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The Jewish “Other” in Argentina: Antisemitism, Exclusion, and the Formation of Argentine Nationalism and Identity in the 20th Century and during Military Rule (1976-1983)

An Honors Paper for the Department of History

By Marcus Helble

Bowdoin College, 2021

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Dedication

To my parents, Rebecca and Joseph. Thank you for always supporting me in all my academic pursuits.

And to my grandfather. Your life experiences sparked my interest in Jewish history and immigration. Thank you for inspiring me.

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Introduction

In the cold and rain of the Malvinas Islands, young Argentine Jewish conscript Silvio Katz laid on the ground, bound to four stakes.¹ Above him stood several young Argentines of the same age as Katz, forced to urinate on him while military superiors stood in the background watching.² The only factor differentiating Katz from his fellow conscripts was his Jewish heritage, but it was precisely because of this factor that Katz became victim and his fellow conscripts abusers. It did not matter that Katz, like most Jewish conscripts serving in the 1982 Malvinas War against Great Britain, was born in Argentina and spoke Spanish at home. The antisemitism he experienced in 1982 while forming part of the Argentine military built on a long history of othering the Jewish community in Argentina. The creation of a non-Argentine other in the Jewish community, throughout the 20th century, was a central element of the formation of Argentine nationalism and identity for liberal, populist, and military governments alike. By targeting Jewish conscripts with harsh physical and verbal abuse during the Malvinas War, Argentine military superiors signaled to both Jewish and non-Jewish conscripts that Jews were a not fully Argentine other. It represented a performative antisemitism that formed a sense of unity among the conscripts forced to abuse Katz, construing a common identity in opposition to the Jewish victim. Argentine nationalism and identity, when linked to Catholicism, similarly were constructed in opposition to the Jewish community. This project examines this idea, and how the Jewish community remained a non-Argentine, politically radical, and secularizing other in the

¹ In 1982, Argentina and Great Britain fought a brief war over a group of islands off the coast of Argentina in the South Atlantic. This project, given that it focuses on Argentine and not British history, will use the Argentine term “Malvinas” for the islands instead of the British term “Falklands”.

² “Argentine conscript speaks of Falklands abuse by superiors”, *BBC*, (London, UK), Sep. 24, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-34335103>.

eyes of the conservative military government of the 1970s and 1980s, building on the conception of a Jewish other in the early and mid-20th century.

Chapter 1 describes the beginning of the process of othering the Jewish community in the early and mid-20th century. It highlights a so-called “Jewish Question”, which for Argentine elites, the Catholic Church, and the military, represented the idea that the Jewish presence in Argentina was a “problem” threatening to corrupt the traditional bases of Argentine society. The framing of the Jewish Question responded to the growing economic success of Jewish immigrants, the arrival of new ideologies like communism and anarchism in Argentina, and concerns over uncontrolled immigration. Because of these ideas, the Jewish community became a politically radical, secularizing, and “non-Argentine” other living in the country. In some cases in the 20th century, this Jewish Question provided social actors the opportunity to maintain or emphasize their position of power, while in other cases it allowed them to demonstrate a break with traditional Argentine politics. The othering of Jews meant that antisemitism operated largely untouched by Argentine governments throughout this period, a reality governments beginning in the 1950s began to respond to. Such governments, eager to maintain positive relations with the United States, attempted to show that they had eradicated or were opposed to antisemitism, while at the same time allowing antisemitic organizations to form part of their political base.

Chapter 2 shifts to the main period of study of this project, the military dictatorship that led Argentina from 1976 to 1983. During this period, military leaders maintained the idea of the Jewish community as a politically radical, secularizing, and “foreign” other, using it to access power and construct an Argentine identity linked to Catholicism. More extreme members of the military even highlighted the Jewish community as a threat to Argentine sovereignty,

capitalizing on such a belief to justify their stay in power and slow the eventual transition to democracy. Other, more moderate leaders, emulated the strategy of earlier governmental actors by expressing to the United States their opposition to antisemitism. This strategy not only improved relations with the United States during the Cold War but also allowed these more “moderate” military leaders to access power within a divided institution.

Chapter 3 focuses on the experience of Jewish conscripts like Silvio Katz during the Malvinas War at the end of the military dictatorship. It shows how the military leaders in power at the time attempted to consolidate a national identity and sense of unity linked to Catholicism. Such an ideological project necessitated the exclusion and marginalization of the Jewish community, as demonstrated by the antisemitic mistreatment of Jewish conscripts like Katz serving in the military during the war. In this way, the Malvinas War, and the Catholic nationalist discourse surrounding it, represented a continuation of the idea of the Jewish community as a foreign, politically radical, and secularizing other living in Argentina.

Jewish Immigration to Argentina

Jewish immigration to Argentina formed part of the mass wave of movement from Europe and the Middle East to the Americas at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. No country, save perhaps the United States, would face such a profound change as Argentina during this mass wave of migration. By 1914, Argentina had proportionally the largest foreign-born population in all the Americas.³ With one in three Argentines foreign-born at the time, the South American nation was truly a cultural melting pot. Although the bulk of the immigrants to Argentina at the time came from Southern Europe, particularly Italy and Spain,

³ Jozami, Gladys, Daniel Bargman, and Mirta Bialogorski, “Arabs, Jews and Koreans in Argentina: A Contemporary Perspective of Different Types of Social and Symbolic Insertion.”, *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 7, no. 2 (1998): 89.

many Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe would arrive as well.⁴ Roughly 115,000 Jewish individuals were living in Argentina, a country of 7 million in 1914, with the community's population continuing to grow in the following decade.⁵ By 1934, roughly a quarter of a million Jews called Argentina home.⁶ With the last wave of Jewish immigrants arriving in the 1950s, the population of the community remained fairly steady at around 300,000, slightly over 1 % of the total population, through the beginning of the military junta in 1976.⁷ Although these Jewish Argentines came from a variety of countries across Europe and the Middle East, they can be divided into three groups according to their geographic origin and time of arrival in Argentina.

The first of such Jewish immigrant groups arrived from Morocco in the mid-19th century. Most Moroccan Jews who arrived in Argentina in this period were descendants of Jews from Spain (Sephardic Jews), with some already speaking a form of Spanish before arrival in South America.⁸ Their move to Argentina corresponded with a process of mass movement from Morocco's interior to urban environments both locally and abroad. The second group of Argentine Jews arrived beginning in the 1880s, largely from Russia. A series of pogroms had targeted the Jewish population there, leading to mass immigration to the Western Hemisphere, including Argentina. Many Argentine emissaries were stationed in Russia, encouraging families to move to the South American nation. By World War I, Jews arriving from Poland also represented a significant portion of this second group of Jewish immigrants, with some coming

⁴ Fitzgerald, David Scott, and David Cook-Martín, "Argentina: Crucible of European Nations?" In *Culling the Masses*, 230. Harvard University Press, 2014.

⁵ Graciela Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews: Argentina, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 8.

⁶ Ibid. 10.

⁷ Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora*, Jewish Identities in a Changing World, v. 12 (Leiden [The Netherlands] ; Boston: Brill, 2010), 31.

⁸ Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

to Argentina after being denied entry to the United States.⁹ Both Russian and Polish Jewish immigrants to Argentina were fairly similar culturally as both were Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jewish communities, and far outnumbered both the Moroccan Jewish population and the small community of Syrian Jewish immigrants that arrived from the Ottoman Empire.

The descendants of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants would thus dominate Jewish cultural institutions in Argentina, and would assimilate into Argentine society. Many Ashkenazi Jews were fairly secular and by the mid-20th century often intermarried with non-Jewish Argentines.¹⁰ Given this, throughout the mid-20th century, and by the beginning of the military dictatorship in 1976, most descendants of Jewish immigrants were Spanish speakers, active politically and economically in society, and generally felt a sense of belonging in Argentina. To the military leaders of the 1970s and 1980s, described in the following section, even these fully assimilated Jewish families and individuals remained a foreign, politically radical, and secularizing other, threatening the traditional bases of Argentine society.

From the Dirty War to the Malvinas War: Division in the Argentine Military (1976-1983)

The military government that took control of the country in a 1976 coup was quick to establish alliances with different sectors of Argentine society, like the Catholic Church and certain business leaders. At least initially, there was little disagreement within the institution over the military's role in leading the country, although significant tension would arise later on during the dictatorship. The conservative leaders of the military viewed Argentina as an inherently Catholic country and largely subscribed to a Catholic nationalist ideology that rejected liberalism and in some cases democracy.¹¹ The coup's leaders cited the political turbulence of the preceding

⁹ Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 10.

¹¹ James P Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones: Revisiting the History of the Dirty War* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 25.

years as the cause behind the military's actions. The mid-1970s had indeed been turbulent, marked by the return of popular nationalist leader Juan Perón from exile in Spain and growing political extremism on both the left and right.¹² Such political extremism included violent insurgencies by left-leaning armed groups like Montoneros and ERP (*El Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*) and frequent attacks by right-leaning paramilitary groups, fostering a tense atmosphere that seemed destined to end in civil war.

The military as an institution generally agreed that the best response to such political extremism was to violently suppress armed organizations operating in the country. Instead of removing violent actors on both the left and the right, however, the military would incorporate right-leaning paramilitary groups into their repressive apparatus.¹³ In addition to waging extensive counterinsurgency campaigns against Montoneros and ERP, the military also began a sort of cultural war against “revolutionary” thought and ideas in what they coined the “Process of National Reorganization”. This consisted of censoring any materials they felt were linked to such “revolutionary” thought, which meant that universities in particular faced harsh repression, with certain disciplines like sociology and psychology removed or heavily reformed to align with the more conservative, narrow worldview of the military leaders.¹⁴ In addition to this form of repression, instead of arresting individuals they believed were associated with leftism and “dangerous” ideas like communism, the military simply “erased” them from society as a whole, placing them in detention centers, assassinating them and piling them into mass graves without identification, or casting them into the River Plate. Such individuals would be known as “disappeared” Argentines, or *desaparecidos*, and were a clear example of the brutal human rights

¹² Jerry Dávila, *Dictatorship in South America* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 73-74.

¹³ Ibid. 78.

¹⁴ Brennan, *Missing Bones*, 25.

violations that occurred in this period at the hands of the military.¹⁵ Over 30,000 Argentines would suffer this fate, while almost 5% of the country would leave during the military dictatorship through politically motivated exile.¹⁶

The military, however, was far from united in this period, even during the so-called Dirty War of 1976 to 1978 when many of the dictatorship's worst human rights violations occurred.¹⁷ Significant disagreement existed between and within each of the three branches of the military, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, over how to run the country. Military leaders, including the heads of the three branches at the time of the coup, Jorge Rafael Videla (Army), Emilio Massera (Navy), and Orlando Agostí (Air Force), differed in their view of state repression, political ideology, economics, foreign policy, and a range of other issues. As the dictatorship progressed, strong rifts would appear within the institution, especially as military leaders debated over the future and whether they should begin a transition towards democracy or maintain the military's position of power.¹⁸ This rift would center around a split within the military between a more "moderate" sector and a more hardline, extremist sector.

In order to understand the internal tension within the military regime, it is important to explain first how that regime functioned and structured itself. Although there were no checks and balances restricting the power of the military as a whole, several organizational factors ultimately limited the power of various individuals in the military government. In 1976, after the military took power, the leaders of the three branches formed a junta, with Videla, the head of the Army,

¹⁵ Luis Alberto Romero and James P. Brennan, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Updated and Revised Edition* (Baltimore, MD: Project MUSE, 2015), 232-233.

¹⁶ Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 185.

¹⁷ Benjamín García Holgado and Nicolás Taccone, "Diseño institucional e inestabilidad presidencial en autoritarismos: El proceso de reorganización nacional en la Argentina (1976-1983)," *Desarrollo Económico* 58, no. 224 (2018): 9.

¹⁸ Romero and Brennan, *A History of Argentina*, 241.

assuming the presidency shortly afterwards. However, there was significant opposition within the Navy to the comparative power of the Army with Videla as president. Because of this, in 1977 the various generals of the three branches began to discuss how to lessen the power of the Army and the president. The solution would be for Videla to retire as head of the Army, but maintain the presidency, with a new junta formed with the new head of the Army, head of the Navy, and head of the Air Force.¹⁹ Beginning in 1978, this structure, with the president and military junta essentially sharing power, would define the military government through the early 1980s and the beginning of the transition towards democracy in late 1982.

The purpose of the military junta was to split power between the three branches, with the goal of preventing the dominance of the Army within the institution. However, the junta was also a reflection of the deep divisions within the military. Not only did its formation demonstrate the tension between the Army and Navy, and particularly between Videla and the head of the Navy Emilio Massera, it showed the lack of political consensus within the institution. The junta, furthermore, greatly limited the power of the president, who could not enact any legislation or take any action without its approval.²⁰ Such a structure fostered indecision, and caused Videla as president to seek out allies within the Army and in the junta itself to maintain power. One such ally would be Roberto Viola, head of the Army in 1978 and thus a member of the junta in that year. Videla's desire for an ally within the military's leading governmental body, however, reflected greater division than that which existed between the Navy and the Army.

Among the causes of division within the institution were disputes over economic, political, domestic, and foreign policy. Videla and Viola, and much of the Army, supported the

¹⁹ Holgado and Taccone, "Diseño insitucional", 10.

²⁰ Ibid. 10-11.

imposition of a neoliberal, free market economy in the style of their neighbors Chile.²¹ This sector valued a strong relationship with the United States, and Viola would later advocate for a transition towards democracy.²² That is not to say that this sector of the military was pro-democracy or “liberal”, as it still was supportive of and complicit in the large-scale repression that occurred between 1976 and 1978. Nevertheless, their views were less hardline than those of much of the Navy, including Massera, and portions of the Air Force and the Army. This more hardline sector of the military rejected a transition towards democracy, did not trust the United States as an ally, was expansionist, advocated for a state-run economy, and was drawn to antisemitic discourse.²³ The last few years of Videla’s presidency would be marked by a power struggle between these factions, and the different generals of the three branches. The fact that Videla remained in power until 1981, despite the significant opposition to his presidency that existed within the military, reflected the alliances he fostered within the junta, the Army, with business interests domestically, and with the United States.

The end of Videla’s term as president in 1981 would represent a shift in the balance between hardline and more “moderate” sectors of the military. Although Viola, Videla’s ally within the Army, would be chosen by the junta as the new president, the composition of the junta would shift to be dominated by hardline members of the military.²⁴ Viola, therefore, struggled to find allies even within the Army, particularly given the presence of Leopoldo Galtieri as the representative of the Army within the junta. Galtieri and the head of the Navy at the time, Jorge Anaya, opposed Viola’s economic policies and desire to open dialogue with political parties, and

²¹ Jerry Dávila, *Dictatorship in South America*, Viewpoints/Puntos de Vista : Themes and Interpretations In Latin American History (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 114.

²² Holgado and Taccone, “Diseño institucional”, 13.

²³ Romero and Brennan, *A History of Argentina*, 235.

²⁴ Holgado and Taccone, “Diseño institucional”, 16-17.

as his presidency progressed increasingly looked for ways to push him out.²⁵ Anaya hoped to win back more power and resources for the Navy, and was a strong advocate for a military invasion of the Malvinas Islands. With the support of the head of the Air Force, the three used Viola's health issues, arising at the end of 1981, as a pretext to stage an internal coup. Galtieri would be named as the next president, and Viola would be forced into retirement.²⁶ The hardline, extremist wing of the military had control of the presidency and the junta.

Galtieri's presidency would bring the invasion and war over the Malvinas Islands, explored in Chapter 3. Argentina's defeat in the war would ultimately be one of the causes of the military's eventual exit from power, and the return to democracy in 1983.²⁷ Regardless, both Galtieri and Videla's presidencies demonstrated the division, both ideological and between branches, existent within the military. As analyzed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, antisemitism played a part, just as it did for previous Argentine governments, as different military leaders sought to access power. Catholic nationalism also helped military leaders access and maintain a position of power. In the end, both the use of antisemitism and Catholic nationalism as "tools" for accessing power during the military dictatorship marginalized and harmed Argentina's Jewish community, reflecting an idea, evident throughout the 20th century, of the Jewish community as an other within Argentina.

²⁵ Holgado and Taccone, "Diseño institucional", 17-18.

²⁶ Ibid. 20.

²⁷ Romero and Brennan, *A History of Argentina*, 254.

Chapter 1: The Jewish Question in 20th Century Argentina

Argentina's Jewish community, throughout the 20th century, represented an important minority population within the South American nation. Certain Buenos Aires neighborhoods like Once and Villa Crespo at times consisted of majority Jewish populations, with the Jewish community representing between 1 and 2 percent of the total Argentine population for much of the 20th century.²⁸ Despite the minority status of Argentina's Jews, their presence in mostly urban areas like Buenos Aires, early economic success, and different cultural background to the European Catholics who made up the majority of early immigrants to Argentina, meant that different Argentine governments and social actors would give special attention to the Jewish immigrant community. Their view of and conversations over the Jewish community and the main issues relating to that community were responses to an Argentine "Jewish Question", a term used in Europe to debate the position and status of Jewish communities in European societies.²⁹ In Argentina, as in Europe, leading governments and social actors viewed the Jewish population as a "problem" that threatened to corrupt the traditional bases of Argentine society. This Jewish "problem" centered on developments within the Jewish immigrant community, like their economic progress, political views, and influence on the rest of society. These traditional bases of Argentine society, like the Catholic Church and the dominance of the upper-class urban elite, defined the Jewish Question throughout much of the 20th century, and used it as a tool that could shape Argentine society and identity.

²⁸ Víctor A. Mirelman, *Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1939: In Search of an Identity*, electronic resource (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse, 2018), 66, <http://LW5CZ6WA6G.search.serialssolutions.com/?V=1.0&L=LW5CZ6WA6G&S=JCs&C=TC0002266336&T=m arc&tab=BOOKS>.

²⁹ Monica O'Brien, "The Politics of Blood and Soil: Hannah Arendt, George Eliot, and the Jewish Question in Modern Europe," *Comparative Literature Studies* 44, no. 1/2 (2007): 99.

In periods that represented a break from traditional Argentine politics, like under nationalist leader Juan Perón in the 1940s and 1950s, the Jewish community's inclusion in politics would be highlighted to demonstrate a rupture with conservative elements of Argentine society. This inclusion would couple with efforts to voice opposition to antisemitism, particularly to improve relations with the United States. By the 1960s, even conservative military governments attempted to prove that they opposed antisemitism, in the form of violent attacks on the Jewish community by far-right nationalist organizations in Argentina, while including those same groups within their political base. This chapter examines how powerful actors in three different periods of Argentine history defined the Jewish Question and responded to antisemitism, capitalizing on shifting conceptions of the Jewish Question and social realities to serve their own political and social interests.

The Semana Trágica of 1919

In 1919, a group of police, soldiers, and upper-class Argentines entered one of Buenos Aires' Jewish-majority neighborhoods, looting stores, burning whatever they could get their hands on, and attacking residents and families in the neighborhood. The angry mob had hurried there after clashing with workers on strike at one of the city's largest factories, eager to punish those who they believed were responsible for planning the strike and bringing radical ideas to their Argentina.³⁰ To such members of the Argentine elite and bourgeois class, supporters of then President Hipólito Yrigoyen and the Argentine Radical Party, the large influx of Russian and Eastern European immigrants in the city represented the arrival of "threatening" ideas like communism, socialism, and anarchism. To them, only through the influence of these unwanted immigrants could the 1919 workers' strike be explained. Given that the majority of Russian

³⁰ Victor A. Mirelman, "The Semana Trágica of 1919 and the Jews in Argentina," *Jewish Social Studies* 37, no. 1 (1975): 62.

immigrants to Buenos Aires were of Jewish origin, upper-class Argentines, some members of the Church, and a number of officials in the Radical Party, argued that Jewish immigrants were responsible for the strike and both communist and socialist opposition in the country.³¹

Motivated by these beliefs, police, soldiers, and upper-class Argentine men laid waste to Jewish homes and stores, beating, raping, and killing other individuals they believed were Jewish or Russian.³² This violence, which occurred over several days in early 1919, would come to be known as the *Semana Trágica* (Tragic Week).

The *Semana Trágica* represented a watershed movement for the Jewish community and antisemitism in Argentina. Its significance was clear to the many Jewish families living in Buenos Aires who had fled Eastern Europe and especially Russia because of the wave of pogroms that occurred there in the late 19th century.³³ Argentina would not be the haven those Jewish immigrants had imagined and hoped for, and the violence that resulted from the events of the *Semana Trágica* demonstrated this.

The 1919 *Semana Trágica* also represented an instance in which the actors and institutions involved and responsible for the pogrom had used the Jewish Question as a political tool that could help shape Argentine society and identity. In 1919, discussions of the Jewish community centered on the economic success of some Jewish immigrants, the spread of new ideologies like socialism and communism in the country, and built on anti-immigrant sentiment. These conversations surrounding the Jewish Question served to marginalize the Jewish community and scapegoat it for the changes occurring in Argentine society at the time. In that

³¹ Graciela Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews: Argentina, 1933-1945* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 35.

³² Mirelman, "The *Semana Trágica* of 1919 and the Jews in Argentina," 63.

³³ Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora*, Jewish Identities in a Changing World, v. 12 (Leiden [The Netherlands] ; Boston: Brill, 2010), 21.

sense, the antisemitism and the resulting violence of the Semana Trágica would represent a tool that shaped Argentine society by maintaining the dominance of the urban upper-class, the Catholic Church, and Radical Party within the country.

The economic success of some Jewish immigrants in Buenos Aires formed a significant part of elite conversations around the Jewish Question in Argentina in the early 20th century. Such economic success had resulted from the prominence of Jewish individuals in urban commerce, with many community members working as peddlers or in houses of commerce. These activities meant that a minority within the Jewish immigrant community had risen to the urban middle and upper classes, which caused some discomfort to the traditional Argentine upper class, mainly of Spanish descent and Catholic origin.³⁴ Anti-immigrant sentiment had grown in the country since the beginning of the 20th century, linked to an Argentine elite view of Jewish and Southern European immigrants as inferior and lacking proper social mannerisms.³⁵ The image of upper-class Argentines burning and looting Jewish businesses and homes was a clear signal that such anti-immigrant sentiment had been redirected in this instance to the Jewish community, and sent a message to economically successful Jewish families that they would be unwelcome among the Argentine elite. This anti-immigrant sentiment had grown out of the Hispanic upper class's fear of displacement as economic and social leaders in Argentina, a position that was hardly threatened by the success of *some* Jewish immigrants. Anxieties over the changing ethnic makeup of the country contributed to such concerns, and the Jewish community's presence in Buenos Aires was at the center of such worries. Concerns over the economic success of some Jewish immigrants thus sparked upper-class anti-Jewish violence

³⁴ Mirelman, *Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1939*, 42.

³⁵ Aline Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880-1930: Theory, Policies, and Popular Reaction", in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (University of Texas Press: 1990), 45.

during the *Semana Trágica*, and solidified the Hispanic elites' position as the social and economic driving force in Argentina.

Another important aspect of the Jewish Question in 1919 Argentina related to the growth of communism, socialism, and anarchism in the country. The Catholic Church was one institution alarmed over the growing power of communism, socialism, and anarchism globally, and the potential influence those ideologies could have in Catholic countries.³⁶ The Church in Argentina similarly reacted to the presence of these ideologies in Argentina, with some priests connecting their arrival in the country with the growing anti-immigrant, xenophobic sentiment among the traditional urban elite. Such priests associated anarchism and socialism with Judaism, thus spreading antisemitic propaganda through the city from pulpits and street corners.³⁷ The Church was closely aligned with the Argentine upper-class and oligarchy, and also worried about losing their position as a leading institution in the country with the arrival of new immigrants and new ideologies. An exaggerated association between Eastern European Jewish immigrants, communism, and socialism, also served the Church in maintaining its dominance in Argentine society.

The Radical Party government at the time also opposed communism and certain workers' movements. President Hipólito Yrigoyen and the Radical Party (considered "radical" for its advocacy for universal male suffrage in the late 19th century) had been elected in 1916 through support from native-born Argentines, and sought to gain support among the Buenos Aires working class. Yrigoyen, in fact, even expressed support for workers' strikes led by political

³⁶ Giuliana Chamedes, "The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-Communism in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 2 (2016): 262.

³⁷ Mirelman, "The *Semana Trágica* of 1919 and the Jews in Argentina," 67.

allies and native-born Argentines in this period.³⁸ However, the 1918 workers' strike that resulted in the *Semana Trágica* was organized by anarchists, and occurred at a metallurgical firm that employed many immigrants. Both of these groups represented sectors of society outside of Yrigoyen and the Radical Party's base, thus demonstrating why the government made no effort to stop the mob that targeted workers and stormed through Jewish and other immigrant neighborhoods.³⁹ Socialism and anarchism were ideologies that competed for the support of the urban working class in Argentina, and crushing an anarchist-led strike therefore allowed the Radical Party to demonstrate its power and even control over the working class. In this way, the government's concerns over the rise of communism and uncontrolled immigration to Argentina allowed the Radical Party to maintain and emphasize its position of power through the violence of the *Semana Trágica*.

Anxieties over the position of the Jewish community in Argentina at this time focused on the economic success of Jewish immigrants, the spread of communism and socialism in Argentina, and concerns over immigration. The economic success and non-Hispanic ethnic background of the Jewish community caused anxiety for the Argentine upper class, while some priests in the Church explicitly linked Jewishness to communism and socialism because of the Eastern European background of most Jewish immigrants. The Radical Party, meanwhile, benefitted from violence that warned the working class against support for socialism and anarchism, while building on anti-immigrant sentiment linked to newly arrived segments of the Jewish community. The actions of these groups showed that the Jewish Question in Argentina would be multifaceted and would have different definitions for distinct social groups, all

³⁸ Joel Horowitz, *Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Mobilization, 1916-1930* (College Station, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), 116-117.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 128.

stemming from a growing worry that the traditional bases of Argentine society were disappearing. Nevertheless, upper-class elites, governmental actors, and the Catholic Church would be the groups that would continue to frame and define the Jewish Question, as in this period around the *Semana Trágica*, using it as a tool to shape Argentine society to their specific designs.

Peronism, Secularism, and the Jewish Community

In early 1946, General Juan Perón won a democratic election over the Radical Civic Union (Radical Party), whose support at the time largely came from the mostly liberal urban middle class and opposed any form of military rule.⁴⁰ Perón, who had been involved in the military government that led the country from 1943 to 1946, therefore represented a threat to the ideals that the Radical Civic Union stood for. For the Jewish community, much of which formed part of the country's urban middle class in the 1940s, Perón's victory meant uncertainty, and the rise of forces, such as the military and the Church, that had traditionally worked against the well-being of the community. Ideas like Catholic nationalism and Catholic-inspired forms of social activism excluded the country's Jews, and such ideas were largely popular among the base that had elected Perón in 1946. Furthermore, Perón's rhetoric, military past, and public image as a strongman with a populist base led to fears among some in the Jewish community that he might have fascist and even pro-Nazi tendencies. Perón did in fact admire some fascist leaders like Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain, and during his time in power a number of Germans were accepted into the country. In reality, Perón's acceptance of such German immigrants was more out of practical necessity rather than ideological affinity, as many of the German immigrants

⁴⁰ Beatrice Dora Gurwitz, "From the New World to the Third World: Generation, Politics, and the Making of Argentine Jewish Ethnicity (1955-1983)" (Ph.D., United States -- California, University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 24, <http://search.proquest.com/pqdtthss/docview/1667095505/abstract/D79EBFBC1CB94308PQ/1>.

were engineers, scientists, and professionals who provided skill sets in short supply in Argentina.⁴¹ Nevertheless, these factors combined led many in the Jewish community to be wary of Perón's position of power and the potential for antisemitism under such a regime.

Perón's government and political ideology, despite his military past, represented a rupture with traditional Argentine governments. Perón's political base largely consisted of working class Argentines, and in the early years of his presidency he would distance himself from both the military and the Church, two institutions traditionally dominant in the country. He would enact fairly progressive social policies when it came to workers' rights, unions, and social issues, further demonstrating his rejection of traditional Argentine politics and social institutions.⁴² Perón also sought to include the Jewish community within his base, mobilizing on elite concerns over the Jewish Question. The Jewish community to many in the upper-class and Catholic Church leadership still represented a problem that threatened to displace their dominance in the country and the Catholic nature of Argentina. Earning support among the Jewish community allowed Perón to emphasize his separation from such social actors and institutions. Their inclusion within his base emphasized the importance of secularism and loyalty to him in this new Argentina. Fostering relations with the Jewish community also provided Perón with the opportunity to improve his image abroad, specifically with the United States, particularly given his reputation as an authoritarian leader with fascist and even pro-Nazi leanings. His desire to include the Jewish community within his base and the resulting political ideology associated with his regime, Peronism, reflected the view of the Jewish community as a problem, as a non-Argentine, secularizing, and untrustworthy other living in the country. By

⁴¹ Some of the German immigrants who arrived in Argentina were former members of the Nazi party. See Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines?*, 78.

⁴² Romero and Brennan, *A History of Argentina*, 108.

including such a dangerous “other”, Perón forged a new political and social identity separate from the conservative ones previously formed by the Church, upper-class, and military.

Perón’s efforts to earn support from the Jewish community consisted of a number of tactics. First, Perón, unlike many previous Argentine presidents, directly addressed and met with community leaders. Certain speeches addressed the importance of Jewish participation within Peronism and the Argentine nature of the community, evident in the following comment he made to Jewish Peronist activists in 1947: “My only wish is that all those who live here feel that they are Argentines, that they are truly Argentine, independently of their origin or where they came from”.⁴³ Such inclusive language helped increase Jewish support for Perón, and contrasted with the prevailing political and religious discourse surrounding the events of the *Semana Trágica*, in which the Jewish community was highlighted as an enemy of the state and traditional Argentine social institutions.

Perón’s gestures of goodwill to the community, like the admittance of 47 Jewish refugees from Europe who had come to Argentina without papers after being denied entry to Brazil, also led to increased affiliation with Peronism among Jewish individuals.⁴⁴ This eventually fostered the creation of a formal tie between the community and the Peronist government. In late 1947, the OIA (*Organización Israelita Argentina*), a Jewish Peronist organization that advocated for the social and political integration of Argentine Jews through Peronism, would form.⁴⁵ The OIA, at its founding, even stated that one of its goals would be to win over the Jewish vote for Perón. Under Perón, the OIA also competed with the DAIA (*Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas*

⁴³ Raanan Rein and Isis Sadek, *Populism and Ethnicity: Peronism and the Jews of Argentina*, McGill-Queen’s Iberian and Latin American Cultures Series, I (Montreal ; Kingston ; London ; Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 74–75.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 75.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 77.

Argentinas), the traditional body of Jewish community leadership in Argentina, as the representative of the Jewish community in the country.⁴⁶ Perón's efforts to include the Jewish community within Peronism emphasized the secular nature of his state, showing that loyalty to Argentina and Perón mattered far more in this period than ethnic or religious background. It also allowed him to redefine Argentine nationalism and identity, even stating to the OIA in a meeting that there was "only one class of men in Argentina...those who work for the national well-being."⁴⁷ Through comments like these, Perón was able to increase Jewish affiliation with Peronism which in turn highlighted the new Peronist and anti-Peronist binary existent during his time in power.

Perón's inclusion of the Jewish community within Peronism clearly demonstrated his rejection of traditional, conservative and Catholic ideologies. The alliance that often existed between the Church and government, particularly military regimes, temporarily disappeared during Perón's stay in power. Jewish participation within Peronism was useful in demonstrating the growing distance between Perón and the Church, primarily because of the presence of Jewish individuals in important positions within the Peronist regime. These Jewish governmental figures included economic advisor José Ber Gelbard and Rabbi Amram Blum who served as a religious affairs advisor towards the end of Perón's presidency.⁴⁸ The appointment of Blum as a religious affairs advisor communicated to the Church that Catholicism had lost its influence within the Argentine government. The symbolism of photos of Perón and Blum together was clear, as it

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Marder, "The Organización Israelita Argentina: Between Perón and the Jews," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 20, no. 39/40 (1995): 131.

⁴⁷ "En la Argentina no debe haber más que una clase de hombres. Hombres que trabajen por el bien nacional". Raanan Rein, "Más allá del crisol de razas: los judíos argentinos, el peronismo y la lucha por un hogar multicultural," *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, vol. 59 (2014), 148.

⁴⁸ Rein, *Argentine Jews*, 139.

was an apparent rejection of the traditional Church-government alliance in the country. Blum's presence in Perón's government further indicated the use inclusion of the Jewish community had for Perón, in this case as a tool that effectively distanced him from the Catholic Church.

Discussions around combating and minimizing antisemitism were also a central part of Perón's relationship with the Jewish community. Such discussions were important for Perón, given his damaged image abroad. Perón faced negative publicity for accepting former Nazis into Argentina and was often associated with fascism in foreign press outlets.⁴⁹ Because of these factors, the United States in particular was wary of Perón and his authoritarian tendencies. The United States had significant influence over Perón, because of his reliance on American capital for industrialization and modernization projects domestically.⁵⁰ Perón was therefore eager to patch up American-Argentine relations immediately after taking power, and one of the primary methods in improving such relations was attempting to prove to the American government that antisemitism did not exist in Argentina. As a result, Perón and his wife Eva Perón's (Evita) public rhetoric occasionally addressed antisemitism specifically. Evita, in a 1948 speech, argued that antisemitism in Argentina had been a consequence of previous governments' actions and that it was Perón who healed the country of the division such governments had fostered.⁵¹

The OIA, the Jewish Peronist organization operating in the country at the time, was similarly helpful for Perón in his efforts to improve American-Argentine relations. The OIA, given that it consisted of Jewish individuals, to the Americans represented a powerful and seemingly credible source on antisemitism in Argentina. Perón recognized this, and likely

⁴⁹ Paul H. Lewis, "Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism," *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (1980): 243, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2130025>.

⁵⁰ Raanan, Rein, "Las imágenes conflictivas del peronismo en Israel (1946-1955)," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 20, no. 39/40 (1995): 154.

⁵¹ Rein and Sadek, *Populism and Ethnicity*, 82.

benefited from the OIA's visits with American leaders, including one in the late 1940s in which several OIA members traveled to the United States to communicate to the American government that antisemitism no longer existed in Argentina because of Perón's efforts to combat it.⁵² These proclamations from members of the Jewish community were particularly powerful given the presence of former Nazis in Argentina at the time, and worked to better Perón's reputation in the United States. The OIA also played a role in establishing relations with Israel, with Argentina officially recognizing the young state in 1949. Argentina would be the first Latin American nation to send diplomatic representation to Tel Aviv, and for the remainder of Perón's time in power OIA members would serve as diplomatic intermediaries with Israel.⁵³

Inclusion of the Jewish community within Peronism and voicing opposition to antisemitism served Perón as political tools that helped shape Argentine society and identity during his time in power. Increased political activity of members of the Jewish community emphasized the secular nature of the Peronist state, and indicated a new sort of division within Argentine society between Peronists and anti-Peronists, rather than between Catholics and non-Catholics. By appointing Jewish individuals to important positions in his government and increasing ties with the community's leadership as a whole, Perón indicated that a Peronist Argentina would accept religious pluralism. Voicing opposition to antisemitism similarly helped improve Argentina's relations with the United States, demonstrating to the American government that Perón could not have pro-Nazi or fascist tendencies given his supposed eradication of antisemitism.

⁵² Rein and Sadek, *Populism and Ethnicity*, 80.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 80.

Perón's inclusion of the Jewish community within Argentine politics built on the framing of the Jewish Question in the period around the 1919 Semana Trágica. As elites and members of the Catholic Church highlighted a Jewish problem that painted the Jewish community as a secularizing, economically powerful other responsible for bringing threatening ideas like communism and anarchism to Argentina, Perón looked for ways to demonstrate his rejection of those same traditionally dominant social actors that defined the Jewish Question. By including the Jewish community within Peronism, this dangerous non-Argentine other, Perón broke with traditional Argentine politics and institutions. His legacy for the Jewish community is therefore complex. On the one hand, his emphasis on secularism allowed many Jews to feel a position of belonging previously unobtainable under mostly Catholic, conservative military regimes.⁵⁴ Jewish figures participated in the Argentine government in important roles for the first time, and a specifically Jewish political organization formed in support of the Peronist government.

On the other hand, his claims that antisemitism had been eradicated and was not tolerated were simply untrue. Antisemitic elements within the Peronist base, for instance, were never fully pushed out or addressed by Perón. The ALN (*Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista*) was one such antisemitic group that supported Perón and had led a number of attacks against the Jewish community before Perón's election victory in 1946.⁵⁵ Once he was in power, antisemitic nationalists like those of the ALN were tolerated, although a few more extreme figures were forced out of the ALN in the last couple years of Perón's administration. This tolerance of antisemitic nationalists who carried out frequent attacks on Jewish individuals allowed them to gain agency, and in the ensuing decades some of these groups would even establish formal links

⁵⁴ Marder, "The Organización Israelita Argentina," 127.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 126.

with Argentine governments. Ultimately, Perón's efforts to demonstrate an opposition to antisemitism would also serve future governments as a political tool useful in shaping Argentine society and identity.

The 1950s and 1960s: Anti-Communism, Tacuara, and Antisemitism

In 1955, Juan Perón's time as President came to an abrupt end when the Argentine military staged a coup, forcing him into exile and later banning Peronism as a political ideology. Partly as a result, the relative security the Jewish community had experienced under Perón would disappear under the subsequent governments of the 1950s and 1960s. Antisemitic organizations like the ALN (*Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista*) and Tacuara operated in this period largely with impunity, accentuating certain views of the Jewish population as a problem threatening to corrupt the traditional bases of Argentine society.⁵⁶ In the 1950s, traditionally powerful institutions like the military, Catholic Church, and upper-class elite returned to dominate Argentine society, as they had during the period around the 1919 *Semana Trágica*. These institutions reacted to and criticized Peronism's rejection of the traditional, conservative values of Argentina and emphasized Perón's connection to the Jewish community as evidence of his betrayal of these values, which to them determined Argentine identity.⁵⁷

Some aspects of Perón's governing style and political strategy would remain in the 1950s and 1960s, despite the return to more traditional democratic and military governments. Like Perón, these governments valued a strong alliance with the United States, a desire which at times clashed with their views on the Jewish community and relationships with antisemitic organizations like Tacuara. Actors like Tacuara, and some within the governments of the 1950s

⁵⁶ Michael Goebel, "A Movement from Right to Left in Argentine Nationalism? The Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista and Tacuara as Stages of Militancy," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26, no. 3 (2007): 363.

⁵⁷ Rein, *Argentine Jews*, 158.

and 1960s, continued to highlight a Jewish Question in Argentina related to the Jewish community's political ideals and activity, influence as non-Catholics, and perceived status as foreigners. Given the United States' relationship with Israel and the importance of its own Jewish community, American diplomats were generally eager to lessen the presence of antisemitic organizations in Argentina. Like Perón, the democratic and military governments of the 1950s and 1960s attempted to prove to the Americans that they were opposed to and had even lessened antisemitism in Argentina. At the same time, these governments included and even formed relationships with antisemitic organizations like Tacuara. This "balancing act" between condemning antisemitism and including antisemitic groups within their political base allowed such governments to improve relations with the United States, maintain democracy, and combat communist influences within Argentine society. This section examines this "balancing act" during the democratic government of Arturo Frondizi and the military government led by Juan Carlos Onganía.

Frondizi took power in 1958, winning a democratic election after three years of military rule. Despite the return to democracy, the influence of the military on Argentine politics remained, as Frondizi faced strong pressure from them to not institute any radical changes politically, economically, and socially.⁵⁸ Because of this, sectors in Argentina ideologically aligned with members of the military were largely untouchable for Frondizi. The antisemitic nationalist organization Tacuara was an example of one such group with an ideological overlap and strong connection to sectors of the military.⁵⁹ Tacuara at times even received military

⁵⁸ Luis Alberto Romero and James P. Brennan, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Updated and Revised Edition* (Baltimore, MD: Project MUSE, 2015), 134.

⁵⁹ Beatrice Dora Gurwitz, "From the New World to the Third World: Generation, Politics, and the Making of Argentine Jewish Ethnicity (1955-1983)" (Ph.D., United States -- California, University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 52, <http://search.proquest.com/pqdtthss/docview/1667095505/abstract/D79EBFBC1CB94308PQ/1>.

training, and its members came mainly from the same Catholic, urban upper class background as many military leaders. Tacuara was a fiercely anti-liberal, anti-communist, and antisemitic organization, whose activities consisted of street fights against ideological opponents and intimidation of Jewish merchants and individuals in general.⁶⁰ Tacuara, however, also worked to reduce the influence of Marxism in society, and many of their street fights consisted of clashes with left-leaning groups active in the country.⁶¹ Not taking action against Tacuara's activities and attacks on Jewish merchants benefited Frondizi in two ways. First, Tacuara's anti-communist intimidation tactics helped his goal of reducing communist influences within Argentina. That is not to say that Frondizi sponsored Tacuara and explicitly encouraged the organization to remove leftist influences from society, but in refusing to act against and punish Tacuara for its attacks and rhetoric, Frondizi essentially indicated to them that their actions were accepted and perhaps even tacitly appreciated. Secondly, allowing Tacuara to operate largely with impunity signaled to the military that Frondizi was not overly "problematic" or "radical". Given the frequency of military coups in this period of Argentine history, it is fair to say that appeasing the military was almost a prerequisite for maintaining democracy. Frondizi thus chose to ignore, at least in his legislation and policy, the many acts of antisemitism committed by Tacuara, seeking to ensure the survival of democracy, his position of power, and the fight against communist influences in Argentina.

Although Frondizi did not take legislative action against Tacuara and the antisemitic acts they committed, he did at times condemn their activities and the group as a whole. Condemning Tacuara at least gave Frondizi the appearance of an individual standing up to the extreme,

⁶⁰ Goebel, "A Movement from Right to Left in Argentine Nationalism?," 363.

⁶¹ Raanan Rein, "The Eichmann Kidnapping: Its Effects on Argentine-Israeli Relations and the Local Jewish Community," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (2001): 116.

nationalist, and antisemitic views present in the military and Argentine politics. This appearance certainly would have helped in maintaining positive relations with the United States, who hoped to count upon Frondizi as a reliable ally in the regional and global battle against communism.⁶² In this sense, Frondizi emulated Perón's voiced opposition to antisemitism for diplomatic purposes. Despite these condemnations, the freedom Tacuara had early in the Frondizi administration would have disastrous consequences for the Jewish community, particularly after Israeli Mossad agents captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires in 1960. Eichmann had arrived in Argentina several years after the end of World War II with false papers, and had remained in the country throughout the 1950s. Israel's decision, upon receiving intelligence that Eichmann was living in Buenos Aires, to move forward with his arrest without consulting Argentine authorities also contributed to anti-Jewish sentiment in Argentina in the years following the Eichmann capture.⁶³ During those years, Tacuara's antisemitic attacks and rhetoric would increase, with one especially brutal incident occurring in 1962 when Tacuara kidnapped and tortured a Jewish student, declaring the act as revenge for Eichmann's capture.⁶⁴ The murder a year later of a Jewish law student by Tacuara finally led to the banning of the organization by the subsequent president Arturo Illia, although former members of the group would continue similarly violent activities after this point.⁶⁵

The balancing act between condemning antisemitism and allowing antisemitic groups to continue to operate within Argentina continued into one of the following governments, the military regime that took power in 1966. This new military regime, headed by General Juan

⁶² "164. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Secretary of State," January 16, 1959, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v05/d164>.

⁶³ Raanan Rein, "The Eichmann Kidnapping: Its Effects on Argentine-Israeli Relations and the Local Jewish Community," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (2001): 116.

⁶⁴ Gurwitz, "From the New World to the Third World," 47.

⁶⁵ Goebel, "A Movement from Right to Left in Argentine Nationalism?," 364.

Carlos Onganía, also had some connections to and ideological overlap with Tacuara, even though its influence had decreased significantly in the mid-1960s since the ban enacted by the Illia administration. Nevertheless, some disbanded members of the group became informants for the Onganía regime, establishing a more explicit link between the antisemitic nationalism present in Tacuara and the Argentine government.⁶⁶ Tacuara's connections with the military regime also meant that an openly antisemitic organization could frame and define the Jewish Question along with the Church, military, and Argentine upper-class. The balancing act for Onganía would center on combating antisemitism while maintaining a relationship with disbanded members of Tacuara responsible for antisemitic violence and rhetoric. This relationship between combating antisemitism and incorporating Tacuara members into the regime allowed the military government to remove communist influences from society and uphold a strong relationship with the United States.

As for Frondizi, Tacuara members had political use in the anti-communist efforts and campaigns the Onganía government led. The military figures in power believed that a new liberal culture had led to the disappearance of traditional Argentine values linked to Catholicism.⁶⁷ Such military figures had strong connections with the Church leadership at the time, which generally opposed reforms within the institution and the increasing numbers of "Third World Priests" who tried to link Catholicism with a greater sense of social activism.⁶⁸ The military's efforts to combat this liberal culture led to significant repression and censoring of elements in society considered to be open to liberal and leftist ideals. For example, Onganía's government removed a number of left-leaning professors from prominent universities, banned

⁶⁶ Goebel, "A Movement from Right to Left in Argentine Nationalism?," 363-365.

⁶⁷ Cyrus Stephen Cousins, "General Onganía and the Argentine [Military] Revolution of the Right: Anti-Communism and Morality, 1966-1970", *Historia Actual Online* 17 (2008): 75.

⁶⁸ Brennan, *Missing Bones*, 65.

political groups from campuses, and made it legal to arrest anyone linked to spreading, harboring, or engaging with communist materials.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the government, like Tacuara, believed that the Catholic faith was central to national identity. Reducing communist influences helped establish such a relationship between Catholicism and Argentine identity. The incorporation of disbanded members of an antisemitic organization like Tacuara into the military regime allowed the government to transform Argentina society and identity as it combated communist influences.

Despite the presence of Tacuara members within the regime, Onganía assured both the Jewish community and the American government that he and his regime would be accepting of all religions.⁷⁰ Like for Perón, combating antisemitism, or at least denying its existence, was a central part of the balancing act for Onganía's military regime and allowed him to improve relations with the United States. In order to do so, Onganía had to both attempt to distance himself from Tacuara and its antisemitic attacks without losing its support for his regime and aid in the fight against communism. Meetings with American government officials and members of the American Jewish community reflected this complex relationship the Onganía government had with Tacuara and its members' activities. In 1966, one such meeting occurred, when Morris Abram, President of the American Jewish Committee, met in Buenos Aires with the Foreign Minister of Onganía's government, Nicanor Costa Méndez. During the meeting, Abram expressed concern to Costa Méndez over the presence of antisemitism in Argentina, pointing out that after taking power the government had invited both former Tacuara members and Jewish community leaders to meet with Onganía.⁷¹ After insisting that the military government had

⁶⁹ Stephen Cousins, "Anti-Communism and Morality, 1966-1970", 75.

⁷⁰ *Antisemitism in Argentina Detailed* (United States: Department Of State, 1966), 3, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349045694/USDD?u=brun62796&sid=zotero&xid=7ed53014>.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 2.

greatly reduced the number of antisemitic incidents in Argentina since coming to power, Costa Méndez stated that the meeting with Tacuara had simply been the result of a personal connection between a high-ranking government official and a former member of Tacuara. When Abram pressed Costa Méndez as to why the government had not specifically condemned Tacuara, his response was that there was little use in singling them out, as it would bring unnecessary attention to the group.⁷²

The government's refusal to individually condemn Tacuara and its actions reflected the importance of the organization to the Onganía government. After all, Costa Méndez was an advocate of a strong alliance with the United States, and was avidly anti-communist, which only strengthened his desire to maintain positive relations with the Americans.⁷³ Given this, his refusal to oblige with American demands in this case, while also trying to highlight the regime's acceptance of religious diversity, is significant. It suggests that Tacuara still was of use to the military in their anti-communist project, and that the regime would ignore the group's antisemitic nature while attempting to distance itself from such antisemitism. Furthermore, Costa Méndez's statement that a member of the military government had a personal connection in Tacuara hinted at the continued link between the organization and the military. Such a connection, if it is believed to be the actual reason behind the regime's meeting with Tacuara, would hardly be surprising, given the shared Catholic nationalist, anti-liberal backgrounds of both Tacuara and the military. Through Costa Méndez's interactions with Morris Abram, Onganía's "balancing act" is clear. On the one hand, like Perón and Frondizi, the military regime recognized the importance of combating and distancing itself from antisemitism for the upkeep of positive

⁷² *Antisemitism in Argentina Detailed* (United States: Department Of State, 1966), 3, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349045694/USDD?u=brun62796&sid=zotero&xid=7ed53014>.

⁷³ "Nicanor Costa Mendez, 69, Aide In Argentina in the Falkland War - The New York Times," n.d., <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/08/03/world/nicanor-costa-mendez-69-aide-in-argentina-in-the-falkland-war.html>.

foreign relations, primarily with the United States. On the other hand, they were unwilling to go as far as removing antisemitic groups from society, because of personal and ideological connections with such groups like Tacuara. Tacuara's use in the Onganía government's anti-communist repression also made the organization largely untouchable for the military regime, making even more complex the balancing act managed by that government.

Tacuara's incorporation into the military regime, however, also signified a development within the framing and defining of the Jewish Question in Argentina. While traditionally dominant social actors like the military, Church, and upper-class elite had originally responded to a Jewish problem that they viewed as capable of removing their dominant position in society and the Catholic values of Argentina, antisemitic organizations like Tacuara could now participate in the response to this "problem". In later military regimes similar to the Onganía government, the Jewish Question would be conflated with a "Marxist Question", which served as a response to the growing influence of leftist and liberal thought in Argentina.⁷⁴ The inclusion of antisemitic organizations like Tacuara in military regimes contributed to this conflation and a shift in the conception of the Jewish Question that more explicitly established a link between Judaism and Marxism. Furthermore, as evident during the 1950s and 1960s under the Frondizi and Onganía administrations, the Jewish Question would no longer exist in a vacuum within Argentina, as the United States government pressured different governments to reduce antisemitism.

⁷⁴ The "Marxist Question" refers to concerns over the influence of Marxism and communism in society. It is a term proposed in this project to reflect the idea of the Jewish Question, used in Europe throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Conclusion

These three periods of Argentine history demonstrate the ways in which both responding to the Jewish Question and tactically opposing antisemitism represented tools for different actors to shape Argentine society and identity. The violence of the *Semana Trágica* of 1919 resulted in part from distinct elements of the Jewish Question at the time. The growing economic success of some Jewish immigrants, an exaggerated link between Eastern European immigrants and the arrival of new ideologies like communism and socialism in Argentina, and elite concerns over uncontrolled immigration from “undesirable” regions of the world were central to the Jewish Question. Upper-class elites, in participating in the violence of the *Semana Trágica*, used it as a tool that maintained their position as the economic and social driving force in Argentina, while some members of the Catholic Church established a link between Judaism and communism, scapegoating the Jewish community as a way of reducing communist influences in the country. The Radical Party leadership similarly benefited from the Jewish Question and the repression of working class immigrants who were outside of the party’s base.

The Peronist period of the 1940s and 1950s broke significantly with traditional Argentine politics and social institutions. Peronism, in a way, defined itself in opposition to conservative, traditionally dominant sectors of Argentina like the Catholic Church and upper-class elite. Given that those same groups framed and defined the Jewish Question in the decades leading up to Perón’s arrival in power, including the Jewish community within Peronist organizations and within his own regime allowed Perón to distance himself from those same social actors he rejected. Perón therefore capitalized on the Jewish Question, more specifically the idea of the Jewish community as a force that threatened to corrupt the traditional bases of Argentine society and identity, to form a new Peronist identity in opposition to conservative, elite conceptions of

Argentina. Inclusion of the Jewish community within Peronism, this secularizing, non-Catholic, “dangerous” other within Argentina, highlighted the secular nature of Perón’s state and that loyalty to the regime defined Argentine identity, instead of Catholicism or any other distinguishing feature. Nevertheless, after the end of World War II, with the victory of the Allied powers and the creation of Israel in 1948, the Jewish Question in Argentina could no longer exist separate from conversations around Jewish communities and antisemitism in the rest of the world. Perón recognized this and attempted to prove to the United States that he had eradicated antisemitism in Argentina, despite the presence of some antisemitic nationalist organizations like the ALN (*Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista*) within his political base. The following governments of Arturo Frondizi and Juan Carlos Onganía would also attempt to prove that they were combating antisemitism in order to maintain positive relations with the United States.

Both Frondizi and Onganía had to adopt a balancing act between condemning antisemitism and maintaining the support of antisemitic nationalist organizations like Tacuara. Tacuara served both regimes as they sought to combat communist influences in Argentina, and in the case of the military government of General Onganía, former Tacuara members even formed part of the regime’s repressive apparatus. Frondizi and Onganía, however, attempted to distance themselves from the antisemitic attacks and rhetoric of Tacuara, particularly when meeting with American officials. Both regimes’ refusal to definitively act against Tacuara allowed its influence on society and traditionally dominant social actors like the military to grow. Even though the Jewish Question could no longer exist in an Argentine vacuum, the impunity guaranteed for Tacuara and other far-right actors provided them the opportunity to re-emphasize the Jewish “problem”, a reality evident during the following military dictatorship in the late 1970s, explored in the next chapter.

While these distinct periods of 20th century Argentine history differed in relation to the Jewish Question and antisemitism, they all reflected a social reality in which Jews were considered to be foreign. If these regimes had viewed the Jewish community as truly and fully Argentine, it is hard to imagine they would have allowed antisemitic organizations to continue to operate with impunity or would have even purposefully used Jewish individuals as diplomatic intermediaries abroad. The framing of the Jewish Question by the military, Church, and upper-class elite during the *Semana Trágica* othered the Jewish community as a secularizing, non-Catholic, economically powerful, and politically radical force that threatened to do away with Argentine tradition and the link between national identity and Catholicism. This began the process of othering the Jewish community, a reality that future regimes responded to, altered, but never fully rejected. Even the supposedly inclusive government of Juan Perón singled out Jews as an other, painting them as such to highlight his eventual inclusion of the community within Peronism. Argentina's Jews, in the eyes of these respective governments, social classes, and nationalist organizations, were foreigners, second-class citizens, and were never quite worth full protection. The consequences of this reality, as the following two chapters will show, would be clear in later periods as antisemitism continued to marginalize Argentina's Jews and would even become a part of efforts to foster national unity and identity in the 1980s.

Chapter 2: *Cabildo* and Antisemitism in the Argentine Military (1976-1983)

In 1979, the Argentine Federal District Court fined both the director and editor of the right-wing, antisemitic magazine *Cabildo*, charging them for “slander” and “abuse” directed at Moises Kostzer, a wealthy Jewish businessman. A particularly scathing letter to the editor had accused Kostzer of being a “Marxist theorist” and an “economic subversive”, accusations that if true would render him an enemy of the firmly anticommunist military regime in power at the time.⁷⁵ *Cabildo*, and antisemitic opinion and thought more generally, rarely faced any sort of pushback from the military state. Indeed, as during previous Argentine governments, many international observers believed that the state itself was supportive of antisemitic views and Nazi ideologies.⁷⁶ Given this, the government’s response to this specific instance of antisemitism is notable. However, this was not the only time military leaders opposed or sought to counter antisemitism. Faced with significant international pressure, particularly from the United States, to curb antisemitism and respect human rights, more “moderate” military leaders did occasionally respond through legal or political action.

The writers of *Cabildo*, in the same editions that contained antisemitic rhetoric, frequently attacked such leaders, like President Jorge Videla, for showing “weakness” in bowing to international pressure. Their criticism, and the responses military leaders took to *Cabildo*’s rhetoric, reveal the deep divisions within the military regime that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Various factions and individuals within the military supported the views expressed within *Cabildo*. The memoirs of Jewish political prisoners like journalist Jacobo Timerman, for example, show that the antisemitic, pro-Nazi beliefs apparent in *Cabildo* flourished in the

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Human Rights Summary United States Embassy Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1979), 8.

⁷⁶ Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora*, *Jewish Identities in a Changing World*, v. 12 (Leiden [The Netherlands] ; Boston: Brill, 2010), 36.

military's many detention centers. On the other hand, *Cabildo's* obvious antisemitism provided President Videla, like Perón and Onganía before him, the opportunity to tactically oppose antisemitism, enhancing his own position within the military regime and receiving international support for it. This chapter will use *Cabildo* to examine the internal tension and power struggle between "moderates" and ultra-nationalist extremists within the military, analyzing both the magazine's ideological and personal connections to such extremist military sectors as well as the government response to the magazine's antisemitic rhetoric.

Antisemitism and Military Rule (1976-1983)

One of the most controversial legacies of the military regime that led Argentina from 1976 to 1983 is its relation to antisemitism. This antisemitism built on the inclusion of far-right groups like Tacuara in previous military governments and the voice those groups gained in not facing repression from the governments described in Chapter 1. Under the military regime that took power in 1976, many of the forces that had defined and framed the Jewish Question in the early 1900s remained dominant in the country. These forces, like the military, Church, and upper-class elite, in large part still viewed the Jewish Question as a "problem", given the Jewish community's status as non-Catholics, political activity, economic success, and relatively secular nature. Even more so than during the *Semana Trágica* and under the Onganía regime, antisemitic voices influenced the ruling government and increasingly conflated fears over the spread of Marxism and liberal thought in Argentina with anxieties over the Jewish Question. Some figures who contributed to this growing overlap between the Marxist Question and the Jewish Question even held high positions within the military government. Additionally, most of the generals of the three branches of the armed forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) originated from Argentina's urban middle class and were almost entirely of Italian and Spanish backgrounds. Given that the

vast majority of them belonged to the Catholic faith, the military's leaders did not reflect the diversity of the country and often rejected and looked down upon religious and ethnic minorities in the country.⁷⁷ Many military leaders also believed, like previous military figures in the 20th century, that Catholicism was central to Argentine identity, a view which left Jews as a non-Argentine other residing in the country.

The conflation of the Marxist Question and the Jewish Question contributed to the human rights violations many Jewish individuals experienced during military rule in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the Jewish community in Argentina comprised roughly 1% of the country's population at the time of the 1976 coup, Jewish individuals made up around 10% of the *desaparecidos* ("disappeared") under the military regime.⁷⁸ Many abroad presumed that, given that Argentina contained the largest Jewish community in Latin America and served as a post-war haven for a number of Nazis, the military regime imprisoned, tortured, and killed Jews simply for being Jewish.⁷⁹ Scholars writing after the dictatorship, however, have refuted this, noting that the relatively large proportion of Jewish political prisoners and *desaparecidos* was a result of the high percentage of Jewish university students, activists, and professionals. The military did in fact target professions like psychiatry, journalism, and law as possible sites of subversion, and a significant number of Argentine Jews happened to work in these sectors.⁸⁰ Although this explanation for the high proportion of Jewish individuals among the regime's political prisoners is generally accepted, it is unquestionable that antisemitism did occur at the hands of the military. While there is little evidence that Jewish individuals faced arrest simply for

⁷⁷ Brennan, *Missing Bones*, 40.

⁷⁸ Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines?*, 36.

⁷⁹ Brennan, *Missing Bones*, 29.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 30-31.

being Jewish, once arrested Jews received far harsher treatment than their non-Jewish counterparts.⁸¹ The memoirs of individuals like imprisoned Jewish journalist Jacobo Timerman, explored later in the chapter, or the archives of activists such as American rabbi Marshall Meyer attest to this.

The Creation and Rise of *Cabildo*

With its first edition published in 1973, *Cabildo* was a relatively new magazine in 1976 when the military took control. *Cabildo* had been fairly active during the years preceding the coup, and opposed many of the developments occurring in the country in those years.⁸² After several years under military rule, Argentina had returned to democracy in 1973. The return to democracy also marked the reappearance of Juan Perón from exile. Although Perón died less than a year after his return to Argentina, Peronist politicians dominated the country's government in the remaining two years before the 1976 coup. Both the military and *Cabildo* viewed the return of Perón as the beginning of Argentina's deterioration in those years, as the country became increasingly prone to often violent political attacks.⁸³ Naturally, the editors and writers of *Cabildo* expressed openly antidemocratic views and regularly criticized the Peronist government in their publications. Because of this, the Peronist government headed by Juan Perón's second wife Isabel Perón censored three separate editions of the magazine. In a Peronist Argentina, there was clearly no place for *Cabildo*'s views.

The return of military rule in 1976 would change *Cabildo*'s status from a sidelined, censored magazine to one whose views were largely accepted. The editors of the magazine

⁸¹ Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 123.

⁸² Jorge Saborido, "El antisemitismo en la Historia argentina reciente: la revista *Cabildo* y la conspiración judía," *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 30 (January 1, 2004): 210.

⁸³ David Sheinin, *Consent of the Damned: Ordinary Argentines in the Dirty War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 35.

believed that they would take an active part in the “Process of National Reorganization” begun by the military.⁸⁴ In the early years of the military dictatorship, *Cabildo* regularly praised the national project the government had undertaken. Although they would eventually come to criticize some members and actions of that same government, during the military dictatorship the magazine flourished and reached a level of national (and international) attention not realized in a democratic Argentina.

***Cabildo*, Extremism, and the Military**

In 1977, in a regular human rights report on Argentina, the American embassy in Buenos Aires reported to the Secretary of State in Washington that “nationalistic elements” in the military regularly consumed *Cabildo*.⁸⁵ Only a year into military rule, the United States government was already aware of the presence of *Cabildo*, and that a largely ideological link seemed to exist between *Cabildo*, the ideas expressed within it, and the military. Although the magazine mostly received funding from rightwing business interests, and there is little evidence that the military regime itself directly supported *Cabildo* financially, the magazine did serve as a voice for extremist and ultra-nationalist factions within the military, and the country as a whole. It surely caught the attention of the United States government given both its presumed connection with sectors of the military and the problematic views expressed within it. Even if the military regime did not view *Cabildo* as a tool of the state, some prominent military leaders did in fact contribute to the magazine. In the years leading up to the 1976 coup, Ramón J. Camps, head of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police during the dictatorship, contributed to and regularly

⁸⁴ Laura Graciela Rodríguez, “Los nacionalistas católicos de *Cabildo* y la educación durante la última dictadura en Argentina,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 68, no. 1 (June 30, 2011): 112, <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2011.v68.i1.539> . "Cabildo aspiraba a ‘ser un instrumento activo de la plena restauración nacional’ ”.

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Far Right Monthly Charges Jewish-Marxist Conspiracy*. (Buenos Aires, 1977), 2.

read *Cabildo*.⁸⁶ Even *Cabildo* itself, in a later edition, noted that it had “a wide dissemination among the military ranks”.⁸⁷ Furthermore, *Cabildo* would remain throughout military rule, despite the regular attacks it directed at President Jorge Videla and other “moderates”. The views and commentary expressed within it rarely faced pushback from Videla and other military leaders, suggesting the influence and the importance the magazine had for other prominent, more extremist military members. After all, Videla and other prominent generals tended not to accept any form of criticism towards the regime, making this lack of censorship even more notable. It also further indicates a division within the military regime, and the power of extremist generals like Ramón J. Camps in that same regime.⁸⁸

Two specific cases demonstrate *Cabildo*'s ideological connection to the extremist wing of the military. In both these cases, *Cabildo* responded in their writing to the controversies surrounding the military's arrest of prominent Jewish individuals and families. Their beliefs reflected the actions and the rhetoric of certain leaders and sectors of the military, yet clashed with international pressure and opinion on these cases. As a later section will show, their beliefs and rhetoric would clash with that of other sectors of the military government too. The first of these cases is that of the Graiver family, and the accusations of money laundering directed at that family and their business.

Throughout the dictatorship, the military regime remained convinced that Marxist subversion existed in all spaces of society, threatening to corrupt the traditional bases of Argentina, like the Jewish “problem”. These spaces included universities, literary societies, and

⁸⁶ Saborido, “El antisemitismo en la Historia argentina reciente”, 211.

⁸⁷ “Una amplia difusión en los rangos militares”. *Cabildo*, no. 9, August 1977. “Graiver: Una ‘Amnesia’ en la ‘Memoria’ de Lanusse.”

⁸⁸ Jerry W. Knudson, “Veil of Silence: The Argentine Press and the Dirty War, 1976-1983,” *Latin American Perspectives* 24, no. 6 (1997): 99–100.

even prominent businesses.⁸⁹ There is little surprise, therefore, that the military suspected Jewish businessman David Graiver of laundering money to armed Marxist revolutionaries, like the group Montoneros active in the country at the time. The uncertainty surrounding Graiver's death in a freak plane accident in Mexico in 1976 served to add more credence to the military's suspicions, and in 1977 the military would move forward and arrest Graiver's wife and family. Five years later, a federal judge ruled that the Graiver family was completely innocent, and that their only crime was their relation to the deceased David Graiver, who was only presumed guilty.⁹⁰ Regardless of their innocence, *Cabildo* and certain factions of the military remained convinced that the Graiver family as a whole was guilty, even before the whole scandal arose.

Writing in October of 1976, only a couple months after David Graiver had passed, *Cabildo* wasted no words in expressing their view on the Jewish businessman. To them, Graiver was no more than a "Polish Jew who figured out how to make a large fortune among us" and who "expanded his public figure...up to national clandestine politics and the highest levels of the Argentine state".⁹¹ Interestingly, this edition of *Cabildo* came out several months before the accusations of money laundering appeared. To *Cabildo*, before Graiver was even considered guilty, he was already one who could not be trusted and represented a threat to Argentine society. The antisemitism in *Cabildo*'s writing on Graiver is clear. The writers of *Cabildo* do not see him as Argentine, and their underlying argument is that Graiver was no more than a thief who through his money came to have an influence on Argentine power structures. The writers of *Cabildo* believed that Catholicism was the central characteristic of the Argentine nation, and that

⁸⁹ Dávila, *Dictatorship in South America*, 120.

⁹⁰ James Neilson, "The Graiver Scandal", *Buenos Aires Herald* (Buenos Aires), July 21, 1982. <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/meyermarshall/meypw03046>

⁹¹ "Ese vástago de un judío polaco que supo hacerse de una gruesa fortuna entre nosotros...expandió su personalidad hasta la política nacional clandestina y los altos niveles del Estado argentino". *Cabildo*, no. 3, October 1976. "Las cenizas de David".

religious minorities largely had no place in such a nation. In their writing, Jewish individuals were regularly stripped of their Argentine identities, as Graiver was here. This was hardly different from the language the military regime used in its own discourse. While generally not directed against the country's Jews, that same discourse identified Marxist and leftist Argentines as the country's enemies. The military argued that as enemies of the nation such individuals and organizations could no longer be considered Argentine.⁹² That is not to say that *Cabildo* influenced the military leaders' public discourse, but there certainly was overlap in the way both talked about the country's enemies, whether Jewish, Marxist, or something different altogether.

In 1977, the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, headed by former *Cabildo* contributor Ramón J. Camps, moved forward to arrest David Graiver's wife.⁹³ Camps was a particularly powerful figure at the time, given that the police formed part of the regime's security forces and repressive apparatus, and that Buenos Aires Province contained roughly a third of the country's population at the time.⁹⁴ Camps, and extremist sections of the military, shared in *Cabildo*'s view of the Graiver family and their supposed guilt. Camps himself had even published a book that intended to prove David Graiver's connections with the armed Marxist group Montoneros.⁹⁵ *Cabildo*, like Camps, had used the accusations of the Graiver family's money laundering as proof of some sort of "Jewish-Marxist-Montonero" apparatus plotting to take control of Argentina.⁹⁶ This view reflected the conflation of Judaism and Marxism present during the

⁹² Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 27.

⁹³ "Lidia Papaleo relató cómo fue torturada en la última dictadura", *El territorio* (Posadas), May 30, 2012. <https://www.eltterritorio.com.ar/noticias/2012/05/30/304450-lidia-papaleo-relato-como-fue-torturada-en-la-ultima-dictadura>.

⁹⁴ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. (1980). *Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 1980*. Retrieved from https://biblioteca.indec.gob.ar/bases/minde/1c1980b3_1.pdf.

⁹⁵ "(Camps) publicó un libro destinado a mostrar la supuesta trama financiera controlada por Graiver." Saborido, "El antisemitismo en la Historia argentina reciente", 216.

⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Far Right Monthly Charges Jewish-Marxist Conspiracy*. (Buenos Aires, 1977), 1.

Semana Trágica and strengthened by the presence of antisemitic organizations like Tacuara within military governments. It went a step further than other views linked to the Jewish Question, however, highlighting the Jewish community not only as a force that threatened traditional Argentine values but that even hoped to take control of the country. Camps and some contributors to *Cabildo*, along with other Argentine far-right nationalists, pushed forward a belief that international Jewish interests were in the process of forming some sort of Jewish enclave or state in Patagonia. These same nationalists, much like those of Nazi Germany, argued that Argentina and the world's ills were the result of Jewish power.⁹⁷ This shared antisemitic ideological belief between members of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police and *Cabildo* indicate an influence and connection between each group. While it is impossible to prove that *Cabildo* sparked the whole Graiver affair, *Cabildo*'s rhetoric and link to Ramón Camps, who was so prominent in the Graiver family's arrest, does demonstrate the magazine's role as a voice for the extremist factions within the military.

The Graiver affair was not the only instance in which a prominent Argentine Jew had to confront and experience the antisemitism within both the military and *Cabildo*. The arrest of journalist Jaboco Timerman in 1977 would further reveal both the internal tension in the military as well as the ideological viewpoints of *Cabildo*'s writers and military extremists. The cause for Timerman's arrest remains unclear, with members of the military claiming he, like Graiver, supported Montoneros, and therefore was a Marxist subversive. Evidence for this did not exist, and many international observers would claim that Timerman's arrest was the result of antisemitism.⁹⁸ Timerman, before his arrest, was the editor of Argentine journal *La Opinión* and

⁹⁷ Ernesto Lázaro Bohoslavsky, *El Complot Patagónico: Nación, Conspiracionismo y Violencia En El Sur de Argentina y Chile, Siglos XIX y XX*, Colección Estudios Patagónicos (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2009), 213.

⁹⁸ Eugene Sofer, *InterChange: A Monthly Review of Issues Facing Israel and the Diaspora*, vol. 3, no. 1, September 1977. "Argentinian Jewry: What do we need to know?"

had supported the military coup in 1976 as a solution to the country's violent political divisions.⁹⁹ Given those views, it is hard to imagine Timerman as some sort of Marxist subversive.

Timerman was, however, a self-proclaimed Zionist, an identity that alarmed some in the military and the writers of *Cabildo*.¹⁰⁰ Timerman's openness about Zionism, which to him represented support for the state of Israel and Jewish nationalism, may have been the cause of his arrest, as some in the military ignorantly viewed Zionism as a form of communism.¹⁰¹ To far-right nationalists concerned about Jewish loyalty to Argentina, his status as a Zionist confirmed some of their suspicions about the Jewish community, as to them it was an example of the "foreign" and even subversive nature of the community. To such figures, it served as proof that Jews were untrustworthy and had a dual allegiance, or simply that they were connected with foreign interests. This idea appeared in some of the interrogations Timerman endured while in one of the military's prisons. For example, one interrogator told him, as if it were fact, that Israel "has created three power centers abroad....one is the United States, where Jewish power is evident...the second is the Kremlin, where Israel also has important influence...and the third center of power is Argentina".¹⁰² Timerman notes that denial of such a plan for Jewish control of Argentina (specifically Patagonia), known as *El Plan Andinia*, only caused the military

⁹⁹ Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, First edition (New York: Knopf: distributed by Random House, 1981), 27.

¹⁰⁰ Zionism in Argentina had different forms. Some used it as a way of supporting the state of Israel and its right to exist, others as a way of expressing their Jewish identity, while younger, leftist activists cast it as a movement of "national liberation". See Beatrice Dora Gurwitz, "From the New World to the Third World: Generation, Politics, and the Making of Argentine Jewish Ethnicity (1955-1983)" (Ph.D., United States -- California, University of California, Berkeley, 2012), <http://search.proquest.com/pqdtthss/docview/1667095505/abstract/D79EBFBC1CB94308PQ/1>.

¹⁰¹ Central Intelligence Agency, *Jacobo Timerman Calls for Inquiry into 'David Graiver Affair'*. (Tel Aviv, 1981), 3.

¹⁰² Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name*, 74.

individuals he met to believe even more strongly in said conspiracy.¹⁰³ His status as a Zionist would have caused such antisemitic individuals in the military to link that identity with the idea of international Jewish power and supposed efforts to undermine Argentine sovereignty. The influence of such antisemitic ideologies and conspiracies on the military regime was clear, particularly when the Argentine Minister of the Interior admitted to the United States' Carter administration in a meeting that Timerman was imprisoned for being a Zionist. Significant international pressure from the United States would eventually result in Timerman's release and exile in Israel, though some in the military remained convinced of his guilt and continued to see Zionism as a crime.

Cabildo was naturally one such voice that remained confident of Timerman's guilt. In 1978, when the military regime decided to move him from one of the detention centers to house arrest, *Cabildo* responded with a number of scathing attacks on the Jewish journalist. To *Cabildo*, Timerman's own identity already served as his confession: "Jewish, but a Zionist, Zionist, but of the left, according to his own public confession, spewed out his hate, ambition, and irreverence upon the very roots of the nation that so unscrupulously had taken him in".¹⁰⁴ Timerman's status as a Zionist, which of course he admitted to publicly, supported *Cabildo's* belief that Jews were untasteful and connected to foreign interests. The Argentine nation, according to *Cabildo*, had made the mistake of letting such a dangerous figure into the country. Just as upper-class elites, the Church, and government officials blamed the arrival of

¹⁰³ Far-right Argentine nationalists believed that Zionist leaders had considered Patagonia as a possible site for a Jewish state before settlement of Palestine. After the creation of Israel, some believed that Israel was interested in settling Patagonia as an alternative to Palestine, given the multiple threats it faced throughout the 20th century from Arab states. Ernesto Lázaro Bohoslavsky, *El Complot Patagónico: Nación, Conspiracionismo y Violencia En El Sur de Argentina y Chile, Siglos XIX y XX*, Colección Estudios Patagónicos (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2009), 213.

¹⁰⁴ "Judío, pero sionista, y sionista, pero de izquierda, según propia confesión pública, vomitó su odio, su ambición y su irreverencia sobre las raíces mismas de la nación que tan desaprensivamente lo había acogido". *Cabildo*, no. 15, April 1978. "¡Impune! Jacobo Timerman: Agente de la corrupción y la subversión".

communism and anarchism in Argentina on Jewish immigrants during the *Semana Trágica*, *Cabildo* suggested that Argentina had allowed such ideologies to gain ground by accepting yet another Jewish immigrant. Timerman had immigrated to Argentina as a child from the Soviet Union, further alarming those suspicious of his loyalty to Argentina, as the Soviet Union represented the home of communism and an important foreign power. *Cabildo* therefore shared in the belief that the Ministry of the Interior and Ramón Camps held of Zionism and the trustworthiness of Jewish individuals, yet another instance of the ideological overlap between the military and *Cabildo*. Once again, *Cabildo* seemed to be the voice of the military extremists, although in this case such extremists even felt comfortable voicing their opinion in a meeting with the Carter administration.

Cabildo's ideological overlap with the military is evident in Timerman's memoir, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, in which he describes the antisemitic treatment he encountered while in one of the military's prisons. Timerman's guards and interrogators often tortured him severely, and seemed to enjoy doing it. In his memoir, he recalls how soldiers would chant "Jew" while torturing him, or how he heard one woman screaming that she was Catholic while several soldiers mocked her as a Jew during interrogation.¹⁰⁵ Another Jewish prisoner of the military recalled that a priest had encouraged him to convert to Catholicism, so as to avoid the harsher interrogations and torture Jewish prisoners faced. Other prisoners even stated that soldiers would ask newly arrived detainees if they were Jewish or not, which later determined the treatment such prisoners would receive.¹⁰⁶ It is clear from Timerman and other prisoners' accounts that simply being Catholic allowed for some acceptance as Argentine. On the

¹⁰⁵ Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name*, 61.

¹⁰⁶ Notes on prison visits with Máximo Shprejer and Jorge Eduardo Podolsky, 1978, Marshall T. Meyer Archive, Duke University, Durham, NC.

other hand, being Jewish meant suspicion, and treatment as both an enemy of the state and an enemy of the nation. The construction of a Jewish other, too, seemed to be an approach within military detention centers, even as a way of forming a shared identity in opposition to the Jewish prisoners soldiers interacted with. This othering reflected the Jewish Question, the idea that the Jewish community threatened traditional Argentine values, national identity, and society as a whole.

Cabildo, as a voice for extremist viewpoints, demonstrated its ideological common ground with factions of the military throughout the Graiver and Timerman affairs, as well as the military dictatorship as a whole. Their ideologies were antisemitic, and often based on falsehoods that fabricated evidence of anti-Argentine threats and conspiracies. For the military, in addition to representing actual beliefs and convictions, such ideologies served as a way of accessing power. In 1979, those very same ideologies resulted in a revolt in the interior city of Córdoba, when Third Army corps commander Luciano Benjamin Menéndez marched his troops against the military government which had decided to release Timerman.¹⁰⁷ Although Menéndez's coup would fail, it demonstrated how prevalent antisemitic conspiracies were among some factions of the military, and how those beliefs could be mobilized to access power. After all, the military regime could only really justify its stay in power if a serious threat existed to the country's security. Having essentially eradicated armed leftist groups like Montoneros, the military needed to demonstrate that there was some other threat to the Argentine nation. To *Cabildo* and pro-Nazi extremists in the military this was the world's, and Argentina's, Jews.

¹⁰⁷ Juan Carlos Mercado, "Anti-Semitism under Military Rule, 1976-83 / Marshall T. Meyer Papers / Duke Digital Repository," Duke Digital Collections, 12. <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/meyermarshall/meypw01127>.

Military Moderates? The Response to *Cabildo* and Antisemitism

In early 1978, Navy commander Emilio Massera reportedly approached the Carter administration in the United States, promising that if he were in power (instead of President Jorge Videla), he would be committed to halting all human rights violations. Human rights activists from Argentina, however, reported that Massera had never shown any more devotion to human rights causes than Videla and that in fact the Navy had committed some of the gravest human rights violations in that period.¹⁰⁸ Massera himself probably cared little about human rights, but it was a language, an idea through which he could access power. For some in the military government, including President Videla, antisemitism served the same purpose as human rights discourse. Tactically opposing it allowed him and other moderates to enhance their own position within the military regime, and, similarly to Perón and Onganía, improve international relations. In a ruling body rife with division, as shown by Menéndez's failed coup in Córdoba or Massera's appeal to the Carter administration, distancing oneself from other sectors in the regime proved to be useful. As this section will show, there were a number of instances in which Videla and military "moderates" opposed *Cabildo*, extremist voices, and antisemitism in an effort to maintain their loose grip on power.

Cabildo was often critical of Videla, and seemed to view him as overly weak. Given that *Cabildo* believed there were a host of enemies of the Argentine nation, to them it seemed that Videla was simply allowing those enemies to operate with impunity. *Cabildo*'s commentary on the government's decision to transfer Jacobo Timerman from imprisonment in one of the military's detention centers to house arrest demonstrates this: "the state is subjectively weak. Particularly, in regards to foreign pressure. Only thus can one explain the astonishing privilege -

¹⁰⁸ "Split is Seen in Argentine Military Junta", *International Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), January 31, 1978, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/meyermarshall/meypw04157>.

under the label of ‘house arrest’, but as a pledge for his definitive freedom in the short run - (the state) has just granted to Jacobo Timerman.”¹⁰⁹ Only the government’s perceived weakness could explain this “privilege” the state had granted Timerman in placing him under house arrest . Of course, *Cabildo* was correct in identifying international pressures behind the Timerman case, given that the Carter administration in the United States demanded frequent updates on his well-being and status during his imprisonment. Videla received the confidence of American diplomats in Argentina and was generally receptive to American demands.¹¹⁰ His relationship with the United States and *Cabildo*, as the voice of military extremists, provide more explanation for his actions throughout his time in power.

It was easy for Videla to distance himself from extremism and antisemitism given his relationship with *Cabildo*. In the same article, the magazine’s writers would denounce Jewish power and Videla’s own weakness, as they did in an August 1977 edition: “Cabildo goes back to remaining between two fires: the government which has fined it and Jewish power”.¹¹¹ To the international observer, surely, then, Videla himself could not have supported *Cabildo*’s views and antisemitic beliefs. He too was a victim of their often scathing editorials. Even if he might have opposed antisemitism from a moral standpoint, curbing antisemitic voices clearly served him tactically as well. Videla’s government took advantage of this, censoring overly antisemitic

¹⁰⁹ “El estado es “subjetivamente débil. En especial, respecto de las presiones exteriores. Solo así se explica el asombroso privilegio que - a título de ‘arresto domiciliario’, pero como prenda de su libertad definitiva a corto plazo - acaba de concedérsele a Jacobo Timerman”. *Cabildo*, no. 15, April 1978. “¡Impune! Jacobo Timerman: Agente de la corrupción y la subversión”.

¹¹⁰ Split is Seen in Argentine Military Junta”, *International Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), January 31, 1978, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/meyermarshall/meypw04157>.

¹¹¹ “CABILDO vuelve a quedar entre dos fuegos: el gobierno que la ha sancionado y el poder judío, que con multiples manifestaciones la ha cubierto de amenazas” *Cabildo*, no. 9, August 1977. “Graiver: Una ‘Amnesia’ en la ‘Memoria’ de Lanusse.”

editions of *Cabildo* twice.¹¹² In doing so, Videla and the government could position itself as moderate and in opposition to the antisemitism expressed in *Cabildo*.

In another instance, Videla attempted to censor *Cabildo* yet again, though not explicitly for antisemitism. According to a human rights report from the American embassy in Buenos Aires, in March 1978 “the government was contemplating action against the extreme right wing magazine *Cabildo* for a scathing editorial attacking President Videla’s proposed racial and religious anti-discrimination law (which has been shelved). However, nothing seems to have developed.”¹¹³ There are a number of important elements to note here. First, the fact that Videla had proposed a racial and religious anti-discrimination law is significant. It suggests that Videla was either responding to international pressure to put forward such a law, or believed it would be useful to push for it himself. Regardless, to the United States, Videla appeared as a moderate for proposing such a law, and that only would have further established his position as the United States’ chief ally within the military regime. Secondly, *Cabildo*’s response to the proposition of such a law further distanced Videla from extremist, antisemitic factions within Argentina. It exposed a tension between these antisemitic factions and moderates within the government. Finally, this tension is even more apparent in the outcome of this whole situation described by the American embassy. The law did not pass, which reflects the influence of more hardline nationalist factions in the military government, and *Cabildo* was not censored. In a regime that generally censored any form of press that criticized it, save perhaps the more international *Buenos Aires Herald*, it is interesting that *Cabildo*, even with its own criticism, remained active throughout military rule.¹¹⁴ Again, this implies some sort of support among the military for the

¹¹² Saborido, “El antisemitismo en la Historia argentina reciente”, 211.

¹¹³ U.S. Department of State, *Human Rights Roundup through May 31, 1978*, (Buenos Aires, 1978), 15.

¹¹⁴ Knudson, “Veil of Silence,” 99–100.

ideas expressed within *Cabildo*, and indicates that Videla and other moderates did not have sufficient control to silence extremist voices. As one US-based journal noted at the time, “Videla reigns but does not rule”.¹¹⁵ Through actions like pushing forward an anti-religious discrimination law, or censoring antisemitic voices, however, Videla and other moderates could improve their own standing and power by improving relations with the United States, just as other Argentine leaders did before him.

Jacobo Timerman’s memoir provides further insight into this response to antisemitism and extremism by some military leaders. Throughout his memoir, Timerman makes a distinction between military moderates and extremists, arguing that it was the extremists who arrested, interrogated, and tortured him. Interestingly, the figure of Ramón Camps, the same general involved with *Cabildo* and the Graiver affair, appears as villain again in Timerman’s own history while he is under the custody of the Federal Police. Timerman contrasts Camps with the so-called moderates, who acted upon his behalf: “from the outset, President Rafael Videla and General Roberto Viola tried to convert my disappearance into an arrest in order to save my life”.¹¹⁶ Had Timerman remained “disappeared”, in reality kidnapped and detained illegally like countless Argentines, it is likely he would have died, cast into the River Plate or shot and piled into a mass grave. Timerman almost goes as far to suggest that military leaders like Videla did not originally know about the plot to detain him, and thus worked to counter it once other military factions apprehended him. Just as with the response to and censorship of *Cabildo*, it is unknown if Videla and General Viola attempted to save Timerman for moral and ideological reasons, or rather for diplomacy and their own personal gain. Regardless, it still allowed them to

¹¹⁵ Eugene Sofer, *InterChange: A Monthly Review of Issues Facing Israel and the Diaspora*, vol. 3, no. 1, September 1977. “Argentinian Jewry: What do we need to know?”

¹¹⁶ Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name*, 26.

position themselves as moderates and maintain their hold on power, even if they were not necessarily moderates ideologically. Timerman's own release from custody and exile in Israel were the result of Videla's actions, as the military only agreed to obey the Supreme Court's demand for his release when Videla threatened to quit.¹¹⁷ Videla's response to antisemitism and extremism, once again, only served to improve his international image.

The internal division within the military would remain throughout the entirety of their stay in power. Videla would ultimately step down in 1981 as a result of such tensions, and his successor Roberto Viola would face the same fate shortly afterwards. Videla's leadership was complicated, as is his legacy. To many, he remains a representation of the brutality of the military regime, as it was he who presided over a ruling body that assassinated over 30,000 Argentines. Videla was largely unable, or perhaps unwilling, to rein in extremists in the military, although his censoring of *Cabildo* and diplomatic engagement with the United States reveal that he made some effort to contain them. Most sources from outside Argentina at the time describe Videla as a conservative, or as a nationalist, but not as a fascist. Some American and Argentine Jewish leaders even argued that Videla would "move against antisemitism if he could", but that he did not have the power or resources to do so.¹¹⁸ Videla's seemingly positive international image, however, was a result of his actions and self-depiction as a moderate. He could distance himself from the antisemitism that ran through the military and its prisons, or that featured so prominently in magazines like *Cabildo*. Ultimately, it is unclear how successful this tactic was. *Cabildo* continued to operate throughout military rule, and Videla did not remain in power. Nevertheless, perhaps the fact that he managed to lead such a divided military for five years was

¹¹⁷ Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name*, 128.

¹¹⁸ Eugene Sofer, *InterChange: A Monthly Review of Issues Facing Israel and the Diaspora*, vol. 3, no. 1, September 1977. "Argentinian Jewry: What do we need to know?"

a result of his political strategy and expertise, which included tactical opposition to certain instances of antisemitism.

Conclusion

The Argentine Federal Court's 1979 decision to charge *Cabildo*'s editor and director for "slander" through the "medium of the press" represents one of the few instances in which the military government actually countered antisemitism in an effective manner.¹¹⁹ Facing regular accusations of antisemitism throughout its time in power, the military continued to insist it was not antisemitic and that Argentina's Jews were completely safe under military rule.¹²⁰ *Cabildo* itself responded to charges of antisemitism, stating that as devout Catholics, they could not be antisemitic: "How can we, who worship a God who is Jewish in the flesh, be racist?"¹²¹ Nevertheless, *Cabildo*'s own rhetoric throughout the military dictatorship would suggest otherwise, as would the military's actions. Argentina's Jews were safe under military rule as long as they were not doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, businessmen, rabbis, activists, students, or soldiers. Antisemitic generals like Ramón Camps filled important positions within the military regime, and could openly express their views without any form of accountability. There was no large scale effort to eradicate antisemitism within the military's detention centers, as those who controlled those spaces of repression were often antisemitic themselves, like Third Army Corps commander Luciano Menéndez.¹²² This is what made actions against antisemitism by President Videla and other "moderates" so notable. These actions were rare, yet were highly strategic. By

¹¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Human Rights Summary United States Embassy Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1979), 8.

¹²⁰ Eugene Sofer, *InterChange: A Monthly Review of Issues Facing Israel and the Diaspora*, vol. 3, no. 1, September 1977. "Argentinian Jewry: What do we need to know?"

¹²¹ "¿Cómo podemos ser racistas los que adoramos a un Dios que es judío en la carne?". *Cabildo*, no. 6, March 1977. "Cabildo y el Mito Antisemita".

¹²² Juan Carlos Mercado, "Anti-Semitism under Military Rule, 1976-83 / Marshall T. Meyer Papers / Duke Digital Repository," Duke Digital Collections, 12, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/meyermarshall/meypw01127>.

censoring *Cabildo*, particularly after various international groups criticized it severely, or by proposing an anti-religious discrimination law, Videla styled himself as a moderate. In such a divided military, each general needed their own strategy and method to maintain or increase their own authority. For Navy commander Emilio Massera, this strategy consisted of appealing to American human rights discourse. For President Jorge Videla and General Roberto Viola, this strategy consisted of opposing high profile instances of antisemitism, as in the case of Jacobo Timerman. For others, like Ramón J. Camps and Luciano Menéndez, the fabrication of internal and external enemies, all related to the Jewish faith, represented a clear strategy to enhance their own positions, building on their own antisemitic convictions. Both these military men styled themselves as nationalists operating in the face of grave threats to the country's hegemony, and both antisemitism and *Cabildo* provided the means to do so.

This period, similarly, demonstrated how the Jewish community in Argentina remained an other within Argentina. During the military dictatorship, the actors who framed the Jewish Question as a Jewish "problem" in the early 20th century remained dominant in Argentina. These actors, like the military, Church, and upper-class elite, still viewed the Jewish community as a force that threatened the traditional, Catholic nature of Argentine society and identity. Their framing of the Jewish Question and rhetoric expressed in magazines like *Cabildo* continued to other Jews as a secularizing, political radical, and economically powerful threat. However, this othering had become even more present within the military government as antisemitic figures gained power within the regime, highlighting the Jewish community as a "foreign" threat linked to an international Jewish plot for world domination. In the military's prisons and detention centers, this othering of Jews was clear, and seemed to be part of the process of forming an Argentine national identity linked to Catholicism. Military leaders would continue to speak of

the importance of Catholicism in shaping Argentine society throughout the dictatorship, and antisemitism would continue to have a central role in this attempt to hone a specific national identity and character. This would be especially evident later on in military rule when Argentina invaded the nearby Malvinas Islands, and Jewish individuals were able to participate largely for the first time within the military and Argentine nationalism.

Chapter 3: The Malvinas War: Unity for Some, Exclusion for Others

In May of 1982, as British ships and planes continued to approach the Malvinas Islands, the Argentine military quickly organized itself to prepare for the defense of the islands they had taken for themselves only a month earlier.¹²³ As soldiers piled into the military's planes and prepared to make the short journey over the South Atlantic from Patagonia to the Malvinas Islands, a lieutenant pulled one of his soldiers aside, telling him he would not be fighting at the front: "I'm only taking *criollo* soldiers, not a Jew".¹²⁴ Marcelo Eddi, the young Jewish conscript the lieutenant was speaking to, boarded the plane anyway when the lieutenant's focus had shifted elsewhere, eager to prove his own sense of patriotism to his superiors. The lieutenant's comment reflected a larger truth about the Malvinas War and the reality within the Argentine military during the conflict. Through antisemitic and Catholic nationalist discourse, the military excluded and marginalized Jewish conscripts and individuals. This exclusion was a central part of a military-led ideological project to foster Argentine unity linked to a Catholic identity, representing a continuation of the othering of the Jewish community as a secularizing, politically radical, and "foreign" threat to the Argentine nation. The experience of Jewish individuals like Marcelo Eddi during the Malvinas War demonstrated this, told he would not be able to fight for the country he called home simply because he was Jewish and not *criollo*, a native Argentine of European and particularly Spanish descent (although most Argentine Jews are in fact of European ancestry). This chapter examines this antisemitic exclusion, arguing that the formation of national unity during the Malvinas War built on Catholic religious discourse, and that this

¹²³ In addition to disputes over rights to the islands, both the British and Argentines disagree over the name of the islands. This project uses the Argentine term "Malvinas", instead of the British "Falklands", given that it focuses on the Argentine aspect of the sovereignty dispute and 1982 war.

¹²⁴ "Voy a llevar todos soldados criollos, no un judío." Hernán Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas: La Comunidad judía Argentina, La Guerra Del Atlántico Sur y El Antisemitismo*, Buenos Aires: Vergara, 2012, 179.

unity necessitated the exclusion of Jewish individuals like Eddi through antisemitism which labeled Jews as untrustworthy foreigners.

History and Context of the Malvinas War

In commanding the invasion of the Malvinas Islands in 1982, the ruling military junta capitalized on Argentina's long-standing claim on the islands. Such a claim traced back to the early colonial period, and disputes between the Spanish and British over the islands. Both nations recorded discoveries of the islands in the 16th century, with the Spanish arguing that explorer Ferdinand Magellan had discovered them in his journey around the southern tip of South America in 1520. The British, on the other hand, countered that it was actually British Captain John Davis who recorded the first discovery in 1592.¹²⁵ Both the British and Spanish would settle the islands in different periods of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, before the United Provinces of the River Plate, precursor to the modern Argentine nation, would lay claim to the islands.¹²⁶ Despite this, the United Provinces of the River Plate never sent a governor to the islands, and the few settlers remaining there were mostly British with a few French individuals as well. In 1832, after French settlers and newly arrived Argentine colonists seized several American sealing ships, the Americans would respond by burning the French settlement and removing the few Argentines there.¹²⁷ A year later, the British residents on the islands petitioned the British government to form a permanent settlement on the islands, and from that point on the British would control the islands, populated almost entirely by British residents.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ "Falkland Islands at a Glance; Falkland Islands; History." *New York Times*, Apr 03, 1982, Late Edition (East Coast).

¹²⁶ Lord Shackleton, "The Falkland Islands and Their History," *The Geographical Journal* 149, no. 1 (1983): 3–4, <https://doi.org/10.2307/633330>.

¹²⁷ "Falkland Islands at a Glance; Falkland Islands; History." *New York Times*, Apr 03, 1982, Late Edition (East Coast).

¹²⁸ Shackleton, "The Falkland Islands", 4.

Despite British control of the islands, the sovereignty dispute continued, linked to those disagreements over the discovery of and early settlements on the islands. Argentina continued to claim them, lodging a number of protests to the British government throughout the 19th century.¹²⁹ The British ignored these protests, but in the 1930s and the 1940s as the British Empire began to dissolve, the relevancy of the Malvinas sovereignty dispute grew. When Argentina joined the United Nations in 1945, it finally had an international body in which it could voice its claims over the islands. Argentina continued to demand direct negotiations with the British, which the UN sanctioned in 1965, commanding the two states to resolve the sovereignty dispute peacefully. These talks, while representing a step forward, failed to make any progress on the question of sovereignty over the islands.¹³⁰

When the Argentine military took control of the country in 1976, the dispute over the islands remained unresolved. The failure of diplomatic channels was a reflection of different conceptions of what the main issue was relating to the sovereignty dispute. Argentine diplomats, and much of the country, viewed the islands as an outdated relic of colonialism. British governments and diplomats, on the other hand, viewed the dispute as an issue of self-determination.¹³¹ Both these viewpoints furthered each nation's claim to the islands. If seen as a relic of British colonialism, then it was natural that the islands should belong to the nation whose territory was adjacent to the islands. If viewed as an issue of self-determination, then it was obvious the islands should belong to the United Kingdom, given that nearly all the islanders were

¹²⁹ Roberto C. Laver, *The Falklands/Malvinas Case: Breaking the Deadlock in the Anglo-Argentine Sovereignty Dispute* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2001), 89.

¹³⁰ David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, "Argentina's Invasion of the Falklands (Malvinas), 1982," in *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars, What America and China Can Learn* (RAND Corporation, 2014), 151, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt1287m9t.20>.

¹³¹ Lowell S. Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands* (Cary, UNITED STATES: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1988), 117, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bowdoin-ebooks/detail.action?docID=273211>.

British and had expressed a desire to remain under British rule. These clashing viewpoints naturally meant that diplomacy regularly led to frustration for both sides, even 15 years after negotiations had begun.

The continued failure of diplomatic channels corresponded with the rise of extremist military leaders within the Argentine government in the early 1980s, who opted to reject the use of diplomatic channels and elected instead to use militaristic means to resolve the dispute over the islands. While scholars and historians have disputed the main motivating factor behind the invasion of the islands in April of 1982, there is no doubt that the move was widely popular across Argentina. Many Argentines of the left, previously opponents and enemies of the military state, supported the war as an anti-colonial struggle, while many Argentines of the right supported the war as a display of nationalism and military power.¹³² The prevailing discourse in the country surrounding the islands throughout the 20th century communicated an idea that the country could not be “whole” until the islands were under Argentine control.¹³³ This discourse existed in schools across the country and further contributed to former targets of state repression, such as exiles, leftists, and Jews, supporting the invasion.¹³⁴ Given this widespread support, in claiming the islands for Argentina, the Junta at least briefly improved their domestic image and distracted the country from the human rights violations, economic failures, and overall poor governance witnessed during the previous six years under military control.

While the invasion of the Malvinas Islands provided the military the opportunity to increase their approval domestically and perhaps lengthen their stay in power, this hinged on their ability to keep the islands from the British. The military government believed that the

¹³² Romero and Brennan, *A History of Argentina*, 275.

¹³³ Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lins, “Argentina’s Invasion of the Falklands (Malvinas)”, 151.

¹³⁴ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 134-135.

British would not respond if Argentina invaded and occupied the islands, and given that diplomatic channels had failed, they argued that military action was the only way to resolve the sovereignty dispute.¹³⁵ Their belief that the British would not respond militarily, however, failed to take into account a number of factors. First, that Britain's conservative government under Margaret Thatcher faced disapproval itself domestically, that the United States would side with the British, and that Argentina was isolated diplomatically. War allowed Thatcher to improve her own image, just as it did for the junta leaders, and the Argentine military was not prepared for this.¹³⁶ After occupying the islands for a little over a month, Argentine troops on the islands faced regular bombardments from British planes, and the many teenage conscripts rushed to the front had almost no training and poor equipment.¹³⁷ Argentine resistance to the British response lasted only a month, and in June of 1982 they would surrender. The islands would remain in British hands, with Argentina's defeat marking the beginning of the end of the military's stay in power.

Fostering Unity through Exclusion: Argentine Nationalism during the Malvinas War

In April of 1982, shortly after Argentine troops had arrived on the Malvinas Islands to claim them for Argentina, President and head of the military junta Leopoldo Galtieri addressed the nation from the balconies of the Casa Rosada (Argentina's executive mansion).¹³⁸ In his speech, Galtieri spoke confidently, full of praise for the military and Argentina as a whole. He expressed a sentiment of unity previously unseen in military discourse, highlighting the different sectors of Argentine society that had gathered before him in the Plaza de Mayo and across the

¹³⁵ Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands*, 126.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 131.

¹³⁷ Paola Ehrmantraut, "Aftermath of Violence: Coming to Terms with the Legacy of the Malvinas/Falklands War (1982)," *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 15 (2011): 98.

¹³⁸ Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lins, "Argentina's Invasion of the Falklands (Malvinas)", 153.

country to express support for the invasions of the Malvinas Islands: “Gathered here we have workers, businessmen, intellectuals, all the orders of life in the national union working towards the country’s well-being and dignity.”¹³⁹ While Galtieri’s statement may not seem particularly significant, it highlighted unity between groups that the regime had at times targeted as enemies of the state. Workers, for example, and particularly workers’ unions, had faced state repression regularly since the beginning of military rule in 1976. Between 1976 and 1983, the military raided over 30% of the labor unions operating in the country at the time.¹⁴⁰ Businessmen and business interests, on the other hand, had been a traditional ally of the military regime under President Jorge Videla (1976-1981), in some cases even helping the military by drawing up lists of “subversives”, many of whom were sent to one of the regime’s many detention centers or who simply disappeared.¹⁴¹ Leopoldo Galtieri and the military junta, including Navy commander Jorge Anaya and Air Force brigadier Basilio Lami Dozo, belonged to a more hardline wing of the military which, like the extremist generals described in Chapter 2, was generally suspicious of the business sector and its connections to foreign interests.

The last group Galtieri mentioned, intellectuals, faced harsh repression from the military throughout its time in power. In being individuals who questioned, criticized, and analyzed society and culture, intellectuals proposed new alternatives for how society, politics, and the economy should function. Many Jewish individuals had formed part of this last group, enduring the military’s crackdown on university learning and certain academic disciplines like psychology

¹³⁹“Acá están reunidos obreros, empresarios, intelectuales, todos los órdenes de la vida nacional en la unión nacional en procura del bienestar del país y su dignidad.” Leopoldo Galtieri, “Leopoldo Galtieri Discurso Completo 2 de abril 1982”, (speech, Buenos Aires, April 2, 1982).

¹⁴⁰ Luciana Zorzoli, “Las intervenciones a organizaciones sindicales durante la última dictadura militar argentina: Un estudio cuantitativo,” *Desarrollo Económico* 57, no. 223 (2018): 499.

¹⁴¹ Brennan, *Missing Bones*, 25.

and sociology.¹⁴² To such individuals, Galtieri's speech seemed to indicate that they would now be included in a united Argentina in which all were welcome, even former enemies of the state.

In reality, the military's efforts to foster national unity during the Malvinas War necessitated the othering and exclusion of non-Catholic Argentines. The military used the war as an opportunity to solidify a national identity strongly linked to Catholicism, which naturally meant that Argentina's Jews were not included within such a national identity. Galtieri's discourse reflected this, framing the conflict in religious terms as many other military and religious leaders would do. Speaking of the invasion, Galtieri emphasized the religious nature of Argentine society to his audience: "Tomorrow is Easter, tomorrow Sunday is Easter, so let the Argentine nation which is profoundly religious and Catholic pray asking God for peace."¹⁴³ Encouraging the crowd gathered before him to pray, while speaking from the nation's most important building, the Casa Rosada, had a clear symbolism to it. Argentines of all walks of life and political beliefs stood together in prayer for the "recuperation" of the Malvinas Islands. In this way, Galtieri established a link between Catholicism and nationalism. Both forces had united the country behind the nation's military, even though that same military had divided and repressed much of the country over the past six years.

In describing Argentina as a Catholic country, Galtieri had implied that hundreds of thousands of Argentine citizens did not form part of the nation. In a speech expressing and advocating for unity, the President had excluded every non-Catholic Argentine in his view of the nation. After receiving complaints of discrimination from local Jewish leaders, Galtieri would eventually write a leader to the DAIA, the leading Jewish community organization in Buenos

¹⁴² Brennan, *Missing Bones*, 25.

¹⁴³ "Mañana es pascua, mañana domingo es pascua, que el pueblo argentino que es profundamente religioso y católico rece pidiendo a dios por la paz." Leopoldo Galtieri, "Leopoldo Galtieri Discurso Completo 2 de abril 1982", (speech, Buenos Aires, April 2, 1982).

Aires, thanking it and the Jewish community for its support of the occupation of the islands.¹⁴⁴ Even if Galtieri was willing to include and thank the Jewish community for its commitment to a profoundly Argentine cause in private, he did not in public before thousands of Argentine citizens. Such religious framing of the conflict, in relation to Catholic nationalism, required the exclusion of Jewish and non-Catholic communities, representing a continuation of the idea, present throughout the 20th century, of the Jewish community as a politically radical, “foreign”, and secularizing “other” within Argentina.

The popularity of the war gave the military a chance to shape Argentina to their liking, allowing them to disassociate Argentine identity with the many ideologies and groups they rejected. The writers of *Cabildo*, always eager to express their views on the military’s ideological and social projects, argued that the war presented Argentina with perhaps its last chance to separate itself from all the “anti-Christian” ideologies that to them had corrupted Argentine society throughout the 20th century. For *Cabildo*, the war and this process of forming a new Argentine national identity “will be worth dying for it if it purifies us as a nation”.¹⁴⁵ “Purifying” Argentina meant distancing the nation from ideologies like democracy, religious pluralism, liberalism, and any sort of leftist belief system. It meant solidifying a national identity based on Catholicism, narrowing the definition of who was accepted as Argentine. If the early years of repression and state-sponsored terrorism had been the beginning of this “purification” process for the military, then the Malvinas War represented the culmination of this effort. Argentina’s Jews, as a non-Catholic other living within the country, were one of such groups that the military

¹⁴⁴ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 118-119.

¹⁴⁵ “Esta guerra es quizás nuestra última chance. Valdrá la pena morir por ella si nos purifica como nación”. “Editorial”, *Cabildo*, no. 3, Buenos Aires, 1981.

distanced itself from, using the exclusion of the Jewish community to highlight this new “purified” Catholic Argentine identity.

Fostering national unity and identity linked to Catholicism during the Malvinas War required the support of the Catholic Church. The war thus also provided the military to improve its relationship with the Church. Although Church leaders were largely supportive of or at least silent before the military’s actions during the dictatorship, the growing unpopularity of the military regime shortly before the war meant that the Church began to position itself as a sort of mediator between civilian leaders advocating for democracy and the military.¹⁴⁶ The Malvinas War and the military’s ideological project during it, however, reestablished the traditional alliance between the military and Church. Many Church leaders quickly came out in support of the invasion of the islands with public statements, which served to strengthen the connection between Catholicism and nationalism the military worked to cultivate at the outset of the conflict. Catholic social organizations, like *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action), expressed similar support of the invasion, framing the conflict in religious terms like many military leaders did: “The coincidence of this event, so dear to the dignity of Argentines, with the celebration of Easter, the great Christian festival, is motive for reflection in order to discover the profound sense of our national identity. We ask the people of the Nation to pray to Christ...to illuminate our hearts and wills, and to share in the fundamental values of our *Argentinidad*; we are capable of recreating a responsible Fatherland under his sovereignty”.¹⁴⁷ The timing of the invasion, occurring the week of Easter 1982, to Catholic Action, indicated a sort of divine importance to the Argentine cause, as it did to Galtieri and the military. Such statements of support

¹⁴⁶ Michael A. Burdick, *For God and Fatherland: Religion and Politics in Argentina* (SUNY Press, 1995), 223.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 227.

demonstrated the renewal of the traditional Church-military alliance, emphasizing the importance of Catholicism for national unity while requiring the exclusion of non-Catholic Argentines.

The Church-military alliance, however, went far beyond discourse, demonstrated in particular by the chaplains serving in the military. Priests that served in the military as chaplains were not considered civilians, but rather an integral part of the institution which received the same state-sponsored benefits as soldiers and generals alike.¹⁴⁸ Military chaplains, in addition to attending to the spiritual needs of the members of the military, taught courses on Catholicism and generally influenced the military with their own viewpoints and interpretations of the religion.¹⁴⁹ Their teachings contributed to the establishment of the military as a firmly Catholic institution, with no place for religious minorities. Until the 1990s, candidates for the National Military College had to present proof of baptism to gain admittance, thus preventing non-Catholics from becoming officers there.¹⁵⁰ At the time of the Malvinas War, the military was a homogeneous institution, whose demographics did not reflect that of the nation as a whole. This homogeneity contributed to the antisemitic reactions many military commanders had to the presence of Jewish conscripts in the military during the war, as they rejected the idea of a religiously and culturally pluralist military and country.

The military's goal of forming a sense of national unity and identity linked to Catholicism during the Malvinas War necessitated the exclusion of Argentina's Jews. All those who were Catholic seemed to be part of the nation, even former enemies of the military state,

¹⁴⁸ Stephan Ruderer, "Between Religion and Politics: The Military Clergy during the Late Twentieth-Century Dictatorships in Argentina and Chile," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 3 (2015): 464.

¹⁴⁹ Emilio Fermín Mignone, *Witness to the Truth: The Complicity of Church and Dictatorship in Argentina, 1976-1983* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 14.

¹⁵⁰ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 72.

while non-Catholics remained on the outside. It mattered little that many non-Catholics, like Marcelo Eddi, expressed support for the war and considered themselves to be nationalists. The military's ideological project required that such individuals kept their status as a "foreign", not fully Argentine, other. The antisemitism Jewish conscripts experienced while serving in the military during the Malvinas War demonstrated this idea, showing that the war represented a continuation of the othering of Jews as a politically radical, "foreign", and secularizing force.

Antisemitic Exclusion during the Malvinas War

The presence of Jews within the military during the Malvinas War caused discomfort for some military commanders, to the point that many expressed surprise upon meeting Jewish conscripts at military bases in Patagonia. Pablo Macharowski, one of the roughly 200 Jewish conscripts who participated in the war, witnessed such sentiments from one of his superiors, who commented to him that it was "odd" that he was Jewish and fighting for Argentina in the war.¹⁵¹ Military superiors struggled to fathom that it was possible to be Argentine and Jewish, or that it was possible to be Jewish and live outside of Israel. Such ignorance contributed to and reflected a view of Argentine Jews as foreigners, even as they trained and fought alongside Catholic soldiers in Patagonia and on the Malvinas Islands. As this section discusses, this view of Jews as non-Argentine led some military officials to be suspicious of their Jewish conscripts' loyalty and trustworthiness, and Jewish individuals therefore received extra attention from their superiors who kept a close watch on their actions and movements within military spaces. Such antisemitism alienated Jewish conscripts, isolating them as an untrustworthy non-Argentine other. This isolation was essential in constructing an Argentine identity and sense of unity linked to Catholicism.

¹⁵¹ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 54.

The antisemitism Jewish conscripts and soldiers experienced during the Malvinas War occurred within an institution in which mistreatment and abuse were commonplace. Even before the war, military superiors used their position of power within the institution to make their subordinates suffer, often through overly demanding physical activity done in little clothing or in the cold.¹⁵² Jewish conscripts and soldiers, however, recall experiencing added abuse from their superiors, which also included physical exercise, withdrawal or even stealing of food, and sexual abuse in the most extreme case. Silvio Katz was one Jewish conscript who detailed this additional abuse decades after the end of the war: “Every day we were on the island, he (Lieutenant Eduardo Flores Ardoino) punished me for being a Jew. He froze my hands and head in ice water. He threw my food in shit and forced me to pick it up with my mouth. He gloated about what he did and was happy to see me suffer. He told me that he would have done the same to the others, if they had been Jewish too.”¹⁵³ Lieutenant Ardoino’s treatment of Katz was visibly antisemitic, as it targeted a Jewish conscript in a different, harsher way than non-Jewish conscripts. While Flores Ardoino did not make comments labeling Katz as a foreigner, his actions still marginalized Katz in communicating to him that he was different from the other conscripts and thus not accepted by his superiors or even as an Argentine. Katz, similarly, felt he was punished for being Jewish, a view that reflected the lieutenant’s statement that he would have treated the other soldiers in the same way if they had been Jewish too. By mistreating Jews in different or more harmful ways than the rest of their subordinates, military commanders therefore signaled in their actions that Jews were “foreigners”. These actions excluded and

¹⁵² Daniel Lvovich, “Los orígenes de una cosmovisión discriminatoria - LA NACION,” *La Nación*, n.d., <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/opinion/los-origenes-de-una-cosmovision-discriminatoria-nid1455170/>.

¹⁵³ “Me castigó todos los días de mi vida por ser judío. Me congelaba las manos en el agua, me tiraba la comida adentro de la mierda y la tenía que buscar con la boca. El tipo se regodeaba con lo que me hacía, era feliz viéndome sufrir. Les decía a los demás que les hubiera pasado lo mismo si hubieran sido judíos como yo”. Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 63.

marginalized Jewish conscripts, fostering an Argentine and military identity in opposition to such “foreigners”.

Commentary from military superiors often explicitly demonstrated a belief that Jews were not Argentine and did not belong in the military. For example, one official told a Jewish soldier that he should “go defend his own country”, once again reflecting an idea that Jews could not be Argentine because they had their “own country”, Israel.¹⁵⁴ In late April 1982, when several Jewish rabbis arrived in Patagonia to provide spiritual guidance and assistance to Jewish members of the military, they would receive questions on Israel and “foreign opinion” on the Malvinas War, further implying a belief that Jews were foreign or at least had greater access to the international community.¹⁵⁵ This notion existed beyond military bases in society as a whole. Even in Argentina’s cosmopolitan capital of Buenos Aires, the Jewish community felt pressure to publicly show its support for the invasion of and war over the islands. Even when DAIA (*Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas*), one of the community’s leading organizations, had expressed its support for the invasion of the islands in a letter to the Junta, this pressure continued as the military leaders took the letter as permission to try and get the organization to participate in public demonstrations in support of the Argentine cause.¹⁵⁶ In the same way that some military officials believed that Jewish soldiers and conscripts could not be truly or fully Argentine, the military government’s pressure on Jewish organizations to show public support for the war effort demonstrated that the government did not view Jews as fully Argentine or patriotic unless they had “proof”. Catholic organizations in the country did not face

¹⁵⁴ “¡Vaya a defender su país, judío de mierda!”. Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 63.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 276.

¹⁵⁶ Rosana Guber, “Adopción, Filiación y El Fracaso de La Reciprocidad: El Respaldo de Residentes Extranjeros En La Argentina a ‘la Recuperación’ de Las Islas Malvinas En 1982,” *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 71 (2001): 11.

the same scrutiny, given the military's view that Catholics were fully Argentine and thus "naturally" supportive of the military's decision to invade the islands.¹⁵⁷ This double standard, just like the cruel treatment Jewish conscripts endured while serving with the military, alienated and reminded the Jewish community that it was not accepted by all Argentines.

Coupled with this idea of Jews as foreigners was the notion that Jewish individuals were untrustworthy and even spies. For instance, such distrust of Jews was so firm in the mindset of one military official that he even refused treatment from a Jewish doctor after an injury in combat training, stating "the only thing missing in my life was a Jew coming to cure me. I have to endure this Jewish son of a b***h giving me antibiotics".¹⁵⁸ The implication from the official's statement was that somehow an Argentine doctor could not be trusted simply because they were Jewish. Clearly there was an underlying view of Jews as untrustworthy, to the point that there seemed to be a negative connotation to the word "judío" (Jew) when such military officials used it. When Jewish soldiers went to meet with the rabbis that had traveled to Patagonia to accompany them, non-Jewish military superiors would stand alongside their soldiers in some of their consultations with the rabbis and would even tell them they must speak Spanish. Such military members considered Jews as untrustworthy because they did not view them as Argentine, a view perhaps accentuated in this period by the strong anti-foreign sentiment existent in Argentine society. As a reflection of this anti-foreign sentiment, several companies with English names switched to Spanish ones and ads in Argentine newspapers highlighted Argentina's "self-sufficiency", despite the fact that the military government received significant amounts of foreign aid from the United States and ironically bought most of its weapons from

¹⁵⁷ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 121.

¹⁵⁸ "Lo último que me faltaba en la vida es que un judío me venga a curar, tengo que aguantarme a este judío hijo de puta que me viene a dar los antibióticos." Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 61.

Israel.¹⁵⁹ This wider atmosphere in society was clearly present within the military at bases in Patagonia and on the Malvinas Islands during the war. Military commanders viewed their Jewish conscripts as untrustworthy, signaling to them with their actions, riddled with antisemitism, that they would not be accepted as fully Argentine.

The idea of Jewish individuals as untrustworthy also connected to religious discourse and conspiracies. These conspiracies added “evidence” to the supposed deceitfulness or malevolence of the Jewish people, none more so than the idea that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. This conspiracy appeared not only in interactions with Argentines Jews, but also in arms deals with Israeli officials. One military captain even refused to buy weapons from Israel before the war, telling the Israelis he met with that he blamed them for the death of Christ: “we will never buy [weapons] from you, because you are Jewish and killed Christ”.¹⁶⁰ The fact that a military captain would say this to Israelis indicates that this was a firmly held belief, and not just some contrived way to exclude and alienate Jewish individuals in the Argentine military. Nevertheless, many Jews in the Argentine military received similar comments from their superiors, blaming them for having killed Christ. While this form of antisemitism went hand in hand with certain Catholic religious discourses, it only served to further the idea of Jews as foreign and untrustworthy. If Jews were viewed as responsible for the death of Christ, a central figure to the Catholic religion, and if Argentina was considered by many in the military to be a Catholic country, then how could a Jew be Argentine, or be trusted in the defense of Argentina during wartime? The antisemitism that Jews faced was thus all interrelated. Considering them foreign and untrustworthy coupled with this belief that Jewish individuals were responsible for

¹⁵⁹ Juan Mundel et al., “Malvinas/Falkland Islands War: A Look into Ads,” *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 11, no. 2 (2019): 241, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1108/JHRM-01-2018-0002>.

¹⁶⁰ “Nosotros no se lo vamos a comprar nunca, porque ustedes son judíos y lo mataron a Cristo”. Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 75.

the death of Christ, and connected to the religious discourse and imagery that military leaders used when framing the Malvinas War.

The antisemitism that Jewish conscripts endured while fighting for Argentina preserved and built on the idea, present throughout the 20th century, that Jews were a not fully Argentine, politically radical, and foreign other. Military commanders through cruel treatment and antisemitic comments signaled this reality to their Jewish conscripts, while other commanders demonstrated a blatant mistrust of such conscripts. The anti-foreign sentiment that spread through Argentine society during the war meant that Jews were an easy target and scapegoat for military commanders, especially as it became clear by late May of 1982 that Argentina would lose the war. Increasingly hopeless military leaders, therefore, took out some of their anger and frustration on those who they viewed as non-Argentine, their Jewish conscripts.¹⁶¹ All this clearly indicated that the national unity fostered by the Malvinas War did not extend to Jewish individuals, and instead necessitated the preservation of Jews as an other within Argentina.

Conclusion

President Galtieri's speech in April of 1982, shortly after Argentina had occupied the Malvinas Islands, expressed a sense of unity missing during the previous six years of the military dictatorship. Galtieri seemed to extend an olive branch to sectors of society once targeted by the military and considered enemies of the state. The military government now considered workers, businessmen, and intellectuals as part of a united Argentina standing up to a potent foreign power in Great Britain. The national unity Galtieri advocated for, however, also excluded those the military did not consider to be Argentine. While Galtieri encouraged unity across different sectors of Argentine society, he was careful to describe Argentina as a Catholic country. Such a

¹⁶¹ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 48.

view left non-Catholic Argentines, including the hundreds of thousands of Jewish individuals living in the country, in a difficult position. Many Argentine Jews by the 1970s and 1980s were already third or even fourth generation Argentines, with a strong attachment to the South American nation.¹⁶² Most were monolingual Spanish speakers and had assimilated into Argentine society. Outside of religion, there was little distinguishing a Jewish Argentine from the Catholic majority. Nevertheless, Galtieri's comments and the religious framing of the war would exclude the country's large Jewish minority, signaling to them that they remained an other within Argentine society. The military's efforts to consolidate a national identity linked to Catholicism during the war required the continued othering of Jews as foreigners, an othering begun long before in the early 1900s during the *Semana Trágica*.

Their hopes of creating a truly Catholic Argentina built on the religious framing of the Malvinas War, and provided the military the chance to rekindle their alliance with the Catholic Church. The traditional Church-military alliance present throughout much of the 20th century had deteriorated as the many human rights violations of the military state came to light in the late 1970s, but the Malvinas War did away with Church leaders' hesitation about military rule.¹⁶³ Had Argentina been successful in the war, it may have given the military the chance to stay in power, especially given that the military leaders in control at the time were not supportive of a transition to democracy.¹⁶⁴ Instead, their heavy defeat in the war led to protests against the military regime, and the beginning of the path towards democracy, which would finally arrive in 1983.

¹⁶² Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines*, 175.

¹⁶³ Mignone, *Witness to the Truth*, 106.

¹⁶⁴ Romero and Brennan, *A History of Argentina*, 235.

The experience of the roughly 200 Jewish conscripts who participated in the Malvinas War, coupled with the religious framing of the conflict, was a clear demonstration of the continuation of the status of Jews as a foreign, politically radical, and secularizing other within Argentina. Military commanders, through cruel treatment and antisemitic comments, signaled to their Jewish conscripts that they were “foreigners” and untrustworthy. That is not to say that non-Jewish conscripts did not face mistreatment and abuse from their superiors, but the treatment Jewish individuals endured was often harsher and more directed. Such conscripts, as veterans, received little help from the state and society as a whole after the war. Much of society would view veterans as ideologically suspect for participating in the war, especially given the war’s association with the dictatorship, and their often nationalistic defense of it afterwards, while the military censored their ability to speak of the hardships endured on the ground on the islands. Many veterans thus found it impossible to find employment after the war, and passed into a state of depression, so much so that some would eventually commit suicide. Only in the early 2000s did some veterans have the legal recourse to bring forward and describe the mistreatment they received at the hands of their superiors.¹⁶⁵ Shortly afterwards, the antisemitism Jewish conscripts faced on the islands would also come to light, as veterans finally received some attention from society and the state.

¹⁶⁵ Ehrmantraut, “Aftermath of Violence”, 101.

Conclusion: The Jewish Other in Argentina

From the events of the Semana Trágica of 1919 to the Malvinas War of 1982, the conceptions associated with the Argentine Jewish community and the antisemitism directed towards it would regularly shift and take on different forms. In that first period in the early 20th century, traditionally powerful Argentine social actors, like the Catholic Church, upper-class elite, and military, framed and defined a Jewish Question that argued that the Jewish community was a “problem” threatening their dominance in society and traditional Argentine values. At the time, these social actors responded to the economic success of some Jewish immigrants, arrival of new ideologies like communism and anarchism in Argentina, and concerns over uncontrolled immigration. The violence of the Semana Trágica represented an instance in which the Catholic Church, upper class elite, military, and Radical Party government used such aspects of the Jewish Question to maintain their position of dominance in Argentina. The definitions associated with and framing of the Jewish Question began the process of othering the Jewish community as a politically radical, secularizing, and foreign “other” living within Argentina.

During the government of Juan Perón in the 1940s and 1950s, the Jewish community’s status as an other remained. Perón capitalized on this, actively seeking Jewish support within the political ideology associated with his regime, Peronism. Jewish involvement in Peronism demonstrated Perón’s rejection of traditional social actors like the Church and upper-class elite. It similarly emphasized the secular nature of his state and the importance of loyalty to him in a Peronist Argentina. The Jewish community’s status as a secularizing, political radical, and foreign other therefore helped Perón construct a new Argentine identity separated from traditional, conservative ones, linked to a political ideology rather than a religious or ethnic background.

Despite the opportunity present for Jewish individuals to finally participate within Argentine nationalism and form part of the nation, antisemitism was commonplace in the country in the form of attacks on Jewish individuals by far-right nationalist organizations. One of these groups, the ALN (*Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista*), formed part of Perón's political base. At the same time, Perón was eager to improve relations with the United States, and thus had to strike a balance between condemning antisemitism without compromising support from antisemitic actors within his base. This "balancing act" would be present for governments in the 1950s and 1960s as well. The democratic government of Arturo Frondizi, for example, regularly condemned antisemitic attacks on Jewish merchants and individuals, yet never took action against antisemitic groups like the nationalist organization Tacuara. Tacuara's use in reducing communist influences in society, as well as its personal and ideological connections to the military, meant that Frondizi was either unable or unwilling to curb Tacuara activities. In the late 1960s, under the military government of General Juan Carlos Onganía, Tacuara continued to influence Argentine society, with former members serving as informants for the regime. The Onganía government was also eager to reduce the influence of communism in Argentina, and sought to consolidate a truly Catholic nation. Given this, the Jewish community remained excluded from national identity, still a foreign, secularizing other not worth full protection from antisemitic actors like Tacuara.

During the military dictatorship of the late 1970s and early 1980s, certain military leaders continued to view the Jewish community as a dangerous, foreign other within Argentina. Such military leaders, like head of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Ramón J. Camps or Third Army corps commander Luciano Benjamin Menéndez, linked Argentina's Jews to an antisemitic conspiracy of international Jewish power. Such commanders argued that Jewish individuals were

connected both to leftist groups and ideologies as well as foreign powers like the United States, Israel, and the Soviet Union. Their antisemitism was what drove such extremist figures to attempt to access greater power within the military, like when Menéndez led a failed revolt in Córdoba in 1979, reacting to the placement of Jewish journalist Jacobo Timerman under house arrest. More “moderate” military figures also used antisemitism as a tool for accessing or maintaining power during the dictatorship. President Jorge Videla tactically opposed antisemitism during his time in power, censoring the far-right magazine *Cabildo*, working towards Timerman’s release, and even proposing an anti-discrimination law for the country. These actions helped Videla style himself as a moderate within the military and maintain a strong alliance with the United States. Nevertheless, Videla did little to improve the situation of Jewish individuals who endured antisemitic rhetoric and abuse while in military prisons. The Jewish community remained a foreign and politically radical other, still not worth full protection from the military government.

During the Malvinas War of 1982, military “moderates” like Videla were no longer in power, and instead hardline, nationalist military commanders Leopoldo Galtieri and Jorge Anaya led the country.¹⁶⁶ The invasion of the islands, widely supported across Argentina, initially boosted the military’s reputation. Military leaders like Galtieri, riding this wave of newfound public support, spoke of national unity across Argentina, even among sectors that had previously been victims of state-led repression. The unity that he and the military hoped to foster, however, was exclusionary, and corresponded with efforts to consolidate a national identity linked with Catholicism. The formation of such a national identity necessitated the exclusion of the Jewish other, with national identity formed in opposition to this internal threat. The experience of Jewish

¹⁶⁶ Holgado and Taccone, “Diseño institucional”, 16-17.

conscripts who served in the military during the Malvinas War demonstrated this, as their superiors singled them out as “untrustworthy foreigners”. The religious framing of the conflict further marginalized Argentina’s Jews, many of whom were eager to show their support for the Malvinas cause.¹⁶⁷ The military’s ideological project during the war thus maintained and emphasized the idea of the politically radical, foreign, and secularizing Jewish other, conceived in the early 20th century.

This project, beyond revealing the continued presence of antisemitism and anti-Jewish exclusion in Argentine society throughout the 20th century, has approached Argentine history and the country’s last military dictatorship in a different manner. It has shown the influence the so-called Jewish Question and antisemitism had in shaping such periods of history. While the Jewish community largely lacked agency in many of these periods compared to governmental actors, there is no doubt that they were present and active in Argentine society throughout the 20th century. The presence of the community and their importance to Argentina caused different governments to interact with and approach the Jewish community in distinct ways, at times seeking to include them within political ideologies like Peronism or explicitly seeking to exclude them from ideologies like Catholic nationalism. These interactions helped shape Argentine identity under Perón, the military regime of the 1960s, the dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s, and during the Malvinas War, even if Jewish individuals were often not included within such identities. In this way, this project has attempted to show the importance the Jewish community had in shaping and defining Argentine history during the 20th century and especially in the last military dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s.

¹⁶⁷ Dobry, *Los Rabinos De Malvinas*, 121.

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