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***“Este Pueblo Deicida”*: The Roots of Antisemitism during Argentina’s *Década Infame*,
1930-1943**

**by
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HIS 490 Honors History Thesis**

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Fall 2019**

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“CAUSAS DE LOS MALES DE HOY”¹

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ANTISEMITIC NATIONALISM

During the final decades of the 19th century and opening ones of the next, waves of downtrodden but eager European, Russian and Middle Eastern immigrants disembarked upon Argentina’s inviting shores, abuzz with the hope of freedom from religious persecution and political unrest in their homelands as well as motivated by the prospect of achieving the elusive goal of economic prosperity. By 1914, 33% of Argentina’s population was foreign-born, a higher proportion than any other nation at the time.² Beginning in 1905, in contrast to other immigrant groups, the Argentine Jewish population began to climb with relative stability due to significant numbers of immigrants fleeing the post-Revolution pogroms in Russia.³ The number of Jewish immigrants to Argentina, including those from Russia, Poland, Slavic nations and Germany, peaked between 1910 and 1914 when 41,027 Jews arrived, bringing the total Semitic population to 116,276. Aside from the European emigration decline during WWI, the number of Jewish immigrants entering Argentina during any four-year period remained near the tens-of-thousands until 1940.⁴

¹ Gustavo J. Franceschi, “Los males del mundo,” *Cristerio* 16, no. 221 (1932): 197.

² Allan Metz, “The Pogrom that Failed: The ‘Fascist Meeting’ in Buenos Aires and the *Mundo Israelita* Opinion Survey, August 1932,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 15, no. 29 (1990): 64.

³ Irving Louis Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires,” *Jewish Social Studies* 24, no. 4 (1962): 198.

⁴ Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires,” 198.

Occurring simultaneously with the influx of immigrants were liberalizing and radicalizing changes to the Argentine political and social climate. A group of politicians of the so-called “generation of 1853,” a reference to the creation of Argentina’s Constitution in that year, began to push into effect secular reforms that threatened the long-standing unchallenged political influence of the landed oligarchy and the Catholic Church’s hierarchy.⁵ Historians typically categorize these politicians as “liberal” because of their support for immigration, public and secular education, and, most notably, universal male suffrage, which came to fruition with the 1912 Sáenz Peña Law.⁶ Adding to these changes was the 1916 election of Radical Party standard-bearer Hipólito Yrigoyen as President, whose policies increasingly opened the middle class to greater opportunities for higher education and jobs in the government sector. A new Argentina appeared to be arising, one that rejected the tradition of authoritarian *caudillos*, Church influence in state affairs, and rule by an unchallenged oligarchy. Many reactionaries, including clerics and landed elite, condemned these radical changes as detrimental to their understanding of the traditional Argentine identity and the nation’s Catholic morals.

Nativism among Argentine nationalists in the years preceding and immediately following WWI was primarily motivated by a fear of “radical” ideologies, namely socialism, anarchism, and most importantly, communism. The fact that many Jewish immigrants were of Russian origin and clustered together in small neighborhoods on the outskirts of Buenos Aires spurred certain nativist groups to accuse Jews of being communist subversives intent on sabotaging Argentina from the inside.⁷ This mistrust of the capital city’s Jewish population boiled over into

⁵ John J. Kennedy, *Catholicism, Nationalism, and Democracy in Argentina* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), 98-119.

⁶ Sandra McGee Deutsch, “The Right under Radicalism, 1916-1930,” in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, eds. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, 35-64 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1993), 36.

⁷ According to Allan Metz, by 1914, the majority of the roughly 110,000 Jews in Argentina were Russian.

episodes of targeted violence during the so-called *Semana Trágica* (Tragic Week) of January 1919, during which a strike of workers from the Vasena metallurgy factory ballooned into a general strike of industrial workers.⁸ These events coincided with public paranoia over news of the increasing violence following the Russian Revolution and the general uncertain international atmosphere of WWI. As a result of this paranoia, members of the Radical Party and the upper-class assumed that the general strike was a threat from an “anarchist, foreign-dominated force” that required vigorous suppression. Rumors that the city’s Jewish population was covertly orchestrating the chaos to implant a “Jewish Soviet” in Buenos Aires caused Jewish neighborhoods to be the chief targets of brutality from Guardia Blanca, a rightist civilian group, in addition to mistreatment from the police and army.⁹

La Semana Trágica would neither be Argentine Jewry’s last nor worst experience with antisemitic rumors and violence over the course of the 20th century. In fact, antisemitism, or what David Nirenberg defines as an antipathetic attitude toward Jews and their religion, was, troublingly, the common denominator among many right-wing Catholic nationalists during the decades that followed that fateful week in January of 1919.¹⁰ While names under the heading of “Catholic nationalists” varied in their professions, perspectives, goals, and ideological motivations during the 1930s and early 1940s, nearly all who subscribed to this *Nacionalismo* movement agreed that the Jews were problematic, dangerous, and unequivocally non-Argentine.¹¹ Many such nationalists produced periodicals, pamphlets, speeches and novels that

⁸ Metz, “The Pogrom that Failed,” 65.

⁹ Metz, “The Pogrom that Failed,” 65; Victor A. Mirelman, “The Semana Trágica of 1919 and the Jews in Argentina,” *Jewish Social Studies* 37, no.1 (1975): 62.

¹⁰ David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 3.

¹¹ *Nacionalismo*, according to historian David Rock, refers to the antiliberal, counterrevolutionary ideology that began during the 1920s and 1930s and implies an affiliation with the extreme right; David Rock, “Antecedents of the Argentine Right,” in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, eds. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, 1-34 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1993), 4.

warned the public of the alleged threat that the Jewish population posed to Argentina's Hispanic and Catholic national heritage.

Scholars' existing works focus on 20th-century Argentine nationalists' desire to protect Argentina's perceived identity as a homogeneously Catholic and Hispanic nation. Irving Louis Horowitz, Allan Metz and Bernard E. Segal point to Argentine nationalists' adherence to a strict Catholic identity as the main contributing factor to the zeal of antisemitic rhetoric and literature during the early 20th-century.¹²

Sociologist and political scientist Horowitz identifies "powerful nationalistic ideologies, which have tended to emphasize the homogeneity of Argentina in terms of Roman Catholicism as a social institution" as one of the main sources of antisemitism.¹³ Geographic clustering of Jewish families in industrial neighborhoods, claims Horowitz, caused other residents of Buenos Aires to view their Jewish neighbors as insisting upon ethnic singularity that was fundamentally in conflict with "national unity."¹⁴ Jewish social groups that were not explicitly religious further fueled antisemitic rumors of Jews' anti-clerical leanings and desire to secularize Argentina's traditionally Catholic society. Horowitz argues that Jews having self-identified as such was sufficient to outcast them from the radical nationalist community in Buenos Aires and to label them as targets for intimidation and violence.

Metz, a scholar of the Jewish experience in Latin America, also emphasizes the importance of Catholic identity in the psyche of antisemitic nationalists. According to Metz, nationalists viewed Catholicism as Argentina's only protection against the threat of communism

¹² Although other scholars have studied antisemitism during the Infamous Decade, I chose to focus on Horowitz, Metz, and Segal because of their emphasis on the nationalists' use of identity to create categories of belonging and unbelonging.

¹³ Horowitz, "The Jewish Community," 195-96.

¹⁴ Horowitz, "The Jewish Community," 197.

and social disorder and believed that the only way to guarantee the supremacy of Catholicism as a social pillar was an anti-liberal, corporatist government. If Catholicism were to succeed in saving Argentina from the plots of communists and secularists, these nationalists argued that a homogeneous identity, in which “there was no place for the Jews,” was a necessity.¹⁵

Segal echoes Metz’s explanation of nationalist antisemitism, claiming that “right-wing nationalists believed that only a society that was at once national (i.e. native) and moral (i.e. pre-conciliar Catholic) could overcome the vices of modernity,” chief of which was communism.¹⁶ Like Metz, Segal emphasizes the centrality of a homogeneous Catholic identity in the nationalists’ plot to prevent social and political chaos from destroying Argentine society from the inside. Unlike Horowitz, who claims that the very fact that Jews self-identified as such was the root of antisemitism, Metz and Segal frame Catholic identity as a prerequisite for the nationalists’ conception of stability, a requirement that the Jews did not meet. The explanations of all three of these scholars, though, converge upon the fact that plurality of religious identity was unacceptable to Catholic nationalists.

Scholarship on antisemitic nationalism in Argentina has thus far explained antisemitism as othering of the Jews’ by nationalists for their allegedly not adhering to an ascribed “traditional” Argentine identity. Yet, these historians have not adequately examined the tenets that make up that very identity to which Jews and other outsiders were relatively compared and invariably declared subordinate. Which aspects of the Argentine culture, aside from Catholicism, did nationalists emphasize in their efforts to oust the Jews from a place of belonging? To what degree did nationalists exploit the popular memory of Argentina’s nation-formation myth to

¹⁵ Allan Metz, “Gustavo Juan Franceschi and the Jews: The Overcoming of Prejudice by an Argentine Prelate,” *Church History* 62, no. 2 (1993): 210.

¹⁶ Bernard E. Segal, “Jews and the Argentine Center: A Middleman Minority,” in *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*, eds. Judith Laikin Elkin and Gilbert W. Merkx, 201-217 (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 205.

further their antisemitic agendas? This project examines some identified components that make up the nationalists' myth of traditional identity and the role that historical revisionism played in the creation of that myth. This myth of national identity, derived from traditionally accepted sources of legitimacy in the Argentine historical memory, guided nationalists' belief in the supremacy of an authentically *criollo* (of pure Spanish descent) identity as the only insurance against social disorder.

Argentina's right-wing Catholic intellectuals during the period known as *La Década Infame* (The Infamous Decade) (1930-1943) drew upon a rigidly defined, "traditional" national identity in order to categorize the nation's increasingly diverse population into categories of belonging and unbelonging, trustworthy and enemy. The mythic national identity of the supposed ideal Argentina (and the individuals who "fit" that ideal) combines the following identified strands of cultural inheritance: admiration for Hispanic tradition; appreciation for the federalist, caudillo tradition of the Argentine frontier, best embodied by Juan Manuel de Rosas; and unwavering adherence to the authority of the pre-conciliar Catholic Church, drawing inspiration from Neo-Scholastic Thomism. Nationalists demanded that the lessons drawn from these pillars of the ideal identity be integrated into all spheres of public and private life. Although these three components arguably played an important role in the formation of Argentina as a nation-state during the 19th century, antisemitic Catholic nationalists frequently interpreted these traditions in a revisionist manner, creating a romanticized and mythologized version of the Argentine identity. The most glaring problem with this identity-making is that its components are not tethered to any specific moment in the past but are rather cherry-picked from various contexts based on their utility in the present moment of ideological conflict. The resulting Frankenstein-esque identity, stitched together from the remains of bygone

philosophical, theological and political ideas, adopts convenient sources of authority from the past to suit the nationalists' reactionary goals.

The result of this revisionism is a brand of thought that *appears* legitimate because of its roots in something that can arguably be trusted: the past. Leaning upon the authority of tradition, ancestry, and popular memory, the Catholic intellectuals who adhered to the so-called Nacionalismo ideology sought to resolve Argentina's social, political and economic challenges by condemning any deviations from their allegedly ideal national identity. This active practice of historical revisionism, or reshaping the conception of the past, was employed to give credence to present ideas by manipulating preterit realities in an effort to recolor and romanticize present interpretations of a bygone era. Antisemitic nationalists' revisionist conception of history makes the idealized Argentine identity not a genuine identity, but rather a figment of nationalists' imaginations and a product of their efforts to alienate the populations that they perceived as challenging to their positions of power - political, social and economic. They sought to forge a "bridge between the nation's modern and historical forms," but, problematically, "the Nationalist movement represented only one side of Argentine history: the 'second tradition,' 'the dark underside of Argentine history,' or to use the term made famous by Domingo F. Sarmiento, 'barbarism.'"¹⁷ This anti-democratic and anti-liberal movement resulted in an openly antisemitic attitude, rationalizing criticism of the Jews through theological arguments, anti-imperialist advocacy, and anti-communist propaganda.

By discussing the existence of non-"traditional" Argentines, this project inevitably complicates the narrative put forth by antisemitic nationalists. Not only does this recognition of the Jewish presence in Argentina speak to the often overlooked diversity of the Latin American

¹⁷ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), xv.

socio-cultural landscape, but it also provides possible insight into how other nationalist movements throughout the world might have employed (or are employing today) revisionist tactics and fabricated traditions to other and persecute select populations.

Drawing upon the writings of five antisemitic intellectuals, this work identifies the historio-cultural components of the exclusionary identity that resulted in the othering of Argentine Jews. Two priests, Gustavo Juan Franceschi and Julio Meinvielle, were the most outspoken antisemites of *La Década Infame*, whose publications served to further alienate the Jews. Vicente Balda and Jose Assaf were authors whose openly racist arguments against the Jewish presence in Argentina helped advance criticism of the Jews beyond anticommunist rhetoric and into the realm of explicitly racialized discrimination. Philosopher and anti-positivist social commentator Manuel Gálvez emphasized the chronic threat that the Jewish population posed to the Argentine nation. The works of these five intellectuals reveal shared commitments to the following components of the Argentine historical memory as imperative for belonging: reverence for the Hispanic heritage, antiliberal authoritarianism, and integralist Catholicism. Analysis of a representative sampling of primary sources from these five intellectuals provides the opportunity to conduct an archaeological dig into the Argentine psyche of antisemitic nationalists, unearthing the layered components that make up their idealized and exclusionary myth of belonging.

A SAMPLING OF FIGURES FROM THE NACIONALISMO MOVEMENT¹⁸

GUSTAVO FRANCESCHI

“Es indiscutible que existe un imperialismo hebreo.”¹⁹

Priest, writer, philosopher and professor Gustavo Juan Franceschi (1881-1957), who was born in Paris and died in Montevideo, served as the director of the Argentine Catholic weekly journal *Criterio* from 1932 to 1957, a position that provided him a popular platform and attentive readership for the dissemination of his radical ideology.²⁰ After emigrating from France in 1886 with his family and obtaining Argentine citizenship, Franceschi entered seminary at Seminario Conciliar de Buenos Aires and was ordained to the priesthood in 1904; in time, he became renowned for his preaching skills, especially regarding Christian social doctrine.²¹ First and foremost a rabid anti-communist, Franceschi’s most significant objective in his writings was “mostrar el carácter abarcador y autónomo del catolicismo y su capacidad de dar respuesta al desgobierno contemporáneo.”²² His political ideology rejected liberal philosophy, claiming that “liberalism precipitated such catastrophes as class conflict, economic dictatorship, political

¹⁸ There are two important clarifications necessary in this list of intellectuals. First, this is by no means an exhaustive list of authors, clerics and militants who participated in antisemitic rhetoric and/or violence during La Década Infame. Second, no women are included in this list. This exclusion is not deliberate but is rather the result of a lack of sources from female antisemites. While it is certain that female antisemites existed in Argentina during this period, it seems that their participation in the written culture was slim. Female participation in this nationalist movement may prove to be a valuable area of further investigation for this topic.

¹⁹ Gustavo Franceschi, “Antisemitismo,” *Criterio* 24, no. 319 (1933): 319.

²⁰ This project will focus heavily on articles from *Criterio* as primary sources documents. Other journals contemporary to *Criterio*, namely *La Nación*, *Cristol*, and *Cabildo*, share similar emphases on Catholic identity, militant nationalism, fascism and antisemitism. Time constraints limited my ability to investigate these and other similar sources, so I chose to focus on articles featured in *Criterio* for the bulk of my research.

²¹ Metz, “Gustavo Juan Franceschi and the Jews,” 212.

²² Olga Echeverría, “Virtudes de la doctrina y errores de la política. Monseñor Gustavo Franceschi ante los ‘totalitarismos’ soviético, fascista y nacionalsocialista,” *Quinto Sol* 21, no. 1 (2017): 3.

instability,” among other social ills.²³ In his search for an alternative to the liberal world order, Franceschi flirted with the tenets of fascism, even expressing his sympathy for Spanish Falangism and Mussolini’s Italian governmental structure.²⁴ At the heart of Franceschi’s concerns, though, was the need to preserve the Catholic and Hispanic identity of Argentine society, a society which could not flourish under the threat of “la cuestión judía.”²⁵

With respect to his antisemitic views, Franceschi’s editorial pieces for *Criterio* express his concerns over the growing threat to the purity of Argentina’s national identity as a result of “los semitas que iban poblando ya nuestras ciudades.”²⁶ Describing Jews as an imperialistic, colonizing people, Franceschi criticized the alleged Hebraic tendency to refuse assimilation into the surrounding society because of “su mentalidad de raza.”²⁷ Like many of his fellow nationalists, Franceschi places the highest importance upon complete loyalty to his idealized criteria for Argentine citizenship. One of his most repeated tropes was that all other immigrant groups to Argentina had shed their previous affiliations and identities in favor of considering themselves fully Argentine, while Jews, throughout generations of residence in Argentina, continued to consider themselves fully and exclusively Jewish. To this point, he stated: “Un nieto de italianos es argentino, un nieto de judíos es judío.”²⁸ According to Franceschi, what was most condemnable about the Jewish population was the very fact that being Jewish, in his eyes, precluded one from being loyal to Argentina and committed to its progress.

In 1939, Franceschi penned a series of six articles entitled “El problema judío,” which provide ideological details of his philosophical, theological and political objections to Judaism.

²³ Metz, “Gustavo Juan Franceschi and the Jews,” 213.

²⁴ Metz, “Gustavo Juan Franceschi and the Jews,” 214.

²⁵ Franceschi, “Antisemitismo,” 317.

²⁶ Franceschi, “Antisemitismo,” 317.

²⁷ Franceschi, “Antisemitismo,” 320.

²⁸ Franceschi, “Antisemitismo,” 320.

In this collection of essays, he described the present moment as a situation “de guerra” and warned that the “particularismo racial” of the Jews “puede hacer peligrar la unidad nacional.”²⁹ He continued to warn his readers about the dangers of social, racial and religious heterogeneity, saying that “todo país tiene derecho a mantener incólume su unidad nacional, y a defenderlo contra invasiones extrañas.”³⁰ Franceschi seems to derive this “derecho” (right) to national self-defense from his commitment to the idea of an ordered society, perhaps derived from his appreciation for a strident version of Thomism; his admiration for the perceived orderliness of the Medieval Church and his valuing of the purifying Crusades; and his concerns over “la rebelión del hombre contra Dios.”³¹

JULIO MEINVIELLE

“El Judaísmo [*sic*] es un enemigo declarado y activo de todos los pueblos, en general, y de modo especial de los pueblos cristianos.”³²

Father Julio Meinvielle (1905-1973) —a Catholic priest and philosopher who served as editor of the pro-fascist magazine *Cristol*, spiritual advisor of the rightist paramilitary group Guardia Restauradora Nacionalista, and author of numerous antisemitic, anti-liberal works, including *El judío* and *El problema de la persona y la ciudad*—was arguably one of the most prolific disseminators of conservative Catholic thought in Argentina. Meinvielle’s writings emphasize his belief that Argentina’s supreme authority should be the Roman Catholic Church and that a well-ordered society is a hierarchical one.³³ He claims that politics and religion are

²⁹ Gustavo J. Franceschi, “El problema judío,” *Criterio* 38, no. 587 (1939): 101, 105.

³⁰ Franceschi, “El problema judío,” 105.

³¹ Franceschi, “Los males del mundo,” 197.

³² Julio Meinvielle, *El judío: la teología en defensa del catolicismo* (Mexico City, Ediciones R.T.S.A: 1936), 30.

³³ Julio Meinvielle, “Le penetracion del bolchevismo,” *Criterio* 10, no. 141 (1930): 626.

“unidas jerárquicamente en la primacía de lo eterno sobre lo temporal, de la Iglesia sobre la sociedad política, de Dios sobre el hombre.”³⁴ Meinvielle’s concept of a properly ordered society, coupled with his nearly obsessive references to Neo-Scholastic Thomism, demonstrates a possible source of his antisemitic tendencies.³⁵ If Catholicism provides the only just order for society, Jews, who according to Meinvielle, are distinguished primarily by their “anti-cristianismo,” must not belong in that ordered society.³⁶

Meinvielle’s admiration for Francisco Franco and his classification of the Spanish Civil War as “una guerra santa” reveal his affinity for authoritarianism and his sense of duty to uphold the Catholic faith against the alleged “esfuerzos desesperados de la impiedad.”³⁷ His antisemitic leanings seem to arise in part from this commitment to reintroduction of a Church-centered governmental structure. Meinvielle was not alone in his extreme reactionary political philosophies, though. Like many of his contemporaries, Meinvielle also looked favorably upon the militaristic, anti-liberal leadership of nineteenth century caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas, who perhaps inspired the nativist, gaucho-esque strand of nationalism that came to life during La Década Infame. Characterizing the French Revolution as “simplista” for its destruction of “la sociedad jerárquicamente organizada,” Meinvielle demonstrates his disdain for the liberal world order and a hope for the return of a structured Aristotelian or radical Thomist conception of a properly ordered society, with the Catholic Church at the top.³⁸

³⁴ Julio Meinvielle, *Los tres pueblos bíblicos en su lucha por la dominación del mundo* (Buenos Aires, Adsum: 1937), 34.

³⁵ The influence of Neo-Scholastic Thomism on Meinvielle’s writings will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

³⁶ Meinvielle, *Los tres pueblos bíblicos*, 26.

³⁷ Julio Meinvielle, “Los desvarios de Maritain,” *Criterio* 32, no. 488 (1937): 228.

³⁸ Julio Meinvielle, “La estructura social,” *Criterio* 10, no. 144 (1930): 755.

VICENTE BALDA

“Este pueblo, tan calculador e inteligente, como tenaz en sus propósitos y conservador de sus tradiciones, iba perfeccionando cada vez más, en medio de sus adversidades, el plan y el método para dividir, debilitar, descomponer y dominar al mundo cristiano.”³⁹

Author and social commentator Vicente Balda⁴⁰ was best known for his series of articles published in *Criterio* in 1931 dealing with the so-called “Jewish war against the Christian world.” In this series of four articles, Balda enumerated his grievances with Argentina’s Jewish population, appealing to supersessionist theology, racialized economics, anti-imperialist rhetoric, and political philosophy to prove his allegations against the Jewish people. Balda’s first article in the series draws its evidence primarily from the Bible itself, creating a supposedly theological claim against the Jewish faith. According to Balda, adherents to the Jewish faith were in error because of their preference for the material world over the spiritual, which they rejected in denying Jesus as the Messiah.⁴¹ The second installment of the series warns of the Jewish conspiracy against Catholics, proposing that Jews have infiltrated the Catholic priesthood “para contribuir mejor a la pérdida de la fe” and have become doctors to provide “Maquiavelian” medical advice to Christians.⁴² Balda also explained the supposed Jewish economic plot to control not only Argentina, but the entire world economy, claiming that Jews wielded power

³⁹ Vicente Balda, “El plan judío contra el mundo cristiano,” *Criterio* 12, no. 162 (1931): 74.

⁴⁰ Dates unknown. The lack of available biographical information about Balda causes me to theorize that this may be a pen name.

⁴¹ Vicente Balda, “La guerra judía contra el mundo cristiano,” *Criterio* 11, no. 152 (1931): 141.; Such criticism of the “materialistic” Jewish faith was by no means unique to Balda’s writings. He seems to participate in the long-standing and problematic Christian doctrine of supersessionism, which frames Judaism as a degenerate religion and charges Jews with being deicidal practitioners of a “carnal” law that became obsolete after Christ. For background on this doctrine, see Matthew A. Tapie’s chapter entitled “The Language of Supersessionism” in his 2014 work *Aquinas on Israel and the Church*. Connected to the challenge of antisemitism in Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, is Pope Paul VI’s 1965 encyclical *Nostra Aetate*, in which he clarifies that “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God.”

⁴² Vicente Balda, “La hipocresía judaica,” *Criterio* 11, no. 154 (1931): 207-8.

over global capitalism while also covertly orchestrating the Soviet takeover of the Western world. Balda intertwined his paranoia over the alleged “odio judío” with his disdain for the liberal political order, claiming that “este pueblo provocaron y encauzaron la Revolución Francesa” and allowed the hated ideologies of Rousseau to flourish.⁴³

Balda also attempted to provide legitimacy for his claims against the Jews through revisionist interpretations of history. In an effort to “prove” the deceptiveness of the Jewish people, Balda associated Jews with various villains from history, claiming that Nero lived surrounded by Jews and that the “Gran Sanhedrin” was deeply involved in Napoleon’s government.⁴⁴ The central argument in Balda’s series of articles is that, based on supposedly true events from history, Argentines should live in fear of the Jewish plot to “producir el descontento y malestar general que prepararía el terreno a la revolución universal.”⁴⁵ Echoing the sentiments of his contemporaries Franceschi and Meinvielle, Balda maintained that the presence of a Jewish population in Argentina is detrimental to the safety, stability, and longevity of the Argentine nation.

MANUEL GÁLVEZ

“Para los católicos, pues, la existencia de una enorme colectividad israelita constituye un permanente motivo de temor.”⁴⁶

Argentine political commentator and novelist Manuel Gálvez (1882-1962) argued passionately for the restriction of immigration into Argentina out of fear that a large,

⁴³ Balda, “El plan judío contra el mundo cristiano,” 74.

⁴⁴ Balda, “El plan judío contra el mundo cristiano,” 74-5.

⁴⁵ Vicente Balda, “El plan judío contra el mundo cristiano: el único ejemplar,” *Criterio* 12, no. 170 (1931): 334.

⁴⁶ Manuel Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” *Criterio* 17, no. 239 (1932): 301.

unassimilated minority would hurt the country's national identity.⁴⁷ According to Gálvez, large numbers of proletarian Jews, who were uneducated and only interacted with other Jews, would dilute the nation's Latin characteristic—a component of national identity that he deemed essential to the maintenance of social order.⁴⁸ Although Gálvez himself denied accusations that he was an antisemite, claiming that antisemitism was about violence toward and oppression of Jews, he did accuse Argentina's Jewish population of advancing anti-Catholic laws and threatening the “nacionalidad” of the Catholic, Hispanic nation.⁴⁹ His 1913 work *El solar de la raza* glorifies Spain's “geographical spirituality,” or tangible but unquantifiable quality of specialness that accompanies the Hispanic heritage.⁵⁰ Gálvez, although one of the less extreme examples of antisemitic nationalists, demonstrates the importance of Hispanic and Catholic identity in the creation of the nationalistic myth of belonging.

From Gálvez's writings one can also ascertain his affinity for ordered leadership and strict social hierarchy. Believing Mussolini to be “the highest example of a true modern national leader,” Gálvez admired the fascist political structure and condemned positivist and secular philosophy.⁵¹ This admiration for fascist states permeates his later works, including *Este pueblo necesita* (1934), which argues the necessity of an ordered, hierarchical social structure and a religiously-based national education reform. Jews, therefore, had no place in Gálvez's conception of the ideal Argentina, leading him to advocate the defense of “nuestra causa,” the

⁴⁷ Sandra McGee Deutsch, “The Argentine Right and the Jews, 1919-1933,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 18, no. 1 (1996): 126.

⁴⁸ Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301.

⁴⁹ Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301.

⁵⁰ Illum Rachum, “Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Political Right, 1917-1936,” *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 54 (1993): 100.

⁵¹ Rachum, “Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Right,” 100.

cause of Hispanic, Catholic Argentines who would not allow “la existencia de una enorme colectividad israelita” destroy the nation’s authentic spirit.⁵²

JOSÉ ASSAF

“Los judíos son los únicos racistas que hay entre nosotros; los únicos que se resisten a adaptarse, mezclarse y dejarse absorber por la sociedad en que viven.”⁵³

José Assaf (dates unknown), a frequent contributor to *Criterio*, was arguably one of the most unapologetic antisemites of La Década Infame. Assaf’s main criticisms of the Jews stemmed from his insistence that the Jewish population was racist, anti-assimilationist, detrimental to social cohesion, and therefore inimical to the progress of the Argentine people. Assaf frequently penned articles in response to the writings of his critics, including Lazaro Schallman and Cesar Tiempo.⁵⁴ These responses, which are openly combative in tone, defend the perspectives of Assaf’s fellow nationalists, including Franceschi, Gálvez, and the antisemitic novelist Hugo Wast.⁵⁵

Admiration for a hierarchically ordered society seemed to color Assaf’s definition of the ideal Argentine identity. Believing that “los inferiores” should be subordinated to the rule of those who are “aptos para dirigir el Estado,” Assaf demonstrated a flirtation with the antidemocratic philosophies of Counter-Reformation-era Spain and the federalist leadership of Juan Manuel de Rosas.⁵⁶ His suspicion of high finance and disdain for “los oligarcas cultos que oprimían al pueblo de Judea” divulge the roots of his antisemitic political theory.⁵⁷ While Assaf

⁵² Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301.

⁵³ José Assaf, “Un polemista judío,” *Criterio* 29, no. 427 (1936): 12.

⁵⁴ Pseudonym of author Israel Zeitlin.

⁵⁵ Discussed at length in chapter 6.

⁵⁶ José Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” *Criterio* 21, no. 295 (1933): 177.

⁵⁷ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” 178.

maintained that liberal democracy is fatally flawed in that it inherently creates a society ruled by “la alta finanza,” he did believe that a specific brand of democracy—one that limits voting power to the “beneméritos” of Argentine society—would be the ideal political solution.⁵⁸ Argentine Jewry did not qualify under Assaf’s definition of “beneméritos,” leading him to argue the necessity “de impedir que los judíos alcancen sus propósitos de predominio sobre la sociedad argentina.”⁵⁹ Assaf’s articles in *Criterio* provide insight into how anti-liberalism influenced nationalists’ understanding of Jewish rights to political participation.

⁵⁸ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia, 178-79.

⁵⁹ Assaf, “Un polemista judío,” 11.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF *HISPANISMO* UPON ANTISEMITIC NATIONALISTS

One prominent influence on the writings of antisemitic nationalists is *Hispanismo*, or “the identification with Spain, her culture, values and traditions.”⁶⁰ Embedded within the writings of Franceschi, Gálvez, Meinvielle, Balda and Assaf are a number of ideological strands: an admiration for the philosophy of the Counter-Reformation; the theology of the Spanish Inquisition; and the political theory of *La Reconquista*, Primo de Rivera’s Falangism, and Francisco Franco’s fascist state. These authors appeal to Spanish tradition as a way to legitimize their grievances with Argentina’s Jewish population. Recognizable within the writings of these nationalists are traces of uniquely Spanish ideas and an admiration for the social and political structures of Spain’s Golden Age.

MARCELINO MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO AND RAMIRO DE MAEZTU

The Nacionalismo movement, which was primarily composed of intellectuals—though not to the exclusion of politicians and military men—meant that philosophers, especially Spaniards like Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856-1912) and Ramiro de Maeztu (1875-1936), had a significant impact upon nationalists’ worldview. The ideas of anti-liberal thinker and author Ramiro de Maeztu are arguably identifiable as influential among the writings of antisemitic nationalists. Believing that “los grandes españoles fueron los paladines de hermandad

⁶⁰ Rachum, “Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Political Right,” 98.

humana, frente a los judíos que se consideraban el pueblo elegido,” Maeztu’s philosophy perhaps served as an inspiration for Argentine nationalists, who, in their efforts to alienate the Jews, looked across the Atlantic to their Iberian counterparts for intellectual guidance.⁶¹ The very title of one of Maeztu’s most famous works, *Defensa de la Hispanidad*, reveals his approbation for the “espíritu latino,” a quality that Gálvez, too, considered in need of defense against immigration and Judaism.⁶² Hispanidad, for Maeztu, was the unifying spirit that bound all Spaniards and Latin Americans to the motherland. This spiritual union, based on more than just language and religion, “does not exclude foreign peoples whom it may convert, but does exclude foreign ideas such as masonry, liberalism, Protestantism, socialism, and communism,” and presumably, Judaism.⁶³ Maeztu’s belief that “la jerarquía es la condición de la eficacia” seems to arise from both his nostalgic reminiscing about the glory of Spain’s imperial zenith and his coquetry with Falangism.⁶⁴ Fathers Gustavo Franceschi and Julio Meinvielle show echoes of Maeztu’s appreciation for hierarchical society, believing that “al respaldo de ideologías liberales se destruyó la sociedad jerárquicamente organizada.”⁶⁵ Argentine nationalists’ belief in the primacy of a hierarchical and anti-liberal society, likely influenced by Maeztu’s equally Hispanophile and anti-positivist philosophies, arguably served as an ideological foundation for the antisemitic arguments of la Década Infame.

Nationalists’ reliance on the works of Spanish philosopher and literary critic Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo is further evidence of hispanophile philosophy’s influence on adherents to the Nacionalismo ideology. An admirer of the Middle Ages, Menéndez y Pelayo referred to the

⁶¹ Ramiro de Maeztu, *Defensa de la Hispanidad* (Buenos Aires: Editoriales Poblet, 1934), 86.

⁶² Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301.

⁶³ H. Rutledge Southworth, “The Spanish Phalanx and Latin America,” *Foreign Affairs* 18, no. 1 (1939): 150.

⁶⁴ Maeztu, *Defensa de la Hispanidad*, 86.

⁶⁵ Meinvielle, “La estructura social,” 755.

Reconquest and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain as “noble y salvadora intolerancia.”⁶⁶ Argentine nationalists, especially Balda and Gálvez, seemed to adopt this same mentality that intolerance toward “the other” was justifiable for the sake of conserving the undiluted national Latin spirit. Much like Menéndez y Pelayo justified medieval xenophobia as “salvadora,” Gálvez, too, advocated limiting “la entrada de estos inmigrantes” so that “la Patria argentina” might conserve its uniquely Hispanic identity.⁶⁷

Another concern of Menéndez y Pelayo was the threat of “secret” Jews disguising their true faith to deceive Catholics, as well as the existence of “judaizantes o relapsos,” whose adherence or return to Judaism endangered the unity of Hispanic society.⁶⁸ Vicente Balda adopted this same paranoia in his works, even directly quoting Menéndez y Pelayo as evidence that “canónigos, frailes, monjas y personajes conspicuos en el Estado” were among the 20,000 “judaizantes ocultos” expelled from Spain in 1481.⁶⁹ Balda implied that this type of secret anti-Catholic plot could presently be extant in Argentina once again, stoking the paranoid fears of Argentines who were trying to navigate the changing world order of the 1930s. Balda’s appeals to Menéndez y Pelayo as a source of authority on practices of “noble” intolerance in medieval Spain demonstrates the Argentine nationalists’ tendency to discriminately adopt ideas and arguments from past sources to suit their present agendas. Balda, though, was not alone in adopting Menéndez y Pelayo’s fear of secret Jews; in fact, “fear of an alleged Jewish desire to destroy Christianity was deeply embedded in the thinking of Catholic intellectuals in

⁶⁶ Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (Madrid: Imprenta de F. Maroto e Hijos, 1881), 60.

⁶⁷ Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301.

⁶⁸ Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 527.

⁶⁹ Balda, “La hipocresía judaica,” 208.

Argentina.”⁷⁰ These conspiratorial fears shared by Menéndez y Pelayo and Balda bolstered the myth of the Jew as the untrustworthy enemy whose presence jeopardizes national sanctity.

RECONQUISTA, INQUISITION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION

In addition to inspiration from Hispanic philosophers, the Nacionalismo movement also adopted the theology of militant Spanish Catholicism. Identifying the Argentine nation as first and foremost a Catholic society, these nationalists naturally gravitated toward the militant, “purifying” Catholicism from three sources, each shaped by historical realities and mythical overtones of Hispanic identity: the Christian *Reconquista*, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Counter-Reformation. All three defining events or institutions, central to the historical memory of Spanish imperial and cultural power, embody the pre and early-modern fear of losing the sense of medieval order—a fear that was then co-opted by antisemitic nationalists to combat perceived threats to social order.

From the Spanish Reconquest (722-1492), Argentine nationalists arguably drew a sense of duty to reclaim “territory”—both temporal and spiritual—from usurping imposters who had invaded Spain’s Catholic sphere. This holy war intended to rid Spanish territories of non-Christian infidels—initially Muslims, but later Jews and Protestants. This glorified conquest became immortalized in “Santiago ‘Matamoros’ (the Moor-slayer), [...] a national patron saint” of Spain.⁷¹ Militant intolerance, then, became entrenched in the theological memory of Spanish history and seems to provide inspiration for the antisemitic arguments of the 1930s in Argentina.

⁷⁰ Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, 45.

⁷¹ Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

Spain's history of intolerant theology continued beyond the 1492 reclaiming of Granada, the last remaining Muslim stronghold in Iberia. Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon's marriage in 1469 further deepened the union between the Spanish theological and political orders of society, which served as the religious backdrop of Spain's *Edad de Oro* (late-sixteenth to early-seventeenth centuries). During the rule of these Catholic Monarchs or *Reyes Católicos*—so denominated by Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503), who, incidentally, was also Spanish—Pope Sixtus IV (1414-1484) authorized the 1478 initiation of the Inquisition, the hallmark institution of theological intolerance. Episodically, during the medieval period, a certain degree of interfaith cooperation existed among Jews, Muslims and Christians in Spain. Yet in the early-modern period Isabella and Ferdinand forged an “alliance with social forces that prepared the way for the elimination of a plural, open society.”⁷² Continuing the Catholic Monarchs' legacy, “by the sixteenth century, the Inquisition, often with the support of the crown, began to arrogate to itself the role of social disciplining.”⁷³ Until its eventual abolition in 1834, the Spanish Inquisition sought to enforce theological hegemony and homogeneity upon Spain and her American colonies, emphasizing not only the importance of “correct” belief, but also the notion of purity of blood. Although, as historians Henry Kamen and Stuart B. Schwartz suggest, the Inquisition may have provided more room for religious freedom than popular memory would suggest, the historized record and mythologized memory of this institution—a product of the union between a powerful Church and an intolerant State—permeates the writings of antisemitic nationalists and bolsters their belief in the correctness of a uniform Catholic citizenry.⁷⁴

⁷² Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 7.

⁷³ Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 19; Kamen notes that “even in the pluralist society of mediaeval Spain, Jews had always suffered discrimination.”

⁷⁴ See Schwartz's *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* and Kamen's *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*.

The Counter-Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries also joined Catholic theology with Spanish military might in order to retain a Catholic monopoly over the kingdom's spiritual territory. Just as Argentine nationalists condemned deviations from Catholic thought, the Spanish theology of the Counter-Reformation sought to root out Protestant "heresy" from the venerated lands of the Most Catholic Monarchs. Lutherans began appearing in Spanish *autos de fe* as early as the 1540s, but Protestant persecutions rose considerably after 1564 as part of the Church's efforts to enforce the results of the Council of Trent.⁷⁵ Kamen argues that, ironically, much of the popular memory of Spanish brutality against Protestants is actually an exaggerated result of Protestant anti-Catholic propaganda of the 17th to 19th centuries.⁷⁶ Whether or not these accounts of Spanish aggression against Protestants are dramatized, the conception of an intolerant Spain seems to have lingered in the minds of Hispanophile nationalists, who drew theological inspiration from the supposed uniformity imposed under the Counter-Reformation. Although extreme Catholic intolerance may have been mythologized for the purpose of discrediting Catholics, Argentine nationalists strangely seem to admire the radical nature of late-medieval and early modern institutions of social control.

Present in this project's sampling of nationalists' writings—Franceschi, Galvez, Balda, Meinvielle, and Assaf—is an admixture of these Hispanic theological influences.

Speaking to the theologically-tinged ideology of Hispanism, Franceschi wrote that "la cantidad [de judíos] es excesiva" and used the anti-imperialist language of La Reconquista to justify his grievances with "el problema judío."⁷⁷ Just as Isabella and Ferdinand advocated the union of Spanish territories through expulsion or conversion of all non-Catholic residents,

⁷⁵ Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved*, 24.

⁷⁶ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 305.

⁷⁷ Gustavo J. Franceschi, "Antisemitismo," *Criterio* 21, no. 301 (1933): 317-18.

Franceschi, too, claimed that “los judíos habitan un país” and insist upon “su pureza biológica,” which prevents them from becoming loyal members of the nation in which they live.⁷⁸ Manuel Gálvez also adopted the purifying mentality of Isabella and Ferdinand’s theology, believing that Jews “no pueden comprender nuestro espíritu” and should therefore be restricted from diluting the national purity.⁷⁹

Vicente Balda maintained an Inquisitorial attitude towards Judaism, criticizing the supposedly mistaken theology of the Jews and using those theological differences to condemn Argentina’s Hebraic population. Reflecting the same exclusionary mindset of the Spanish Inquisition, Balda categorized Jewish theology as “carnal, terreno y exclusivista” and entirely in conflict with Catholic thought.⁸⁰ Much like the Inquisition used Church authority as the world’s protector against heresy, Balda asserted that “el mayor obstáculo que encuentra Israel para sus planes es la Iglesia Católica y su divino Fundador Jesucristo.”⁸¹ This belief in the duty of the Church to hegemonically root out heresy and impose homogeneity permeates the antisemitic arguments of nationalists, showing the influence Medieval Spanish theology on the creation of the Argentine national myth.

Meinvielle also adopted the theology of Spain’s Golden Age, explaining the unity between Hispanic heritage and Catholicism in his 1937 work *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra*. A central premise upon which Meinvielle’s argument rests is the idea that “España es obra exclusiva de la fe cristiana de suerte que destruir la fe cristiana es destruir España y destruir España es como amputar la Cristiandad.”⁸² According to Meinvielle, the factors that threaten to

⁷⁸ Franceschi, “Antisemitismo,” 320.

⁷⁹ Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301.

⁸⁰ Balda, “La guerra judía contra el mundo cristiano,” 141.

⁸¹ Balda, “La guerra judía contra el mundo cristiano,” 142.

⁸² Julio Meinvielle, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra* (Buenos Aires: J.A.C., 1937), 11.

destroy Spain, and therefore Catholicism itself, are Protestantism, the philosophy of the French Revolution and “las hordas soviéticas de Israel.”⁸³ Meinvielle’s discussion of these alleged threats to Spanish greatness reveals traces of mythologized theological legacies in his understanding of the proper world order.

Hoping for the restoration of Spain’s “grandeza cristiana e imperial,” Meinvielle detailed a revisionist Spanish historiography that celebrates conquest and forced homogeneity as the only way to regain Spain’s lost grandeur.⁸⁴ Meinvielle relied heavily on the language of war, reconquest and crusade. He described “la época de las Cruzadas” as “las páginas más gloriosas de la Iglesia,” revealing his attraction to the purifying theology of the Middle Ages. He further demonstrated his belief in the importance of vigorously uncompromising Catholicism, writing that Spain “necesita esta condición previa, del martirio del fuego y de la sangre por el cual tan gloriosamente ha pasado y está pasando.”⁸⁵ This fervent brand of Catholicism, which drove hordes of Christians to the Holy Land in defense of the faith, also inspired la Reconquista, which came to fruition during what Meinvielle called “los días gloriosos de Fernando el Católico.”⁸⁶ The sense of unity that arose from la Reconquista seems to be what attracted Meinvielle to this intolerant era of his ancestral nation. Seemingly, Meinvielle’s ultimate goal for Spain, and in turn for Argentina, was complete unity achieved through uniformity of faith, a goal that he apparently found to be most effectively achieved through inspiration from an age so defined by militant Catholic theology.

⁸³ Meinvielle, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra*, 29.

⁸⁴ Meinvielle, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra*, 29.

⁸⁵ Meinvielle, *Los tres pueblos bíblicos en su lucha por la dominación del mundo*, 71.

⁸⁶ Meinvielle, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra*, 27; Interestingly, Meinvielle refers only to the glorious days of *Ferdinand*, not his wife Isabella. Perhaps the omission of the king’s female counterpart in the Reconquista is evidence of a misogynist undercurrent in the worldview of these nationalists. The relationship between Meinvielle (and his like-minded contemporaries) and matters of female leadership and empowerment may prove to be a fruitful avenue for future research.

The factors that challenged complete theological unity in medieval Spain were, according to Meinvielle, reborn in the 1930s in the form of communism, supposedly a Jewish importation from Moscow. Much like Crusaders took up arms against Muslim invaders and Counter-Reformation soldiers waged war against Protestants, Meinvielle described the Spanish Civil War as a “heroica cruzada contra el comunismo ateo que querían implantar los judíos.”⁸⁷ The rebirth of the “cruzada,” this time against communism, was, for Meinvielle and his fellow hispanophile nationalists, a new Reconquista of Spanish spiritual territory. Continuing the motif of militaristic language, Meinvielle encouraged Spanish Nationalist forces under Francisco Franco to take up the “guerra para reclamar con el último recurso que les quedaba a mano, el recurso de la espada.”⁸⁸ The centrality of this necessity to “reclaim” something seemingly stolen from the “authentic” (i.e. Catholic) Spaniards reveals that Meinvielle and his fellow nationalists perceived themselves and their constituents as under attack from forces that threatened their understanding of tradition.

Meinvielle’s militancy regarding the Spanish Civil War carried over into his writings about Argentine Jewry. He observed that “nuestro tiempo presenta de modo manifiesto una lucha entre [...] paganos, judíos, musulmanes y cristianos. Y una lucha decisiva y a muerte, porque estos pueblos luchan conscientes de la lucha y del carácter decisivo está para la dominación del mundo.”⁸⁹ That same militancy extant in the reign of Isabella and Ferdinand and in Meinvielle’s writings about the Spanish Civil War crept into the cleric’s understanding of how Argentines should approach the Jewish presence. He recommended that in order to restore Argentina’s lost social order, which had been supposedly disrupted by “sentimentalismo liberal,” “hay que sanear

⁸⁷ Meinvielle, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra*, 23.

⁸⁸ Meinvielle, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra*, 17.

⁸⁹ Julio Meinvielle, *Los tres pueblos bíblicos en su lucha por la dominación del mundo*, quoted in “Bibliografía,” *Criterio* 33, no. 507 (1937): 267.

el espíritu de la nación.”⁹⁰ This cleansing of the national spirit requires the removal of all “contraste, diversidad de opinión,” harkening back to the Spanish Inquisition’s efforts to root out heterogeneity of belief.⁹¹ Meinvielle proposed that “el espíritu católico [es] lo único que puede vivificarlo [el estado] y hacer la grande Argentina,” necessarily implying that Judaism has no place in Catholic society.⁹² Just as Meinvielle presented the Spanish spirit as being unwaveringly Catholic, he also linked together Argentine patriotism and the Catholic faith, claiming that “porque somos patriotas queremos una Argentina grande y por esto religiosa.”⁹³ Meinvielle’s identification of non-Catholics as being unpatriotic contributed to the nationalists’ targeting of Jews as an inherently destabilizing force.

PRIMO DE RIVERA AND FRANCO

Many of Argentina’s antisemitic nationalists believed in their ability to “bind together social and political cleavages through governments based on hierarchy and authority from above,” a model with great precedent in Spanish politics of the pre-Second Republic and post-Civil War eras.⁹⁴ Argentine nationalists grappled with changes to the political and social hierarchy under liberalizing governments of the post-WWI years, just as Spain’s José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903-1936) and Francisco Franco (1892-1975) were doing nearly simultaneously across the Atlantic.⁹⁵ Clear ideological parallels exist between the Iberian Falangist movements of Primo de Rivera and Franco and the hierarchical political

⁹⁰ Meinvielle, “La defensa del Estado,” 593-94.

⁹¹ Meinvielle, “La estructura social,” 755.

⁹² Meinvielle, “La defensa del Estado,” 594-95.

⁹³ Julio Meinvielle, “Los derechos del estado,” *Criterio* 10, no. 141 (1930): 625.

⁹⁴ Rachum, “Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Right,” 100.

⁹⁵ José Antonio Primo de Rivera is not to be confused with his father, Miguel Primo de Rivera, whose dictatorship lasted from 1923 to 1930 and ended in his execution.

recommendations put forth by Argentine nationalists.⁹⁶ Just as fascist Spain sought to combat secular, liberal trends through fascism, Argentine nationalists believed that “the cornerstone concepts of Argentina’s political system were to be order, hierarchy, authority and discipline.”⁹⁷ Although not overtly antisemitic, both Primo de Rivera and Franco provided political models that inspired antisemitic Argentines in search of an alternative to the secular, pro-immigration liberal ideology.

According to historian Ilan Rachum, “only in the midtwenties, during the [Miguel] Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain (1923-1930), did Hispanismo [in Argentina] definitively acquire the interpretation of a call to inject society with doses of Spanish Catholic traditionalism.”⁹⁸ After the failures of his father’s dictatorship, the younger Primo de Rivera’s ideology sought to avenge the family’s name and Spain’s glory through “a radical and authoritarian nationalism with a modern social and economic program of radical reformism, audacious and modern in culture, but still somehow in harmony with Catholicism and traditionalism, and ready to employ whatever violence was necessary.”⁹⁹ In the younger Primo de Rivera’s own words, “what triumphs” in his Falangist form of government “is the orderly principle common to all, consistent national thought, of which the state is the expression.”¹⁰⁰ This insistence on nationalist social order likely appealed to Franceschi, Meinvielle, Balda, Assaf and Gálvez as they, like Primo de Rivera, pushed back against an increasingly modern, secular society.

Although most Catholic nationalists during the 1930s did not openly share José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s acceptance of violence, many adhered to his mantra that “all that really

⁹⁶ Segal, “Jews and the Argentine Center,” 205.

⁹⁷ Rachum, “Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Right,” 100.

⁹⁸ Rachum, “Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Right,” 98.

⁹⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 90.

¹⁰⁰ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 79.

mattered was Spanish [or national] unity and a strong nationalist government.”¹⁰¹ In 1934 Primo de Rivera’s newly-established nationalist organization, *Falange Española* (FE), merged with the *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* (JONS), a militant labor organization, to form what was popularly known as FE de las JONS.¹⁰² This organization rallied around slogans such as “España, Una, Grande y Libre,” “Por la Patria, el Pan y la Justicia,” and “¡Arriba España!”¹⁰³ Although specifically a Spanish nationalist movement, JONS capitalized on the international appeal of its messaging by exporting to Argentina subscriptions to its weekly publication, earning 1,500 *pesetas* from Argentine subscribers alone.¹⁰⁴ This trans-Atlantic sharing of nationalist ideology demonstrates not only Argentina’s interest in Spanish nationalist politics, but also the tendency of its rightist citizens to flirt with the fascist politics of Primo de Rivera and Franco.

After the younger Primo de Rivera’s 1936 death by firing squad under Spain’s Second Republic (1931-1939), Francisco Franco mythologized his fallen compatriot’s memory, creating a cult of personality that glorified the Falangist party. Franco himself “was a firm if formalistic Catholic and a cultural traditionalist, opposed to what he viewed as the cultural and intellectual poisons of most aspects of modernity.”¹⁰⁵ During periods of anti-clerical government, the Spanish Church “became closely linked to Spanish nationalism” and “presented liberalism as a manifestation of an anti-Spanish ideology,” a rightist tendency to which Franco clung during the

¹⁰¹ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 74.; Argentine nationalists were not openly violent during the 1930s and 1940s, but, as discussed below, the rhetoric of this time period influenced the activities of antisemitic and anti-communist paramilitary groups during the 1970s and 1980s. An interesting avenue of investigation would be how Primo de Rivera’s Falangism influenced the activities of these later paramilitary groups.

¹⁰² Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 99.

¹⁰³ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 100.

¹⁰⁴ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 86.

¹⁰⁵ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 240.

Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).¹⁰⁶ The rise of Franco's fascism occurred simultaneously with Argentina's Infamous Decade, as rightist parties in both nations sought to save their respective societies from the communist calamity. Facing similar challenges—both real and perceived—to their definition of traditional social order, Argentine nationalists looked to the politics of their fellow nationalists in the admirable Spanish homeland. The Hispanismo tendency extant in the Argentine historio-cultural DNA not only influenced nationalists to reflect back on the philosophical and theological memories of Spain's height of imperial glory, but arguably, to also derive inspiration from Spain's contemporary political crisis.

Meinvielle's warning that "el mundo queda expuesto a un espantoso caos" reveals his belief that perilous disorder would inevitably result from a society in which communism and plurality of thought were allowed to grow unchecked.¹⁰⁷ This similar fear—the fear of difference and disorder—perhaps structured in human thinking, and, as such unavoidable, seems to have resonated equally with Meinvielle as it did with Primo de Rivera and Franco. Just as the Falangist movement sought unification and "subordination of individuals and social groups" to the collective authority of the state, Meinvielle, too, saw Argentina as strongest when all individuality was subordinate to a Church-centered government.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, "by adopting or imitating Falangist slogans and methods," nationalists sought to "give their power a new lease on life and to stem the tide of democracy," liberalism and, most importantly, communism.¹⁰⁹

Meinvielle's admiration for Spanish fascism is best demonstrated by his classification of the Spanish Civil War as "una guerra santa" against the forces that threaten to turn "la España

¹⁰⁶ Catheljine de Busser, "Church-state Relations in Spain: Variations on a National-Catholic Theme?" *GeoJournal* 64, no. 4 (2006): 268.

¹⁰⁷ Meinvielle, *Que saldrá de la España que sangra*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Southworth, "The Spanish Phalanx and Latin America," 149.

¹⁰⁹ Southworth, "The Spanish Phalanx and Latin America," 151.

del Cid y de Guzmán” into a secular, Godless nation.¹¹⁰ Just as Spanish “Church leaders would eventually characterize the struggle as a holy crusade,” Meinvielle, too, extolled the “belleza incontrastable [...] [d]el glorioso levantamiento cívico-militar.”¹¹¹ Meinvielle’s understanding of Spanish political strife is inherently theological, as demonstrated by his belief that “no se lucha simplemente por algo político, económico, ni siquiera por algo cultural o filosófico, se lucha por Cristo o por el Anticristo.”¹¹² Likewise, “Falangist spokesmen increasingly emphasized that all Spanish institutions must be imbued with a specifically Catholic spirit,” a goal that Meinvielle supported in the restructuring of the Argentine state following the crisis of the liberal world order.¹¹³ Meinvielle’s admiration for Nationalists’ efforts during the Spanish Civil War did not provide specific inspiration for his dislike of Jews, but equipped him with a political philosophy that legitimized and empowered his belief in a unified, homogenous, anti-liberal social order.

Assaf also shows hints of Spanish Falangism throughout his writings, especially in regards to his stance on democracy. He expresses his lack of faith in the democratic system, claiming that “la democracia liberal y burguesa que se inicia con el espanto del Terror y termina con la miseria que provoca la alta finanza”—an allusion to the alleged Jewish plot to control the global economy—was actually a dangerous gateway to “miseria material y moral por todas partes.”¹¹⁴ Similar to Primo de Rivera’s advocacy for “consistent national thought, of which the state is the expression,” and Franco’s subordination of all individualistic expressions to the will of the state, Assaf found value in a political system directed by “benemeritos de régimen.”¹¹⁵ Further expressing his fascist tendencies, Assaf wrote that “el gobierno está obligado a sacrificar

¹¹⁰ Julio Meinvielle, “Los desvarios de Maritain,” *Criterio* 33, no. 488 (1937): 227-28.

¹¹¹ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 254.; Meinvielle, *Que saldrá de la España que sangra*, 8.

¹¹² Julio Meinvielle, *De la justa y santa Guerra de España* (Buenos Aires: J.A.C., 1937), 47.

¹¹³ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 254.

¹¹⁴ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” 177-78.

¹¹⁵ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” 179.

a sus miembros, si fuera necesario en beneficio de todos.”¹¹⁶ This seeming belief in the disposability of certain members of a society reveal that Assaf would have likely supported Franco and Primo de Rivera’s willingness to use violence against enemies of their ideal state. With this political belief in mind, Assaf’s antisemitic writings seem to be grounded in and justified by the contemporary Spanish movement toward violent authoritarian fascism.

¹¹⁶ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” 178.

NATIONALIST REIMAGINATION OF THE CAUDILLO JUAN MANUEL DE ROSAS

The year 1935 marked the centennial of Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas' victory in the so-called "plebiscito de 1835," causing Argentines to reflect back on that tumultuous age of the nation's history.¹¹⁷ Rosas' stint as dictatorial governor of Buenos Aires spanned from 1829 to 1852 (with a brief voluntary hiatus from 1832 to 1835) and was marked by "strong-man personalism, paternalism, antagonistic moralism, unwillingness to compromise, disrespect for democratic institutions, denigration of opponents," and targeted violence.¹¹⁸ Although denounced as an abominable tyrant by liberals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, "in the late 1930s the 'historical revisionists' modified" the nation's historiography to worship "the autochthonous cult of the longtime governor of Buenos Aires, Juan Manuel de Rosas."¹¹⁹ Nationalists latched onto Rosas' dictatorial government style, reimagining his tainted image to become "la personalidad del jefe salvador de la Patria," and using his name to uphold "the native against the foreign."¹²⁰ Jose Assaf and Manuel Gálvez were especially forgiving of Rosas and employed his

¹¹⁷ José Assaf, "Don Juan Manuel de Rosas," *Criterio* 23, no. 336 (1934): 352.

¹¹⁸ Leslie F. Anderson, "Of Wild and Uncultivated Politics: Conflict and Democracy in Argentina," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 16, no. 1 (2002): 114.

¹¹⁹ David Rock, "Antecedents of the Argentine Right," in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, eds. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1993), 15.

¹²⁰ Diana Quattrocci-Woisson, "Una empresa militante de contra historia: la revisión del pasado argentino en la Revista del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas 'Juan Manuel de Rosas' (1939)," *América: Cahiers du CRICCAL*, no. 4-5 (1990): 419; Rock, "Antecedents of the Argentine Right," 24.

mythologized image in their fight against liberalism, which, in the nationalist worldview, was inherently linked to Judaism.

In a 1934 *Criterio* article, Assaf defends Rosas' image against his liberal critics, arguing that any actions for which Rosas has been condemned in the Argentine national memory were of lesser severity than the brutality of the Unitarians, the Federalist strongman's political opponents. Assaf laments that "nos lo pintan como un monstruo bebedor de sangre, gozando con la agonía de los que mandaba ejecutar nada más que para solazarse," believing instead that Argentines should reconsider Rosas' image without the stigma that liberals have associated with his name.¹²¹ He condemns the liberals' version of history as "necesariamente parcial," decriing the fact that "sólo Rosas es imperdonable" while Bernardino Rivadavia (President 1826-1827), a militaristic Unitarian, is pardoned and even lauded for his role in the nation's history.¹²² Assaf lists the names of "los fusilados" under the short Rivadavia administration, projecting the violence usually associated with the Rosas regime upon his enemies in an effort to glorify an era of the past whose ideology aligned with Assaf's own.

Assaf also frames Rosas' image as a champion of the Hispanic, original Argentina, using anti-imperialist language to support his condemnation of the liberal order. Ironically, Assaf seems entirely unaware of the hypocrisy of his argument. He decries imperialism in favor of the "native" or "original," failing to acknowledge that the native culture that he celebrates was Spanish, an imperial imposition in itself. He claims that "los unitarios," the antagonists of Rosas' Federalist Party, "eran enemigos de la causa americana y española [...] defendida por Rosas," framing Rosas as an anti-imperialist hero and champion of the "real" Argentina. The aristocracy, according to Assaf, who voted in favor of the Unitarians, represented "pensamiento extranjero"

¹²¹ José Assaf, "Don Juan Manuel de Rosas," *Criterio* 23, no. 336 (1934): 352.

¹²² Assaf, "Don Juan Manuel de Rosas," 352.

rather than the voice of the “native” Argentines.¹²³ This “falsa democracia de importación,” he argues, is exactly what Rosas intended to combat.¹²⁴ Because of Rosas’ refusal to accept “la modalidad, unitaria, extranjerizante con exceso,” Assaf argues that “Nuestro pueblo debe ese homenaje a quien fue el primero que por mandato suyo defendió sus derechos contra los que—tal vez inconscientemente—pretendían someterlo a experiencias exóticas.”¹²⁵

Based on Assaf’s criticism of the liberal historical myth, he intended to reimagine that history in a manner that would bolster his criticisms of the liberal social order. Just as his contemporaries appealed to medieval Spanish traditionalism to inform their 1930s worldview, Assaf, too, sanctified the past, in the form of Rosas, to lend credence to his present anti-liberal ideology. The reimagined myth of Juan Manuel de Rosas represented the ideal origin story for the nationalist movement. Assaf celebrated “sus esfuerzos en favor de la grandeza de la patria, su titánica defensa de la integridad territorial argentina y de nuestra soberanía le dan títulos de sobra para que la admiración y el agradecimiento de sus compatriotas vayan en aumento con el sucederse de las generaciones.”¹²⁶ Conveniently, the problems that Rosas allegedly conquered so valiantly were the same that Assaf and his fellow Nationalists perceived as threatening the national integrity in the 1930s as well, providing justification for the reimplementation of Rosas’ anti-liberal methods of government to combat the present social ills.

Gálvez was arguably one of the most enthusiastic advocates of the redemption of Rosas’ image in the Argentine national memory. In fact, Gálvez was so committed to the heroification of Rosas that he participated, along with other intellectuals and members of the military, in the

¹²³ Assaf, “Don Juan Manuel de Rosas,” 353.

¹²⁴ Assaf, “Don Juan Manuel de Rosas,” 353.

¹²⁵ Assaf, “Don Juan Manuel de Rosas,” 356.

¹²⁶ Assaf, “Don Juan Manuel de Rosas,” 355.

founding of El Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1938.¹²⁷ The purpose of this organization was “descubrir verdades ocultas, denunciar falsedades, desenmascarar a los que, mintiendo sobre [el] pasado, sabotean las bases de [la] nacionalidad” of Argentina.”¹²⁸ Just as Assaf attempted to rehabilitate the public memory of Rosas, Gálvez and the other members of the “investigational” institution dedicated to the former dictator sought to correct alleged false notions popularly held about the past.

This revisionist approach attempted to validate Rosas’ own century-old warnings about the dangers of liberalism and modernism, supposedly justifying Argentine Nationalists’ reactionary leanings during the 1930s. Similar to Gálvez’s own concerns over the conservation of the social order and “espíritu latino” in Argentina, “Rosas claimed Argentina was a dying nation being destroyed by unhealthy influences from Europe [...] claimed to represent the forces of law, order and civilization against anarchy.”¹²⁹ Gálvez conceived of caudillos, like Rosas, as “the obscure architects of our nationality [who embodied] national consensus and the eternal spirit of the future nation.”¹³⁰ That unique but undefinable national spirit to which Gálvez so frequently refers was best embodied in the Argentine provinces and gaucho-esque imagery, outside the reach of the corrupt capital city, full of imported ideas and moral degradation. Gálvez saw a great contrast between “the way of life of the old rustic provincial communities” and “the corruption and decadence he perceived in the capital.”¹³¹ This dichotomy that Gálvez sets up is a reproduction of the old Federalist versus Unitarian feud of the Rosas era, with Rosas, the “good guy” in Gálvez’s version of history, representing the morally sound, legitimate Argentines

¹²⁷ Quattrocci-Woisson, “Una empresa militante de contra historia,” 414.

¹²⁸ Quattrocci-Woisson, “Una empresa militante de contra historia,” 415.

¹²⁹ Gálvez, “Antisemitismo,” 301; Anderson, “Of Wild and Uncultivated Politics,” 107.

¹³⁰ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalists Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 44.

¹³¹ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 42.

fighting against foreign intruders. Gálvez and other members of the radical right “conjured up the myth of a past resting on country people of the interior subjugated but intrinsically bold and independent, simple and unsullied, untouched and unstained by modernity’s corrupt commerce and compromising politics.”¹³² Rosas and his Federalist party, when reimagined without the authoritarian violence of the regime, became the perfect emblem of the Argentine Nationalist movement of the 1930s, which, like its ideological predecessor of the previous century, sought to uphold the authentic Argentine nationality against foreign interlopers.

The two most important aspects that Nationalists like Gálvez and Assaf admired of the Rosas regime were the concept of a well-ordered society and an unadulterated “native” (i.e. Hispanic and Catholic) population. Just as “Rosas viewed the body politic as a large-scale estancia or regiment whose hierarchy of interdependent parts required firm direction and control,” Nationalists of the Infamous Decade believed that a strict social hierarchy would protect the nation from the disorder that they thought inevitably followed from liberalism, socialism, or communism.¹³³ Rosas’ authority-from-above model appealed to Nationalists, who believed, as Meinvielle put it, “el orden es esencialmente jerárquico.”¹³⁴ The liberal social order, which took root in the Argentine political system after Rosas’ downfall in 1852, “destruyó la sociedad jerárquicamente organizada y en su lugar substituyóse la plebe indiferencia.”¹³⁵ The only solution, then, would be to return to the time before the imposition of that disruption.

As a corollary to the Nationalists’ disdain for liberalism, which challenged the hierarchical social order, Nationalists looked to Jews as a symbol of the undoing of the

¹³² Segal, “Jews in the Argentine Center,” 207.

¹³³ David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 104-5.

¹³⁴ Meinvielle, “Los derechos del estado,” 625.

¹³⁵ Meinvielle, “La estructura social,” 755.

authoritarian order that Rosas embodied. Since “‘Jew’ stood for [...] in general, the decline of national barriers, traditional hierarchies, and other authority systems and particularisms in the modern age,” he had no place in the Argentine society modeled after Rosas’ vision.¹³⁶ Rosas was willing to single out groups he deemed undesirable or unproductive to national progress. While Rosas’ targets were Unitarians, the Nationalists of the 1930s, modeling themselves after their supposed ideological ancestor, targeted their condemnations at foreign populations.

Rhetoric regarding Juan Manuel de Rosas contains an undeniable anti-imperialist flavor that Assaf, Gálvez and their contemporaries used to justify their disdain for immigration and “imported” political theories that originated, in their minds, with the French Revolution. The radical right understood all leftist ideologies, including liberalism, to be entirely dependent on the political and intellectual environment in Europe. For this reason, then, all leftist ideas were condemned as European imperialist impositions that would dilute the uniquely Argentine spirit. The ideological foil to these imported ideas was best embodied by the mythologized autochthonous Rosas government, which rejected foreign influence in favor of a hierarchical system headed by caudillos—rabble-rousing *criollos* whose loyalties supposedly only fell within the Argentine national boundaries and the Catholic Church. During the 1930s, the far right grouped the Jewish population in with the hated “imperialists,” claiming that Jewish businesses, which were numerous in Buenos Aires, “formed part of an international conspiracy to subjugate the country to the imperialists.”¹³⁷

Revisionists attempted to rescue Rosas’ memory from the dark side of history, and Nationalists employed that rectified image as a source of authority and legitimacy for their own

¹³⁶ Deutsch, “The Argentine Right and the Jews,” 129.

¹³⁷ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 24.

ideology. Their anti-liberal, nativist ideas would no longer be reminiscent of a violent, unpopular dictator, but rather the emulation of the quintessential hero of the Argentine State.

ULTRAMONTANE CATHOLICISM AND NEO-SCHOLASTIC THOMISM

Clearly identifiable within the *Nacionalismo* movement was a disdain for modernism, especially secularism and the philosophies of Hegel, Kant and Descartes. During the early nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, belief in citizens' rights to political participation, fair wages, and social welfare programs "gained increasing support in many places throughout the world," but this "liberal consensus" began to fall apart in Argentina in the years following WWI.¹³⁸ As the liberal world vision began to change the composition of the "traditional" Argentine populace through secular education and efforts to include immigrants and other non-landowning residents into the ranks of citizens, nationalists of the 1930s began to speak up against modernism with greater vigor.¹³⁹ Linking immigration and secularism with the Jewish population, these nationalists condemned their Jewish neighbors as contributing to the denigration of the Catholic Church in the Argentine state. As an alternative to modernism, which was credited with bringing about the influx of immigration in recent decades, Meinvielle, Franceschi and Assaf appealed to the ultramontane medieval social order and the philosophy of Neo-Scholastic Thomism as favorable replacements for liberalism and Enlightenment thought. Adherents to this ultramontane mentality, unlike the individualistic modernist philosophers, saw

¹³⁸ Karen Ann Faulk, *In the Wake of Neoliberalism: Citizenship and Human Rights in Argentina* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 35-36.

¹³⁹ Faulk, *In the Wake of Neoliberalism*, 35.

the Church “as the source of authentic information about divine things and the authoritative guide as to how one should live in order to attain eternal life.”¹⁴⁰

Meinvielle and many of his contemporaries admired the structures of medieval society as an alternative to modernism. According to Meinvielle, “La Edad Media, tan denigrada por los pedantescos sabiondos normalistas como admirada por los auténticos pensadores de la actualidad ha sido una era de verdadera y legítima libertad dentro del bienestar como no ha conocido otra la historia.”¹⁴¹ This “orden sagrado medioeval [sic]” contrasted with “el individualismo liberal” of the modern era, which, according to Franceschi, represented “el caos.”¹⁴² As an ultramontane Catholic, Meinvielle believed that structures and traditions of Medieval Christianity, not the philosophy of the modern era, should guide the establishment of the new world order.¹⁴³ This reactionary view of social order placed the Church at the top of the social and political hierarchy and posited that rigid adherence to Catholic morality and rejection of pluralism would secure the “legítima libertad dentro del bienestar” that Meinvielle alleged to have been the greatest accomplishment of his medieval forebears.

Assaf adopted the same ultramontane view of Catholicism, echoing Meinvielle’s praise of the Church’s centrality in all facets of life in the Middle Ages. Assaf claimed that “quien cree en Dios cree en Él como fuente de todo poder, y no será tentado a suplantarlo como muchos de aquellos, ya que peor aconseja la prosperidad fácil que la labor constante y meritoria, y más difícilmente se alejara de su Misericordia el humilde que el lleno de orgullo.”¹⁴⁴ Based on this mindset, Argentine society would be best served if all of its citizens looked to God and the

¹⁴⁰ Philip Gleason, “Neoscholasticism as Preconciliar Ideology,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7, no. 4 (1988): 405.

¹⁴¹ Meinvielle, “La defensa del estado,” 593.

¹⁴² Meinvielle, *Que saldrá de la España de sangra*, 28.; Gustavo J. Franceschi, “La inquietud de esta hora,” *Criterio* 23, no. 335 (1934): 318.

¹⁴³ Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” 178.

Church as a source of moral guidance, instead of relying on individualistic modern philosophies that, according to Assaf and Meinvielle, disrupted social cohesion.

Franceschi shared the same admiration of the Church's guidance and claimed that communism represented the exact opposite of medieval ultramontanism and was therefore the greatest evil of the modern era. He explained,

En la negación del espíritu va el bolchevismo hasta el último extremo. Ni Dios, ni alma, ni nada que en alguna forma haya sido originario por un principio espiritualista cualquiera. La falta moral, el pecado, por ejemplo, es absurdo porque fuera del espiritualismo carece de sentido. Por lo tanto en el orden privado haya absoluta libertad de pensamiento, de concupiscencia, y también de actividad. La única barrera está constituida por la colectividad, la única moral es la que reglamenta las relaciones del individuo con la comunidad. Lo demás no pasa de simple fantasmagoría inspirada por la vieja filosofía espiritualista.¹⁴⁵

Franceschi's writings, like those of Assaf and Meinvielle, demonstrate that these nationalists viewed private morality as inextricably linked to the public sphere. Whereas, according to Franceschi, "Bolshevism" made private morality virtually non-existent, adherence to the Catholic faith in both the private and public spheres would create a well-ordered society. Even individual religiosity, though, did not satisfy Franceschi's desire for an ultramontane state. He believed that "el cristianismo puramente individual carecería de eficacia," and therefore Catholicism and the morality of the people needed to be linked with the state's authority.¹⁴⁶ Naturally, within this worldview, Jews had no rightful place. In the Middle Ages, a time so celebrated by Franceschi and his contemporaries, Jews endured the burning of their books—and even their bodies—as punishment for their non-compliance with the Catholic Church. Within the historio-cultural imagination of these Argentine nationalists, such a time of enforced order in

¹⁴⁵ Gustavo J. Franceschi, "Una cuestión mal planteada," *Criterio* 18, no. 245 (1933): 127.

¹⁴⁶ Franceschi, "Una cuestión mal planteada," 129.

both the private and public life likely seemed an appealing and effective way to combat the rising tide of secularism in their formerly staunchly Catholic nation.

As a foil to modernist philosophies, adherents to the Nacionalismo movement relied on a strict interpretation of Thomist theology and philosophy, arguing that social order and homogeneity—brought about by an ultramontane state—would best allow the proper practice of Catholic morality. This brand of Thomism, known as Neo-Scholastic Thomism, hoped for “not just a repetition of the Middle Ages, but at least partly an application of scholastic methods and teachings to new questions, which are nevertheless treated along the same lines as the old authorities and methodologies.”¹⁴⁷ As founder of the Sociedad Tomista Argentina (1948), Meinvielle especially adopted Thomism as a normative standard for philosophy and theology, reflecting on social issues of the 1930s and 1940s with a medieval worldview, and grafted on the twentieth century the ideas of Saint Thomas Aquinas.¹⁴⁸ For Meinvielle, “Santo Tomás representaba al mismo tiempo la antimodernidad por su reivindicación de la tradición y rechazo a la ‘impureza’ espiritual moderna,” and his authority as a Doctor of the Church could therefore be applied as a solution for the perceived chaos that Meinvielle hoped to combat.¹⁴⁹ Neo-Scholastic Thomism provided legitimacy for the allegedly “proper” social order—best embodied by Aquinas’ own times—and provided Meinvielle and many of his like-minded contemporaries with a philosophical foundation for their antisemitic rhetoric.

Meinvielle appealed to Aquinas’ writings in many of his works, frequently using Thomism as a way to justify his claim that “lo Espiritual prima entre lo Temporal. Los derechos

¹⁴⁷ Ulrich G. Leinsle and Michael J. Miller, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁴⁸ Leinsle and Miller, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, 5; Gleason, “Neoscholasticism as Preconciliar Ideology,” 406.

¹⁴⁹ José Zanca, *Cristianos antifascistas: conflictos en la cultura católica argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2013), 42.

de Dios sobre los derechos de Cesar.”¹⁵⁰ He claimed that “el maravilloso principal de Santo Tomás [...] soluciona todas las antinomias del Estado y del individuo,” justifying his use of medieval philosophy to supposedly solve the ills of the modern era.¹⁵¹ Whereas modernism encouraged a type of individualism that distanced society from the unifying morality of the Church, Meinvielle believed, based on Aquinas’ teachings, that “todos los que viven en comunidad con respecto a la comunidad como partes de un todo y como tal ordenables al bien de todo.”¹⁵² The supposed inextricability of the individual from the state, and the state from the Church, is, according to Meinvielle, what made communism—an alleged Jewish importation—so deplorable, since it did not respect “el orden esencial impuesto por Dios en los seres.”¹⁵³ Furthermore, Meinvielle denounced the “vergonzante importación del racionalismo anticristiano hecho en nombre de la ciencia y de la investigación (siempre es el mismo lenguaje de la irresponsabilidad y de la impiedad).”¹⁵⁴ This “importation,” a tacit reference to immigration—especially of Jews—sheds light on the rationale behind Meinvielle’s antisemitic rhetoric. If immigrant populations are the source of anti-Christian rationalism and impiety, then their presence is necessarily the enemy of the conservative Argentine state. Alternatively, Neo-Scholastic Thomism, when used as a normative guideline for the creation of social order, would supposedly alleviate those ills that arise from heterogeneity of belief.

Franceschi, too, believed that “los males de hoy,” in the form of individualism, materialism, and secularism, would be best defeated through a return to the glory of the ultramontane Middle Ages. His reimagined view of the medieval era as one of great progress and

¹⁵⁰ Meinvielle, “Los derechos del estado,” 625.

¹⁵¹ Meinvielle, “Los derechos del estado,” 625.

¹⁵² Meinvielle, “La defensa del Estado,” 593.

¹⁵³ Meinvielle, “La defensa del Estado,” 593.

¹⁵⁴ Julio Meinvielle, “Anticristianismo y nesciencia de Navarro Monzó,” *Criterio* 9, no. 126 (1930): 143.

peace contrasted irreconcilably with the modernist philosophies of Rousseau, Dupont-White, Herbert Spencer, Hegel, Schelling, Bluntschli, and of course Marx.¹⁵⁵ Franceschi lamented that “la acumulación de las riquezas en las naciones en un pequeño grupo de individuos; el nacionalismo exagerado, el comunismo y la rebelión del hombre contra Dios [...] el mundo está organizado en un sentido de crudo materialismo, y que mientras domine el egoísmo brutal de hoy.”¹⁵⁶ For Franceschi and his fellow antisemites, the Jews, having become “synonymous with [...] the ‘international threat’ posed by liberalism,” were the source of that hated “materialismo” that could only be countered with a corporatist state where the Church held the highest authority.¹⁵⁷

Like Meinvielle, Franceschi accompanied his criticisms of the modern world order with writings aimed at “mostrar el carácter abarcador y autónoma del catolicismo y su capacidad de dar respuesta al desgobierno contemporáneo.”¹⁵⁸ Franceschi “se asentó en el principio tomista de sedición,” which, in his eyes, justified “la tutela de la Iglesia en los asuntos políticos.”¹⁵⁹ This brand of ultramontane Catholicism sought to “entronizar a la Iglesia como piedra angular de la política,” and it appealed to Neo-Scholastic Thomism as “la ideología sustentadora” that would justify the imposition of a “social Catholicism” in the Argentine state.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, Assaf’s writings demonstrate his hope for resolution of the “misteria material y moral por todas partes”

¹⁵⁵ Franceschi, “Una cuestión mal planteada,” 127.; Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a Genevan philosopher and writer whose work influenced the Enlightenment in Europe. Charles Dupont-White (1807-1878) was a French lawyer and economist whose most famous work, *L’Individu et l’Etat*, presented his liberal, socialist ideas. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was an important classical liberal theorist in Victorian England. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a key philosopher of German idealism. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) was a German objective idealist philosopher. Johann Kaspar Bluntchli (1808-1881) was a Swiss liberal political thinker who helped develop one of the first codes of international law and who sought to combat ultramontane views of theology. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a German political theorist best known for his communist philosophy, now known as Marxism.

¹⁵⁶ Franceschi, “Los males del mundo,” 197.

¹⁵⁷ McGee Deutsch, “The Argentine Right and the Jews,” 132-133.

¹⁵⁸ Echeverría, “Virtudes de la doctrina y errores de la política,” 3.

¹⁵⁹ Echeverría, “Virtudes de la doctrina y errores de la política,” 7.

¹⁶⁰ Echeverría, “Virtudes de la doctrina y errores de la política,” 8.

through social order based on Thomist thought.¹⁶¹ These nationalists were not original in their use of Aquinas as ideological backing for their controversial political beliefs. In fact, the relationship between Thomism and antisemitism has roots in the work of the Dominican Ramón Martí (d. 1286), who used Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* in his own antisemitic text *Pugio fidei contra Judaeos*, or *Dagger of Faith against the Jews*.¹⁶² The “visión del judaísmo como un fermento disolvente de orden establecido” seemingly did not originate with Argentine nationalists of the Infamous Decade, but their continuing reliance on radicalized Thomist thought as the philosophical foundation for their ultraconservatism legitimized their antisemitic ideologies in some Argentines' eyes, and perhaps even contributed to the disproportionate persecution of the Jews during the dictatorship of the military junta, 1976-1983.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Assaf, “Antidemócratas y democracia,” 178.

¹⁶² Joseph F. O'Callaghan, “Religion and Culture, 1212-1369,” in *A History of Medieval Spain*, 487-520 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 502.

¹⁶³ Tulio Halperín Donghi, *La Argentina y la tormenta del mundo: ideas e ideologías entre 1930 y 1945* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2003), 114.

LEGACY

Although most of the antisemitism during the Infamous Decade manifested itself on paper rather than through acts of violence, the same worldview that moved the pens of Meinvielle, Franceschi, Assaf, Gálvez and Balda also influenced their ideological successors to take deadly action against their Jewish neighbors in the second half of the twentieth century. The nationalists' "campaign of hatred directed against the Jews in the 1930s left a legacy for later rabid anti-Semites" whose disdain for the Jews did not stop at verbal criticism or empty threats.¹⁶⁴ Voices of the Nacionalismo movement "influenced the government's policies through its supporters among political leaders, members of the oligarchy, military officers, and clergy," planting their ideologies within the nation's institutions and ensuring the continuity of their ideas.¹⁶⁵ Aggression toward Jews in Argentina seemingly fed off of the example set in the 1930s and early 1940s, inspiring members of the military and paramilitary groups to wage what virtually amounted to civil war against "subversives," a blanket title used to refer to any members of society who did not conform to the mythologized Argentine identity.

HUGO WAST

Novelist and director of Argentina's National Library Hugo Wast (1883-1962) (pseudonym of Gustavo Martínez Zuviría) is credited with popularizing racist theories against Jews through his openly antisemitic works, including *Buenos Aires, futura Babilonia* and *El*

¹⁶⁴ Metz, "Gustavo Juan Franceschi and the Jews," 210.

¹⁶⁵ Rachum, "Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Latin American Political Right," 108.

Kahal.¹⁶⁶ While best remembered for his literature, Wast participated in politics as a minister of justice and public instruction from 1943 to 1944, a post from which he resigned after the nation's president, General Pedro Ramirez, broke neutrality by declaring war on Nazi Germany and severing diplomatic relations with fascist Spain in 1944.¹⁶⁷ During his brief stint as minister of justice, Wast "caused problems for the Jewish community, such as the implementation of punitive measures to restrict Jewish immigration and communal activities."¹⁶⁸

A contemporary of the aforementioned nationalists, Wast was called "Argentina's Most Popular Novelist" by American literary critic Ruth Sedgwick (1892-1974) in 1929, six years before the publication of his most famous novel, *El Kahal*.¹⁶⁹ Wast "posed even more of a threat due to his considerable influence and popularity as a writer and novelist by propagating anti-Semitism" in his novels.¹⁷⁰ In contrast to the theologically inspired works of Meinvielle or Franceschi, which may have only appealed to a specific sector of the population, Wast's literary output appealed to a general readership. His position as the director of Argentina's National Library also afforded him an air of legitimacy, and, according to Allan Metz, the opportunity to doctor the library's contents to serve his own ideological beliefs, to the exclusion of those of his rivals or those he deemed "too liberal."¹⁷¹

In his 1935 novel *Buenos Aires, futura Babilonia*, Wast presents a dystopian storyline in which Jewish "imperialism" turns Buenos Aires into the capital of a future Israeli kingdom. He wrote that "la patria real del judío moderno, no es la vieja Palestina; es todo el mundo, que un día

¹⁶⁶ Metz, "Gustavo Juan Franceschi and the Jews," 211.

¹⁶⁷ Allan Metz, "Hugo Wast: The Anti-Semitic Director of Argentina's National Library, 1931-1955" *Libraries and Culture* 27, no. 1 (1992): 37

¹⁶⁸ Metz, "Hugo Wast: The Anti-Semitic Director of Argentina's National Library," 37.

¹⁶⁹ Ruth Sedgwick, "Hugo Wast, Argentina's Most Popular Novelist," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 9, no. 1 (1929): 116.

¹⁷⁰ Metz, "Hugo Wast: The Antisemitic Director of Argentina's National Library," 40.

¹⁷¹ Metz, "Hugo Wast: The Antisemitic Director of Argentina's National Library," 39.

u otro espera ver sometido al centro de un rey de la sangre de David, que será el Anticristo.”¹⁷²

His condemnation of the Jews has obvious parallels with editorials by Meinvielle, Balda and Franceschi in *Criterio*.¹⁷³ In fact, *Criterio* shows evidence of dialogue and camaraderie between Franceschi and Wast during the 1930s. Franceschi included Wast’s works in the magazine’s book review section entitled “Bibliografía,” in which the Catholic cleric reviewed recent publications, including *El Kahal*. Of this most famous Wast novel Franceschi wrote:

Hugo Wast se convenció de que no podía permanecer callado: no ignora su influencia muy real, atestiguada por la venta de sus libros, sabe que quien maneja ya la palabra, ya la pluma falta a su deber si, en horas como las presentes, no pone una u otra al servicio de las causas que cree justas. Y quiso entonces mostrar toda la gravedad de la amenaza de desargentización que se cierne sobre el país.¹⁷⁴

Franceschi’s celebration of Wast’s work as an act of national valor against perceived social threats suggests that these men shared a specific worldview that they manifested and promulgated through different mediums: Franceschi through his weekly periodical and his position as a respected cleric, and Wast through his widely-appealing novels. While the explicit purpose of *Criterio* and many of Franceschi’s other works was to diffuse throughout the Argentine populace conservative Catholic social thought—albeit imbued with antisemitic tendencies—Wast’s work accomplished the same goal, but implicitly, without the same obvious intellectualism or theological backing. Instead, Wast propagated his anti-Jewish messages through his reputation as an entertaining author with a large, popular literary output.¹⁷⁵

Franceschi was not the only outward admirer of Wast’s writing. Wast’s works were translated into a variety of languages, including English, French, Italian and German, permitting

¹⁷² Hugo Wast, *Buenos Aires, futura Babilonia* (Buenos Aires, Editores de Hugo Wast: 1935), 16.

¹⁷³ Interestingly, Manuel Gálvez openly criticized Wast’s antisemitic literature. After voicing his concerns with Wast’s violent antisemitic imagery, Gálvez’s works were never again published in Franceschi’s *Criterio*.

¹⁷⁴ Gustavo Franceschi, “Bibliografía: *El Kahal* - Oro por Hugo Wast,” *Criterio* 26, no. 382 (1935): 203.

¹⁷⁵ Metz, “Hugo Wast: The Anti-Semitic Director of Argentina’s National Library,” 36.

his novels to reach international audiences. Hailed as “the most popular novelist of America”—clearly an exaggeration—in 1949, Wast was also referred to as “without a doubt the most well-known Argentine writer” outside of Argentina.¹⁷⁶ In 1983, on the centennial of Wast’s birth, the Ministry of Education in Argentina published “To Hugo Wast, in Appreciation,” in recognition of his literary achievements.¹⁷⁷ Wast’s widespread recognition demonstrates that antisemitic rhetoric did not exist only within society’s intellectual and clerical strata, but also permeated the nation’s popular culture and canon of celebrated literary works.

PARAMILITARY GROUPS

As the 20th century progressed, extremist paramilitary groups on the left and right emerged either in support of or in direct conflict against the highly divisive politics of Juan Domingo Perón (1895-1974). Rightist groups, both Peronist and Anti-Peronist, saw themselves as “main advocates of a united nationalist front against” communism, Judaism, and masonry, three perceived enemies of the Argentine state.¹⁷⁸ The Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista (ALN) emerged under the leadership of Juan Queraltó as a particularly virulent force against these national enemies. The ALN, like the nationalists of the Infamous Decade, seemingly drew inspiration from the anti-democratic legacy of Juan Manuel de Rosas. The paramilitary group adopted the slogan “Mazorca, mazorca, judíos a la horca” (Jews to the gallows), a reference to La Mazorca, Rosas’ private police and execution squad during his reign as governor.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Metz, “Hugo Wast: The Anti-Semitic Director of Argentina’s National Library,” 37.

¹⁷⁷ Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, 48.

¹⁷⁸ Victor A. Mirelman. “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” *Jewish Social Studies* 9, no. 3 (1975): 210-211.

¹⁷⁹ Mirelman. “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 211. While in some Latin American nations the word *mazorca* refers to “cob” or “ear” (as in corn), the word carries an explicitly political connotation in Argentina.

One of the reasons for so many ideological parallels between Nacionalismo of the Infamous Decade and the political messages of ALN is that Father Meinvielle participated directly in the leadership of this and other similar groups. Meinvielle, along with other Catholic clergy like Father Dr. David Nuñez and Father Virgilio Filippo, advocated for the creation of a united nationalist front against communism, socialism and masonry, all of which were associated with Judaism.¹⁸⁰

The militant Catholic student organization known as Tacuara also made reference to the infamous 19th century Argentine strongman, taking its name from “the bamboo pikes that were carried more than a century ago by supporters of the tyrant Manuel Rosas.”¹⁸¹ The reimagination of this weapon over 100 years after its use demonstrates the role of historical revisionism and reimagination in the creation of these paramilitary groups. Tacuara’s slogan, “patriotismo sí, judíos no,” succinctly encapsulates the rhetoric popularized in the 1930s, which claimed that being Jewish was inherently incompatible with being a loyal Argentine citizen.¹⁸² Unlike the nationalists of the 1930s, Tacuara did not limit its antisemitism to rhetoric, but instead carried out “a large number of unlawful acts against Jews and Jewish institutions” during the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁸³

Guardia Restauradora Nacionalista (GRN), a splinter group of Tacuara, formed on October 6, 1960 after its founding members accused Tacuara of being infiltrated by “Marxists, Trotskyists, communists, Fidelists and atheists.”¹⁸⁴ Meinvielle served as the GRN’s spiritual

¹⁸⁰ Mirelman, “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 209.

¹⁸¹ Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires,” 217.

¹⁸² Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires,” 217.

¹⁸³ Mirelman, “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 210.

¹⁸⁴ Mirelman, “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 210.

advisor, undoubtedly indoctrinating its reactionary, militant members with the same ideology that filled the pages of *Criterio* in the 1930s.

Despite participating in episodes of violence against Jews, ALN, Tacuara and GRN were treated with leniency under Argentina's military rule from 1966 to 1973. Since these right-wing groups perpetrated violence against radical leftist groups—like the Montoneros—the conservative military government often turned a blind eye to antisemitic violence in hopes that these paramilitary groups would keep leftist ideas in check.¹⁸⁵ Just as Franceschi, Meinvielle, Balda, Assaf and Gálvez advocated a homogenous and mythologized Argentine identity during the Infamous Decade, the Argentine military stressed the necessity of “Civilización Occidental y Cristiana” in its 1966 *Acta de la Revolución Argentina*. This “ideal,” which became somewhat of a slogan for the military rule, implicitly defines any non-Western tradition and any non-Christian (i.e. Jewish) citizens as inherently objectionable.¹⁸⁶

After the formation of the 1976 military junta, led by Jorge Rafael Videla (1925-2013), the antisemitic nationalism fomented among clerics, intellectuals, politicians, paramilitary forces and regular Argentines that began in the 1930s provided the ideological foundation for the capture, torture and execution of a disproportionate number of Jews in clandestine Argentine detention camps.¹⁸⁷

JEWES AND THE DICTATORSHIP (1976-1983)

The antisemitic animus rampant within the Nacionalismo movement of the 1930s and paramilitary groups of the 1950s and 1960s seemingly echoed within the clandestine

¹⁸⁵ Mirelman, “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 211.

¹⁸⁶ Mirelman, “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 211.

¹⁸⁷ Jorge Rafael Videla served as a senior commander in the Argentine Army and rose to power as the nation's right-wing dictator after the 1976 coup d'état that overthrew the government of Isabel Perón. Videla was prosecuted and convicted for war crimes in 1985 after Argentina returned to civilian government and eventually died in civilian prison.

concentration camps of the military dictatorship. Although Jews represented less than one percent of the Argentine population in 1976, between 10 and 15 percent of the estimated 30,000 murdered or disappeared victims of the dictatorship were Jewish.¹⁸⁸ The extremist rhetoric of the Infamous Decade “was once more integrated into [...] European strains of fascism” in the decades following WWII, causing antisemitic sympathies to take root with “much greater intensity among the military than among civilian groups.”¹⁸⁹ Under the guise of National Reorganization, the Argentine military waged an internal war against the same enemies identified within the works of Franceschi, Meinvielle, Balda, Assaf and Gálvez.

According to Argentine concentration camp survivor Pilar Calveiro, “parte de la idea de que el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional no fue una extraña perversión, algo ajeno a la sociedad argentina y a su historia, sino que forma parte de su trama, está unido a ella y arraiga en su modalidad en las características de poder establecido.”¹⁹⁰ The ideology that animated the human rights violations under Videla did not spontaneously invent itself in the 1970s. Instead, the atrocities of the Argentine dictatorship are seemingly the outcome of a weaponized national identity, wielded against populations deemed alien and therefore dangerous.

Jacobo Timerman, a Jewish Argentine journalist and survivor of clandestine torture and imprisonment under the military junta, provides testimony of the antisemitic fervor among the guards in concentration camps in his memoir *Preso sin nombre, celda sin numero*. Timerman writes that “la obsesión de la mente totalitaria es su necesidad de que el mundo resulte claro y nítido,” suggesting that any anomaly within that rigidly imagined worldview is perceived as a

¹⁸⁸ Federico Finchelstein, “From Holocaust Trauma to the Dirty War,” *Historical Reflections* 41, no. 3 (2015): 48.

¹⁸⁹ Finchelstein, “From Holocaust Trauma to the Dirty War,” 55.; Mirelman, “Attitudes towards Jews in Argentina,” 206.

¹⁹⁰ Pilar Calveiro, *Poder y desaparición: los campos de concentración en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1998), 15-16.

threatening deviation.¹⁹¹ Timerman’s analysis of the totalitarian state harkens back to Meinvielle’s strict Thomist worldview and Gálvez’s paranoid concerns about the preservation of the ideal Argentine identity.

Although the historical context of the 1970s and 1980s, when compared to those of the 1930s and 1940s, presented new perceived threats for radical nationalists, Timerman argues that the extreme right, regardless of time period or political context, “puede emplear el odio en su relación con el judío sin alterar su objetivo final de lucha por una sociedad totalitaria de exterminio de la izquierda o de las formas democráticas de vida.”¹⁹² For Timerman and other Jewish victim-survivors of antisemitic violence in Argentina, including author of *Una sola muerte numerosa* Nora Strejilevich, antisemitism was not just an attitude adopted within the concentration camps, but rather a national tradition, entangled within the layers of Argentine identity. Historian Louis Irving Horowitz also concludes that “slogans of national liberation, national honor, anti-Yanquism, anti-capitalism, anti-socialism” – like those popularized during la Década Infame—“tend to fuse in the myth of the patria—and the cement for this myth is often the Jew.”¹⁹³

The story of antisemitism in 20th century Argentina centers around the corruption and modification of national identity to justify scapegoating, alienation and violence. In the process of mythologizing the national memory, nationalists also created a tradition in which fearmongering, conspiratorial paranoia, and targeted threats became a legitimate means to exert control over Argentine society.

¹⁹¹ Jacobo Timerman, *Preso sin nombre, celda sin número* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 200), 115.

¹⁹² Timerman, *Preso sin nombre, celda sin número*, 82.

¹⁹³ Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires,” 218.

CODA

The purpose of this project is not to villainize the Argentine culture as uniquely antisemitic or hateful, nor is it to suggest that antisemitism is a phenomenon limited to one particular time or place. Instead, this project serves as a case study on the creation of categories of belonging and unbelonging through historical revisionism and the weaponization of national myths.

This project, like the historiographies of Franceschi, Meinvielle, Balda, Gálvez and Assaf, is inherently selective in that a historiography cannot adequately capture every event, moment, and nuance of the past. Here, though, is where the similarities begin and end. This historiography first diverges from that of the Argentine Nationalists in terms of purpose; whereas the antisemitic national myth acted as an ideological weapon wielded against Jews, my study of these rhetorical strategies intends instead to understand and learn from the political and social implications of this nationalist myth.

Just as Mary Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein assembled his own monster from a mismatch of decaying body parts, adherents to the Nacionalismo movement unearthed the remnants of antiquated traditions and stitched them together to form a mythical and weaponized identity.¹⁹⁴ This conglomeration of philosophical, theological, and political ideologies that formed the basis of antisemitic nationalism is, in part, a product of the trans-Atlantic exchange of antiliberal and

¹⁹⁴ Mary Shelley (1797-1851) was an English Gothic novelist whose most famous work is *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, originally published in 1818.

antimodern ideas. Much like the “reefers” (refrigerated ships) of the late 19th century transported the quintessential Argentine export – beef – to hungry consumers in Europe, select portions of Catholic and Iberian ideas and traditions traversed the Atlantic – as well as crossed many centuries – to reach their destination in the pages of *Criterion* and other antisemitic publications during the 1930s. This intercontinental ideological monster – having come to life and become weaponized in the minds and hearts of some extremist intellectuals, clergy, and military men – had devastating implications for Argentina’s Jewish population during the twentieth century.

When a historical narrative becomes weaponized – that is, used to influence political or social opinions in a way that degrades the ontological equality of a certain group – it loses its intellectual integrity. The purpose of history should not be to promote specific malicious ideologies for nefarious political ends, but rather to foster greater understanding of the past in the quest for an improved future. History should serve as its own end, providing students of the past and citizens of the present the opportunity to think freely about people, places, events and ideas in order to make well-informed judgements that bolster inclusivity in the democratic order. Weaponized history is, conversely, an authoritarian perversion of this quest for understanding. Nationalist mythology aims at the othering of certain perceived enemies for the improvement of the social and political status of the select few, the opposite of true history’s more democratic intentions.

While historians have the ability to vigorously challenge the mythification of history, they are also faced with the challenge of being human, which arguably includes the primal instinct to see differences and even threats in others. Perhaps, due to a primal human instinct, there are innumerable categories on the basis of which certain groups are targeted as the enemy, the problem, or the outlier. This case study on the othering of the Jews in Argentina may provide a

theoretical basis for the study of how mythicized histories are employed against individuals and groups based on gender, religion, race, immigration status, etc. Perhaps the only way of combating this human tendency to create the “other” is to excavate the components that make up a weaponized historical myth and understand their unadulterated role, devoid of politicizing and hateful interpretations.

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