* version of modernity as soon to inform, if not unify, the entire Spanish speaking world.

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