

THE IMPACT OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR ON ARGENTINE NATIONALIST
INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

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Introduction

From 1936 to 1939 nearly every edition of *La Nación*, Argentina's leading newspaper, covered the Spanish Civil War. Names of the dead filled the second page and families probably scoured the paper searching for relatives among those listed. Argentina had been a Spanish colony and many immigrants arriving in Argentina were Spanish, particularly from the province of Galicia and the Basque region in northern Spain.¹ This heritage and continual close ties with the *madre patria* made the war especially important and personal to Argentines. The most lasting effect of the Spanish Civil War in Argentina, however, was its influence on the growth and development of nationalism. The strongest link between Spain and Argentina, the bond that united nationalist movements in both countries, was the need to maintain Catholicism as the backbone of Hispanic and Hispanic-American identity. In the face of many different forms of social upheaval--a new Spanish Republic run by a leftist Popular Front, global economic crisis, widespread pessimism about the future, coups d'état in Argentina--the one constant thread between these two countries, for conservatives, was their Catholic heritage.

In my thesis I argue that Argentine nationalist intellectuals developed a militant and aggressive intellectual movement. These intellectuals promoted Catholicity in every aspect of society and looked to Spain as their model.² Argentine nationalists obsessed over the preservation of Catholicism in the intellectual culture, the structure of government, and leadership styles. The Spanish Civil War was a gruesome backdrop of a

¹ Mark Falcoff and Frederick B. Pike, *The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939: American Hemispheric Perspectives* (University of Nebraska: Lincoln, 1982) 311.

² Unless otherwise noted, I have translated the quotations from these Argentine intellectuals. (Spanish to English)

perceived “global crisis of identity,” that inspired and invigorated Argentine nationalists.³ Both Argentine and Spanish nationalists believed that their traditional and Catholic lifestyle could evaporate from Hispanic identity, should their enemies triumph in the Spanish Civil War.

The thesis focuses on three powerful currents in Argentine nationalism in the 1930s that arose from this Catholic resurgence: 1) efforts to strengthen Hispanic identity, 2) an emphasis on adopting a corporatist state, and, 3) a fascination with the merits of a fascist state to combat communism. Although other factors influenced nationalism in Argentina during the 1930s--such as the rise of the fascist German and Italian states--the Spanish Civil War was a climactic period when Catholic nationalism could be freely debated as a part of Hispanic-American identity. Argentine conservatives used this state of conflict in Spain to unite their followers and warn of a similar danger facing Argentina. Catholic nationalists had effective reason and merit in their arguments, for if such a catastrophe could happen in Spain, the colonial mother of Argentina, the same political collapse could occur in Latin America as well.

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms nationalism and Catholic nationalism are used interchangeably. Conservative Argentine nationalists could not separate nationalism from Catholicism. These nationalists believed that Roman Catholicism was the central and traditional guide to thought and a bulwark against radical upheaval of the social order. Nationalism was based on Catholicity and separated Spanish and Argentine nationalism from other movements occurring in the world such as nationalism in Germany. Although some elements were similar, *criollismo* and *hispanidad* were

³ Dr. Carlos Ibarguren, “El Crisis mundial es ideologica y espiritual” *La Nación*, January 27, 1936.

founded on the austere virtues of the traditional Hispanic, exalting paternalism, the valor of Argentines *procéres* and the stability of the traditional family.⁴

Between 1936 and 1939, Catholic nationalism moved from the periphery to the center stage of Argentine political and intellectual debate. For the nationalists, the war highlighted their hopes and fears. The war symbolized their own political struggle and the outcome of the war determined the future of Argentine Catholic nationalists. Father Julio Meinvielle, a priest and a Catholic nationalist, was deeply affected by the Spanish Civil War. Meinvielle exalted the battles raging in Spain, claiming the Spanish nationalists were launching a “purifying war under the Cross.”⁵ Argentine nationalists embraced Spanish nationalist values as their own. For their Argentine counterparts, the Spanish nationalists embodied and protected the essence of *Spanishness*, the tradition and heritage, from the onslaught of “alien” ideologies, such as liberalism and communism.

Although the conservative nationalist movement existed in Argentina prior to 1936, the Spanish Civil War invigorated Argentine nationalists with a new purpose and greater visibility. Differing from their predecessors, the nationalists of the late 1930s were influenced by trans-Atlantic intellectual movements as well as a need to protect and promote “Argentiness” in society, based on what they viewed as a shared heritage. Nationalism centered on a “love of order, hierarchy, corporatism, militant Catholicism, landed estates and the hatred of liberalism, leftism, feminism, Freemasonry and Jews and

⁴ Ronald C. Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina, 1931-1947* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1992) 130. *Procéres* are most often military heroes who lived during the revolution against Spain and who helped create the Argentine state. *Criollismo* is the preoccupation in intellectual thought with native Latin American ideals, often used in a nationalistic manner.

⁵ Julio Meinvielle, *Un juicio católico sobre los problemas nuevos de la política*, (Gladium: Buenos Aires 1937.) 38-45, 52.

other foreigners.”⁶ Nationalism encompassed a wide array of conservative beliefs, but the Spanish Civil War helped Argentine nationalists forge a more unified message around their core beliefs.

Even as war broke out in Spain, Argentina was positioned for an extreme nationalist movement. Conservative voters in Argentina held a long list of grievances against their liberal counterparts. Voting reform, under the Saenz Peña Law of 1912, allowed all native born men to vote. As a result of the law the conservative regime disintegrated and a newly invigorated liberal political party, the *Unión Cívica Radical*, took office from 1916-1930. The Great Depression, however, abruptly ended fourteen years of liberal rule. In 1930 Argentina experienced a military coup that replaced President-elect Hipólito Irigoyen with the extremely conservative General José Félix Uriburu. Although the Great Depression of the 1930s was less severe in Argentina than in other industrialized countries it still brought a temporary halt to economic growth and with that, an uneasiness and fear for the future.⁷ The “Infamous Decade” or “Conservative Restoration,” lasting from 1930-1943, teemed with reactionary conservatism and suppressed the once predominant liberal movement.⁸ During this period Argentina had eight presidents, six of whom were military generals.⁹ These generals were conservative and militaristic, open to the influence of a nationalist movement.

⁶ Sandra McGee Deutsch, “The Right in the *Decáda Infame*, 1930-1943,” *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910-Present*, Ed. Ronald H. Dolkart, Sandra McGee Deutsch (Wilmington: SR Books, 1993) xxi.

⁷ Newton, 129.

⁸ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 90.

⁹ Mary Ruth Harlan, “The Relations of Juan Domingo Perón with the Catholic Church”, (M.A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1967) 30.

The political landscape was even more volatile in Spain than in Argentina. Following the deposal of King Alfonso XIII in 1931, the Spanish Republic was founded. To many Spanish conservatives, the Republic seemed to be drifting farther and farther to the left, particularly after the Popular Front's electoral victory in early 1936. In July of the same year, General Francisco Franco attempted a coup to topple the anti-clerical and anti-landowning Popular Front. The coup was unsuccessful and began three years of war in Spain. The failure to take Madrid led Franco to prepare for a long battle. To consolidate his popular base, Franco aligned with the Falange, a highly influential Spanish fascist organization. The Falange espoused illiberalism and authoritarianism and successfully enlisted the power of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰ Nationalists in Spain and Argentina alike looked to Franco as the protector of their core values and the champion of traditional Spain.

The period of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) witnessed a flourishing of nationalist intellectual development and is important for two reasons. The first is that the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed the development of modern, right-wing doctrine in Argentina coinciding with the phenomenon of fascism in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹ The rise of extreme nationalism in Argentina, based on Catholicity, reflects the impact of Western European intellectual tendencies towards reactionary conservatism and nationalism. The influence of these movements in Latin America is often overlooked because most Latin American nations did not become

¹⁰ "Spanish Civil War" *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History*. Jan Palmowski. Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Vanderbilt University. 10 April 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t46.e2211>
"Falange Española Tradicionalista" *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History*. Jan Palmowski. Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Vanderbilt University. 10 April 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t46.e791>

¹¹ Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 2.

directly involved in the military struggle. Yet these rightist intellectual currents prospered in Argentina during the 1930s, and survived in the post World War II period even as they disappeared from Western Europe.

The rise of nationalism was also fundamental to the development of Argentine politics in the following decades. The nationalists grew from an estimated 30,000 adherents in 1933 to upwards of 300,000 followers in 1940, out of a total population of about 13 million.¹² Catholic Action (*Acción Católica Argentina*) was founded in 1931 in order to cultivate lay Catholic leaders and was another incarnation of the Catholic nationalist ideology. By 1943, there were over 98,000 formal members of the organization, and several hundred thousand more adherents.¹³ The numbers, though, are deceptive. The majority of nationalists were centered in Buenos Aires, the cultural, political and intellectual capital of Argentina. Nationalists also created a strong base of civilian and military support within the government elite, cementing the movement in governing power, extending influence beyond its numbers. These links to the armed forces and “members of the ruling coalition” helped Nationalists “acquire government resources and avoid persecution.”¹⁴ As a result, Catholic nationalists were disproportionately influential. This nationalist infiltration of the highest ranks of religious and political institutions would remain throughout the 1940s and continue to influence Argentine politics for decades to come.

¹² Newton, 13;.

Alberto Ciria, Parties and Power in Modern Argentina, 1930-1946 (New York: SUNY Press, 1974) 57. Ciria writes that the total population of Buenos Aires in 1936 was 3,457,000 and comprised 27% of the total population of Argentina. I used his data to find the total population of Argentina in 1936. This population includes all ages and not just those of voting age.

¹³ Michael A. Burdick, For God and Fatherland: Religion and Politics in Argentina (Boulder: NetLibrary, 1999).

¹⁴ Deutsch, Las Derechas, 245-247.

Despite its significance, the impact of the Spanish Civil War on the Catholic nationalist movement has received little scholarly attention. The majority of scholarly publication on Argentine Catholic nationalism focuses on the foundations of the movement, and largely ignores the importance of the late 1930s, specifically the relationship between nationalism in Spain and Argentina.¹⁵ Other scholars have focused on the Peronist years (1946-55) as the pinnacle of nationalist power, overlooking the importance of the nationalist movement preceding Peron's rise to power. Despite a small pool of scholars who focus on Argentine nationalism, there are a couple of major figures whose works have shaped my thesis, aiding my understanding of not only hispanidad and corporatism, but also the political beliefs of Argentine nationalists.¹⁶ While there are brief treatments of the Spanish Civil war in these publications, no one directly addresses the importance of the war to nationalist ideology.

My thesis expands on suggestions that the events in Spain of the 1930s were important to the development and success of nationalist ideology in Argentina. I argue that the Spanish Civil War transformed the power and visibility of the nationalist movement because of Spain's cultural ties with Argentina, one of the preeminent intellectual centers of Latin America at the time. As Che Guevara's best friend and traveling companion, Carlos "Calica" Ferrer noted in his memoir, "The civil war that would soon unfold in that country [Spain] would divide Alta Gracia's society, just as it

¹⁵ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*.

¹⁶ Rock *Authoritarian Argentina*, 1; David Rock "Intellectual Precursors of Conservative Nationalism in Argentina, 1900-1927," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, (62:1987): 7; Howard J. Wiarda, *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America-Revisited* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2004); Frederick Pike *Hispanismo 1898-1936: Spanish Conservatives and Liberals and their Relations with Spanish America* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971).

would the rest of Argentina, teeming with Spanish immigrants and their descendents, into Republicans, anti-Fascists and Falangists.”¹⁷

I focus on three major characteristics shared among Spanish nationalists, united by the common thread of Catholicity, that when applied to Argentine nationalism strengthened the power and visibility of the movement. The first chapter examines on the early twentieth century cross-Atlantic cultural ties called *hispanismo*, and its transition into a new intellectual movement, *hispanidad*. Both intellectual currents embraced the belief that Argentina and Spain shared a common heritage, common traditions, and shared racial characteristics. With the emergence of the *hispanidad* movement in the mid-1930s, however, emphasis shifted from shared customs, to shared institutions, such as the Catholic Church, and how these systems shaped the nature of government and social hierarchy. This shift in perceptions of the relationship between Argentina and Spain enabled Argentine nationalists to align their own beliefs with those of the Spanish nationalists.

The second characteristic, discussed in chapter two, details the importance of corporatism to both Argentine and Spanish nationalism during the Spanish Civil War. Corporatism is broadly defined as the organization of society around functional groups--military, business, the church, organized labor--rather than individuals and instead of genuine pluralism, autonomy, and freedom of association, the organization, regulation, and *control* of these groups comes under state authority. For Iberian and Argentine nationalists, corporatism was the third “ism” another choice for a system of government

¹⁷ Carlos “Calica” Ferrer, Becoming Che: Guevara’s Second and Final Trip through Latin America, trans. Sarah L. Smith (Marea International: Buenos Aires, 2005) 22-23.

apart from liberalism or communism.¹⁸ Corporatism, nationalists believed, was a governing system that had long existed in both Argentina and Spain, in class relations as well as the Catholic Church; therefore, it was the organic form of government for these two countries.

For chapter three, I use as a point of comparison the emergence of fascism. Fascism was never uniformly accepted as an appropriate form of government by Catholic nationalists. Many Argentine nationalists, however, considered the merits of a fascist state and admired Spanish fascists' dedication to religion, social and political hierarchy and the maintenance of tradition. Nationalist intellectuals believed that fascism could be transformed into a vehicle for authoritarian rule based on the principles of Catholicism and the structure of the Church. Fascism, to these nationalists, was the only answer to the fear of a communist takeover. The merits of a fascist state was one of the most debated aspects of nationalism, and while most nationalists considered Italy and Germany's versions of fascism unacceptable, some believed that Spanish fascism could be a functional and beneficial form of government if it blended Catholicism with the State. Sympathy toward fascism was also the greatest obstacle for Argentine nationalists to overcome in their efforts to win broader support and it became the issue that liberals and moderates most frequently attacked and denounced. Additionally, this attraction to fascism made Catholic nationalism less appealing to many Argentines and helped create a perception that conservative nationalism was a radical movement.

To understand how these changing nationalist currents influenced Argentine society during the late 1930s, I will examine how Catholicism emerged as the centerpiece

¹⁸ Howard J Wiarda "Whatever Happened to Corporatism and Authoritarianism in Latin America?" Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America-Revisited Ed. Howard J. Wiarda (Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 2004) 3.

of both Hispanic and Hispanic-American nationalist intellectuals. Throughout the first three decades both Argentine and Spanish intellectuals made a conscious effort to readopt a relationship with one another, believing that such a strong, transatlantic connection would mutually benefit both nations. The retrieval of a relationship between Spain and Argentina is bracketed by two important wars for Spain; the Spanish-American War and the Spanish Civil War. By 1936, changes in the perception of Hispanic identity would greatly influence the nationalist movement in both Spain and Argentina, and reaffirm the importance of Catholicism in all aspects of public life.

Chapter 1: Reshaping Iberian-American Cultural Ties

“The entire world is focused on the Spanish War. I follow tradition and direct myself to the Spanish public, to the Hispanic-American nations and to all those who sympathize and understand that the Spanish cause is that of one civilization and one culture...”

General Francisco Franco. January 2, 1937¹

While cultural links were omnipresent between Spain and Argentina, the nature of these bonds would undergo radical changes during the 1930s. Emerging from the idea of a shared past, a new intellectual movement called *hispanidad* promoted Catholic nationalist ideologies and bolstered support for reform of the Argentine state. Hispanidad was an intellectual movement that affirmed a relationship with Spain based on the tradition of shared societal, political and religious institutions, chiefly the Catholic Church. The intellectual movement associated Argentine nationalists not only with the beliefs of their conservative Spanish counterparts, but also with their struggle throughout the Spanish Civil War. The violence in Spain provided a concrete example of the disaster that could strike Argentina should the public abandon their Hispanic traditions and heritage centered around Catholicism.

With its relatively small mestizo and indigenous population, Argentina was particularly receptive to the Hispanidad movement.² Additionally, by 1936, an estimated 1.5 and 2 million persons, roughly 15% of the nation’s population, consisted of recent Spanish immigrants. This was greater in proportion to the whole population than in any

¹ Speech by General Francisco Franco as it appeared in the Argentine newspaper *La Nación*, published in Buenos Aires “Un Mensaje de General Francisco Franco al Pueblo Hispanoamericano” *La Nacion* (2 January 1937), 2.

² *Mestizo* means “mixed race” and refers to a mixed indigenous and Hispanic heritage.

Spanish American republic except Cuba.³ With the populace receptive to Spanish culture, it was also open to the influence of Iberian intellectual movements. To understand what made the hispanidad movement so atypical, however, we must first examine the origins of hispanidad, the reemergence of this Spanish influence on Argentine society, and then its transition into the later hispanidad movement.

The Rebirth of Hispanism on the Spanish American Continent

At the end of Spanish-American War in 1898, Iberian power declined dramatically and the United States emerged as the most influential nation in the Western Hemisphere. Fear of Spanish cultural imperialism evaporated on the Latin American continent, creating an opportunity for a new trans-Atlantic intellectual movement called hispanism. After its devastating loss, Spanish politicians and intellectuals revitalized efforts to strengthen trans-Atlantic cultural and political connections. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, Spanish and Latin American intellectuals reexamined their mutual relationships, identifying a common trait: Hispanism. These intellectuals believed that through the course of history Spaniards had developed a culture that distinguished them from all other peoples. Hispanism also assumed that Spaniards, in discovering and colonizing America, transplanted their distinct characteristics and traditions to the New World creating an unbreakable bond between the two continents.⁴ Not only was Hispanism a cultural movement, but it also reshaped ideas about the nature of society and government in Latin America. The Hispanism movement grew throughout

³ Falcoff and Pike, 291.

⁴ Frederick Pike, Hispanismo 1898-1936: Spanish Conservatives and Liberals and their Relations with Spanish America (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 133.

the first three decades of the twentieth century and by the 1930s played a dominant role in Spanish and Spanish-American intellectual thought.

Many of Spain's prolific intellectual figures were proponents of Hispanism. Men such as the philosophers Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset came to South America to popularize their ideas on the continent. Ortega y Gasset was an extremely important intellectual figure both in Spain and in Latin America. The philosopher frequently traveled to Latin America, specifically Buenos Aires, to engage in intellectual debates, discuss his latest publications, and to advance Hispanism. Additionally, many of his writings were published in popular literary magazines such as *Sur*, as well as the Sunday sections of major newspapers such as *La Nación*. During the Spanish Civil War, Ortega y Gasset went into exile and spent much of his time in Argentina. Although Ortega y Gasset supported the Spanish Republic, Catholic nationalists used his discourses on the interconnectedness of Spanish and Argentine culture to demonstrate a plight shared with the Spanish nationalists.⁵

Ortega y Gasset saw, in Argentina, Spanish traits and values even with its large influx of Italian immigrants and obsession with French culture. Ortega y Gasset argued that, "The Spain that Argentina was endures then, whether this is desired or not, in the most subterranean depths of your being, and it persists there tacitly, creating its mysterious chemical effects."⁶ Although a liberal and leftist, Ortega y Gasset's notion of an inescapable Spanishness in Latin America would be extremely influential on Catholic nationalist beliefs. By the mid-1930s, Argentina, the cultural capital of Spanish South

⁵ Andrew Dobson, *An Introduction to the Politics and Philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

⁶ José Ortega y Gasset, "Discourse at Museo de Arte Decorativo of Buenos Aires" November 16, 1939, cited in Deutsch, *Las Derechas*, 231

America with its intellectuals ever-focused on European intellectual trends, latched onto the idea of a common Spanish *raza*.⁷

Coupled with these emerging intellectual movements, Spain and Argentina had strong traditional bonds, created through economic activity, popular culture and even through things as mundane as common cuisine. By the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, as one writer stated, Argentines, “cooked with Spanish olive oil, bathed with Spanish soap, ate Spanish ham.” Spanish, too, were the “sardines, the cognac, the bacalao, the olives... the garbanzo beans, the lentils and chorizo sausages.” Argentines also enjoyed theatrical performances by famous Spanish actors such as Margarita Xirgú, and frequented plays by authors such as Federico García Lorca.⁸

Argentine intellectuals embraced not only these cultural ties but also the Spanish attempts to reestablish cultural connections. Intellectuals focused on the interrelation between Argentine and Spanish traditions. Juan Emiliano Carulla, a well known Argentine intellectual and Catholic nationalist, believed that language was the foundation from which Spanish- American ties were built. Carulla wrote in his book, *Genio de la Argentina*,

The interchange of ideas with the rest of the world existed since the beginning of [Argentine] nationality, but the Argentine formed based on the Spanish invention of nationality, along with the contribution of diverse intellectual and spiritual currents, so that, in the course of time, the vernacular would fuse.⁹

This common Spanish language was the basis for not only a relationship with Spain, but also a basis from which to consider other cultures and ideas.

⁷ *Raza* translates to race.

⁸ Falcoff and Pike, 292.

⁹ Juan Emiliano Carulla, *Genio de la Argentina, deberes frente a la crisis político social de nuestro pueblo* (Buenos Aires: Distribudores, R. Medina, 1943) 71.

Spanish publications and Argentine critiques that appeared throughout the 1930s highlighted this new emphasis of a common Spanish raza. Manuel Gálvez wrote a book titled, *España y algunos españoles*, a collection of essays and literary critiques, the last one published in 1945. Gálvez was an Argentine who published for the Argentine market. His collection of essays helped readers to understand Spain and their connection with the *madre tierra* and also the intellectual currents prevalent in Spain. Gálvez praised the revisionist historians of Spain, such as Maurice Legendre, saying of the Spaniard, “Legendre’s work is a grand book. It’s a work that is deep, noble, rich in ideas, full of suggestions, valiant and complete, and exalts in the love of the true Spain, the Catholic and traditional Spain.”¹⁰ Publications like Gálvez’s, that summarized and critiqued the writings of Spanish intellectuals, influenced Argentine literary consumers. By publishing only selected essays, Gálvez filtered the ideas that shaped Argentine intellectual culture. By discussing Spanish essays and emphasizing the relevance to Argentina, Argentine intellectuals promoted nationalist beliefs based on a shared culture with Spain.

The Hispanism movement also reflected many internal changes in Spain. After nearly one hundred years of liberal and democratic tendencies, Spain in the late 1920s and early 1930s experienced a backlash of conservative intellectual thought. Liberalism in Spain meant a social philosophy advocating the importance of the individual, belief in some form of parliamentary or democratic system of government, and was often associated with a shift to a more secular society.¹¹ For conservatives, liberalism

¹⁰ Manuel Gálvez, “La España integral de Legendre,” *España y algunos españoles* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huarpes S.A., 1945) 59.

¹¹ Howard J. Wiarda and Margaret MacLeish Mott, *Catholic Roots and Democratic Flowers: Political systems in Spain and Portugal* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001) 43.

represented the epitome of the social ills of the modern world: egoist individualism, materialism, the breakdown of community, and the removal of religion and the sacred from cultural and social life.

Foreign commentators publishing in Argentine newspapers also detailed the unique bond between Spain and Latin America. These essays, however, did not always cast the relationship in a positive light. Regarding the bond between Latin American and Spanish power, the French intellectual André Sigfried wrote,

The tonality of the Hispanic-Portuguese in Latin America is indelible. The basis of character is Spanish and not Italian. The civilization is Latin, in contrast with the Anglo-Saxon civilizations of the North. This opposition of Spanish against Anglo-Saxon separates the psychology of South America from the North... What are the profound differences that mark this contrast? I see it as above all the Catholicism of South America that is ceremonial and poetic, penetrating certain spiritual threats. Next I see the family, whose social power integrally conserved the Latin part of the New World.¹²

Sigfried was a foreigner who wrote and published this article specifically for *La Nación*, the largest and most widely read newspaper in Argentina. Sigfried saw the Spanishness in Argentines, but regarded Catholicism and strict social and political order as a deterrent to nationalism. Catholic nationalists, to the contrary, viewed these exact traits as positive influences on their culture, which made them distinct from their Northern neighbors and uniquely shaped Latin American culture.

A New Intellectual Movement and the Rise of Catholicism

André Sigfried's commentary on the relationship between Spain and Latin American culture revealed a change in trans-Atlantic intellectual trends, marking the transition to the *Hispanidad* movement. Sigfried viewed the basis of these relationships

¹² André Sigfried, "Los Problemas de América Latina," *La Nación*, 11 September 1937.

as social institutions, not cultural phenomenon such as language or racial characteristics. By the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Hispanism was replaced by the new, politically motivated Hispanidad movement. Hispanism focused on a common Spanish identity based on a shared language, a shared heritage and a shared culture, but it did not define Spanish identity around the traditional institutions in Spain, such as a hierarchical society and the Catholic Church. Hispanidad activists equated the spiritual essence of Spanishness, in which all members of the Spanish-speaking world were said to share, with Catholicism, anti-liberal and anti-democratic views.¹³ Hispanidad assumed that Latin Americans and Spaniards were of the same *raza*, and did not negate what their predecessors claimed. Proponents of hispanidad went radically further, claiming that this *raza* was based on cultural, societal and governmental institutions peculiar to Spain, all heavily influenced by the presence of Catholicism.

The emergence of the Hispanidad movement coincided with the sharp polarization of the intellectual-political landscape in Spain during the early 1930s. “Traditional” Spain, associated with hierarchy and Catholicism, waned to the chagrin on traditionalists in Spain and Argentina alike. Under the Constitution of 1931, directed by the Second Spanish Republic, Spain was declared to have no official religion, and one year later divorce was legalized. Additionally, state support for the clergy was eliminated by 1934 and all religious orders were directed to sell off their large real estate holdings and submit to normal tax laws.¹⁴ Reforms coincided with many uprisings and challenges to public order. In Madrid and in other cities, convents and other religious buildings

¹³ Pike, 5.

¹⁴ Falcoff and Pike, 302.

were attacked and burned.¹⁵ In the wake of a fragile political peace, these violent incidents ignited the Spanish Civil War. Conservative Spaniards led by General Francisco Franco rebelled against the liberal Spanish Republic touching off three very bloody and bitter years of fighting that would eventually lead to the triumph of Franco and his own brand of fascism.¹⁶

As democracy failed and the Spanish government collapsed, the preservation of tradition and heritage became paramount to both Spanish and Argentine nationalists. Nationalists in Argentina were dismayed with the events unfolding in Spain. Federico Ibarguren, an Argentine intellectual and Catholic nationalist wrote, “We South Americans, who are your [Spain’s] children, freed, but proceeding from the same Catholic trunk of *Hispanidad*, we understand its significance, and in this particular case, it is the fault of the parents.”¹⁷ The Spanish Republic, Ibarguren believed, failed because liberalism and democracy were not the traditions of Spain, but rather, were foreign ideologies imposed on the Iberian Peninsula by liberals and leftists. The Spanish experiment with liberalism, many nationalists believed, pushed the country to the brink of war. While the Spanish toyed with a more institutionally liberal, modern state, conservative Argentine intellectuals moved closer to a traditionalist “Hispanic” forms of governance.

Argentines questioned how Spanishness was defined in the midst of its own national crisis. An antidemocratic, proclerical, right-wing movement showed signs of mounting strength and the new radically rightist *hispanidad* movement became a rhetorical guide for Catholic nationalists in Argentina. In a search to recover the “true”

¹⁵ Ibid, 303.

¹⁶ Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Modern Library, 2001)

¹⁷ Federico Ibarguren “La misión histórica de España” *Criterio* 459: 9 (17 December 1936) 372.

roots of nationalism, nationalists turned to the tradition of linking the Church with the State. One nationalist publication urged, “A return to tradition, to the past, to sentiments authentically Argentine... [to] the reintegration of the nation with its essential values.” The most essential value, to these nationalists was the Church and “to Her the Nation should be linked as the body to the soul.”¹⁸ This pro-clerical movement manifested itself in the nation’s public school system. Since 1888 religious instruction had been strictly forbidden in Argentine schools. In 1936, however, coinciding directly with the Spanish Civil War, obligatory catechism classes were reintroduced by provincial ministries in the important provinces of Santa Fe, Catamarca and Buenos Aires. At the same time as these school reforms, the Argentine Army reintroduced open-air masses for conscripts.¹⁹ While Spain was violently torn between strict traditionalism and modernist movements, ranging from socialism to anarchism, Argentina began a process of strengthening conservatism and Hispanism within government institutions. By reinserting the Church into public life, proponents of nationalism were visibly allying themselves with the rightist movement afoot in Spain.

In the Argentine Catholic literary publication, *Criterio*, writers took an unequivocal stance, defending conservative Spanish nationalists. Founded in 1928, *Criterio* was a Catholic literary magazine based out of Buenos Aires and published weekly. In 1932 *Criterio* came under the direction of Monsignor Gustavo J. Franceschi who remained Editor-in-chief until 1957. The mission statement of *Criterio* was to “accompany the cultural, political, social and religious tasks of our country and the

¹⁸ Comisión del estudios, *Nacionalismo*. As cited in Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 100.

¹⁹ Falcoff and Pike, 305

world”, and to Franceschi that meant devotion to the nationalist cause.²⁰ In October 1935, in an article titled, “Spanish Tradition and Universalist Culture,” Valery Larbraud argued that a pan-Latin American movement for interconnectedness was not a new movement. Rather, this interconnectedness existed because Latin Americans were united by a common Hispanic-Romance language and a common Hispanic heritage.²¹ This heritage, Valery Larbraud stated, was based on “Old World” Spanish ideals of ecclesiastic and social hierarchy and religion. Spanish traits were infused into Latin American society and became a part of Argentine nationality. *Criterio* writers called the Spanish Civil War a “holy war,” justified by the ecclesiastical tradition of the Catholic Church, showing their unfailing support for the Spanish nationalists.²²

Federico Ibaguren’s writings were also characteristic of the emerging Hispanidad movement. Believing in the myth of Old Spain he wrote,

The heroism of Old Spain, *Catholic and united*, is reborn in these new men of colored berets and blue shirts, for whom death covers aspects of religious sacrifice and voluntary martyrdom, of reconciliation with God. Spain will not succumb and we will continue watching. They will complete, without a doubt, the historic mission to sustain and propagate Catholicity in the world. Today as yesterday.²³

Ibaguren viewed these “new men” as a modern incarnation of the heroic leaders of Spain’s Golden Age (roughly 1550-1650). These seemingly religious warriors were not just fighting for a certain political belief, but rather for the traditions and culture of Spain, “today as yesterday”. Additionally, Ibaguren vested Argentina’s interests in the Spanish conflict, as if there was a shared mission to propagate the Catholic and Spanish way of

²⁰ Revista Criterio, “Quiénes somos”, Criterio, http://www.revistacriterio.com.ar/q_somos.php. *Criterio* continues to exist today and I had the pleasure of meeting their current staff while in Buenos Aires.

²¹ Valery Larbraud, “Tradición hispana y cultura universalista,” *Criterio* 397: 8 (10 octubre 1935), 131.

²² María Ángeles Castro Montero, “El eco de la Guerra civil Española en la revista *Criterio*,” Temas de historia Argentina y Americana (Buenos Aires: La Universidad Católica Argentina, 2003) 28.

²³ Federico Ibaguren “La misión histórica de España”, *Criterio* 459: 9 (17 December 1936) 372.

life. This historic mission was the implementation of Spanish tradition as the formal political institutions for not only Spain, but also Argentina. Expanding on Franceschi's image of these "reborn" soldiers, Carlos Ibarguren Jr. wrote that the nationalists would rekindle "the ancient apostolic and warrior spirit of the Middle Ages and the Catholic kings" which had conquered and civilized America."²⁴

Although Argentina was founded on a liberal, democratic constitution, nationalists in Argentina rejected democracy as an organic form of government and believed it would never function properly in Latin America. Argentines, it seemed, had lost faith not only in the tradition of democracy, but also in its sustainability. The Argentine intellectual Juan Emiliano Carulla wrote that,

The conception of individualistic democracy of universal suffrage is the fruit of the rationalist ideology of the French Revolution. This system is theoretically seductive... but the political system is a complex manifestation of life that is practically conquered by the circumstances, necessities, passions, interests and concrete desires, and its principles separate from the facts, or bends to them. Societies oscillate, politically, between the principle of authority and of liberty.²⁵

Carulla believed that while Argentina had been ruled by a liberal regime, the country needed a more authoritarian form of government given its economic collapse and the crisis in Spain. The time had come for drastic political change and Argentina should rely on its tradition of strict hierarchy and resist the "seductions" of an all-inclusive democratic government, because, after all, this was never the history or tradition of Argentina. Carulla believed that democracy was not applicable to Spain or Latin America; it was a foreign ideology introduced by the French and irrelevant to Hispanic

²⁴ Carlos Ibarguren Jr, Laferrère, as cited in David Rock, Authoritarian Argentina, 119

²⁵ Carlos Ibarguren Jr, La inquietud de esta hora: liberalismo, corporativismo, nacionalismo (Buenos Aires: Librería y editorial "La Facultad", Roldán, 1934) 39.

government. The “necessity” Carulla speaks of is for a more conservative and traditional political rule.

While Carulla denounced the “rationalist ideology of the French Revolution” the Argentine nation was a product of the age of revolutions. Nationalists sidestepped this problematic issue through historical revision. Nationalists first claimed that it was the Spanish “captains of the conquest” and “the first settlers who gave us our identity, our faith, our culture” and not the founding father who established a liberal democracy.²⁶ Nationalists then proceeded to slander liberalism by denouncing the long-standing economic partnership Argentina maintained with the British Empire. One writer for *La Nación* commented that, “It’s a foul lie that we owe our historical being to liberalism. To liberalism we owe only the handover of our frontier lands and the tutelage of foreigners.”²⁷ Ibarguren Jr. added to such revisionism stating that Britain had destroyed, “the old Hispanic culture, the Catholic religion, traditional customs and native populations.”²⁸

In reality, Britain aided in Argentina’s great economic success. By criticizing, slandering and reworking the history, however, the nationalists were able to sidestep the fact that the first tradition of the *independent* nation was in fact republican and liberal. To such nationalists, the profound tradition of Argentina was that of the Catholic and traditional Spain. Prior to the 1930s, conservatives endorsed the Anglo-French model of national development. The nationalists, however, broke with older conservatives and

²⁶ Carlos Ibarguren Jr, *Laferrère*, as cited in David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 119

²⁷ Quote by Miguel Sánchez Sorondo as cited in David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 116

²⁸ Carlos Ibarguren Jr, *Laferrère*, as cited in David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 116.

identified with “the more ancient corporatist connections inherited from Spain and Rome.”²⁹

Many Argentine nationalists supported the Spanish nationalist idea of a government that was modeled after the traditional social hierarchy and theology of the Catholic Church. The implementation of this governmental structure, called corporatism, would become an important part of the Spanish nationalist front and, as a result, it also became a form of government that Argentine Catholic nationalists supported.³⁰ In both Argentina and Spain, hispanidad was firmly implanted as not just an intellectual movement, but as a blueprint for a new form of government based on previous historical incarnations of power.

The former Spanish Ambassador to Argentina, Ramiro de Maeztu, an intellectual precursor of the Spanish nationalists, recognized the importance of a counterrevolutionary bloc of Catholic rightists both in Spain and Latin America. Maeztu was a major proponent of hispanidad and wrote a series of essays concerning this shared history and a shared future for both Spain and South America.³¹ The former ambassador proposed an organized Catholic movement and founded the “society and study club” *Acción Española* to promote Spanish Catholicism and traditions through lectures and publications. Maeztu’s anti-liberal, anti-democratic ideas influenced Argentine Catholic nationalists. The most direct result of Maeztu’s influence in Argentina was the founding of *La Acción Católica Argentina* in 1931. Catholic Action Argentina was an organized group of lay Catholics dedicated to the same beliefs in the preservation of traditionalism

²⁹ Falcoff and Pike, 299.

³⁰ Argentine intellectuals actually used the term “corporatist” to describe their vision of an appropriate form of government for Latin America

³¹ Ramiro de Maeztu, *Defensa de la hispanidad* (Madrid: Rialp, 1931) 52-53. The essays were published in *Acción Española* a periodical founded and edited by Maeztu in 1930.

and hierarchy with extreme, anti-liberal, anti-democratic tendencies. As a response to the “liberal crisis”, Catholic Action Argentina promoted Catholicism as an ideology uniting nationalism with Catholic spiritualism.³²

The Global Crisis is Ideological and Spiritual

Throughout the Spanish Civil War, hispanidad was intimately associated with the Nationalist Front. A nationalist in Spain during the Civil War was an overarching name for a wide array of conservative political factions. Nationalists were loosely united through their support of Catholicism, traditionalism, their emphasis of hispanidad and their anti-liberal, anti-democratic nature. Defined by the same beliefs, Argentine nationalists adhered to these same ideas. Many Spanish intellectuals published in *Criterio*, such as Marcelino Menéndez, who stated that, “The political and social unity of Spain coincides with religious unity, publicly recognized by the Recaredo now and since the fifteenth century.”³³ The protection of hispanidad, the social, religious and political institutions that they believed made Spain distinct from the rest of the world, became a unifying ideal among the conglomerate of Argentine conservatives.

At the start of the war, the definition of hispanidad expanded based on a mythologized version of Spain’s history. Nationalist revisionists believed that Spain’s greatest era occurred in the medieval period during the reigns of Charles V and Phillip II (1516-1598). Upon a closer examination, Spain’s *siglo de oro*³⁴ (mid-16th to mid-17th centuries) was wrought with inflation, overspending, costly and all-consuming war and

³² Elena Pineiro, *El Nacionalismo de los nacionalistas* (Buenos Aires: La Universidad Católica Argentina, 1998) 83.

³³ Marcelino Menéndez, as cited in María Ángeles Castro Montero’s article, “El eco de la Guerra civil en la revista *Criterio*” 37.

³⁴ Translates to “The Golden Age” in English.

immense religious persecution. Spanish nationalists believed that the symbol of national greatness was the Christian knight of the Middle Ages, who rejected materialism and fought for the honor of God and his King.³⁵ Based on this mythologized history, Spanish nationalists associated the essence of hispanidad with the rejection of materialism and believed that anti-materialism was a core part of Spanish history and as a result was a major part of the modern Spanish identity.

Not only was anti-materialism a major part of the national identity, but both Spanish nationalists and Argentine nationalists believe that much of what was wrong with the modern period was its obsession with materialism. At the 1936 international PEN club conference in Buenos Aires, Dr. Carlos Ibarguren opened the conference with a speech titled, “The Global Crisis is Ideological and Spiritual.”³⁶ Dr. Ibarguren was a leading Argentine intellectual figure and a prominent Catholic nationalist. In his opening remarks, Dr. Ibarguren stated that, after a century of liberal democracies that molded the soul around individualism and materialism, a new movement was afoot that was anti-rationalist and anti-technical, adding that “new emotional, intuitive and spiritual currents signify a reaction against the industrial and material existence... spiritualism has reappeared.”³⁷ Ibarguren’s opening remarks were significant not only because he was representing Catholic nationalists but also because he was espousing ideas strikingly similar to those of the Spanish rightists. His remarks united Argentine Catholic nationalists with the belief in anti-materialism and the revitalization of all things Catholic and spiritual, much like the nationalists of Spain.

³⁵ Pike, 77.

³⁶ The PEN club is a global association of prominent literary and intellectual figures. In 1936 the international gathering was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

³⁷ Dr. Carlos Ibarguren, opening remarks at the PEN club from the article, “La Crisis Mundial es Ideológica y Espiritual, dijo Carlos Ibarguren,” *La Nación* (6 September 1936) 10.

The war in Spain represented a collision of two opposing ideals that became what Spanish and Argentine nationalists considered the great conflict of the early twentieth century. In their perspective, at one end stood traditionalists, such as the nationalists in Spain, who believed in all things spiritual, intuitional, hierarchical and orderly. At the other end of the spectrum were modernists, those who believed in liberalism, individualism and materialism. The Argentine nationalists believed that all of those fighting for the Popular Front in Spain were part of “Red plots”, seeking to destroy, “God, the Nation and the Family.”³⁸ To them, the war was a black and white battle, and in no way did they believe it was a complex clash of many ideas and beliefs.

The poem “Romance of the Civil War” published by Argentine poet Maruja Vidal Fernández, depicts the glorified image of the nationalists’ cause. Fernández wrote, “...If the bloody hordes/of the anarchy/left you without temples/God will be with you/ wherever you go/and each barricade/will be an altar where to pray.”³⁹ The striking image of modern warfare symbolized by the “bloody hordes” juxtaposed with the “altars” of religion glorified the Civil War as a holy and just war. Barricades were characterized as spiritual centers, as if these warriors were religious crusaders against the infidels or anarchists. Disturbing as it may seem, for these nationalists, the war was about religion versus secularism and how to define the modern world in the twentieth century. Nationalists wanted a future defined by its anti-modernism and its embrace of spirituality. The poem reveals how Argentine nationalists felt not only a deep connection with the Spanish nationalists, but also how they romanticized the raging battles as a religious quest essential to Argentine society.

³⁸ Federico Ibarguren, Los orígenes del nacionalismo argentino, (Buenos Aires: Calcius, 1969) 264.

³⁹ Maruja Vidal Fernández, “Romance de la Guerra Civil,” *Criterio* 444:9 (3 September 1936) 17.

Further emphasizing the importance of the war, the editor of *Criterio*, Gustavo J. Franceschi wrote that. “The conscience is formed: in Castile one is gambling in good faith the luck of the Hispano-American continent.”⁴⁰ To Argentine nationalists, the battle of the Spanish nationalist soldiers, who fought to preserve the traditional institutions of Spain, were also fighting to preserve those institutions in the Latin American world. Catholic nationalists had a key stake on the outcome of Spanish military movement because their ideology was based on their unbreakable connection with Spain and the traditionalism the nationalists represented.

The hispanidad movement gained sympathy for the Spanish nationalist cause and helped recruit new members to the nationalist front. The events surrounding the evacuation of Argentine refugees from Spain at the onset of the Civil War further underscored the cultural link between the two nations. Within the first six months of the War, chaos reigned in the streets, and the police and military had little control over the violence that spread throughout the country. Argentine nationals’ homes were “attacked and denuded of furniture, jewelry and works of art.”⁴¹ While eventually some six hundred Argentines and their families were evacuated from Spain, between July and October a half-dozen Argentines died violently at the hand of the Popular Front. One Argentine was even shot after the embassy repeatedly emphasized that he was a foreign national. Such atrocities were reported, in detail, in major Argentine newspapers such as *La Nación* and *La Prensa*.⁴² The war then was not just an ideological battle taking place on a faraway continent, but rather, was a terribly and bloody conflict involving the lives

⁴⁰ Gustavo J. Franceschi, “Frentes populares y anticomunismo.” *Criterio*, 453:9 (5 November 1936) 221.

⁴¹ Adrián C. Escobar, *Diálogo íntimo con España: memorias de un embajador durante la tempestad europea* (Buenos Aires, 1950) 320-327, as cited in Falcoff and Pike, 308

⁴² Falcoff and Pike, 308.

of the Argentine people. Further strengthening the claims of Catholic nationalists, these Argentines were killed by the very people of whom nationalists warned: leftists, liberals, socialists and communists.

After such horrific events, the Argentine embassy in Spain made a critical decision that helped further the platform of Argentine nationalists, granting asylum and safe-keeping to Spanish nationalists. The Argentine embassy protected nearly fifteen hundred Spanish nationalists throughout the war, including prominent leaders. Even General Francisco Franco's brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Suñer was granted safety at the Argentine embassy.⁴³ By harboring only those Spaniards who supported the Nationalist Front, the Argentine government could be seen as promoting nationalist ideology. Catholic nationalists in Argentina supported such decisions and saw them as an affirmation of their beliefs, that the true nature of both Argentina and Spain was rooted in their common heritage and traditional hierarchical and anti-modernist structures.

By claiming a common heritage based on hierarchy and Catholic spirituality, nationalists in both Argentina and Spain argued for a common destiny to uphold these ideals against foreign infiltrators. In January 1937, General Francisco Franco reached out to the people of Latin America and solidified the importance of Spanish American support for the war in Spain. Using the New Year holiday, Franco addressed both the Spanish and Spanish American public calling for the support of anyone who felt a connection with the Spanish nationalist cause. Franco dedicated almost all of his speech to addressing Spanish Americans who, according to Franco, shared the same blood, same history and the same ideologies. Franco called on Spanish Americans to move from the margins of the nationalist plight to the forefront of support for the Spanish cause. Franco

⁴³ Falcoff and Pike, 309.

claimed that the nationalists were fighting a war against communism disguised as democracy, liberalism, materialism and modern political thought.⁴⁴ Franco's speech directly connected the ideas of the hispanidad movement to the nationalist movement in the Spanish Civil War, making Catholic nationalists in Argentina intellectual soldiers in this new ideological battle.

Slowly evolving for three decades, the hispanidad movement of the early and mid-1930s laid the foundation of support for the nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. The belief in a trans-Atlantic *raza* based on traditions such as Catholicism, anti-materialism, conservatism, and basic characteristics including social hierarchy and the Hispanic romance language, created a bond between Spanish and Argentine nationalists. For the believers in hispanidad, modernism and its institutions such as democracy and communism were evils to be fought at all costs because at stake was national identity. As Spanish nationalists fought to protect "traditional Spain", Argentines reconsidered what "traditional Argentina" was, questioning what the organic form of government in their country was. The *madre patria* claimed its right to corporatism based on a hierarchical structure modeled after the Church. Corporatism then, would become a controversial proposition for a new form of government in Argentina, and became one of the fundamental goals of Catholic nationalists.

⁴⁴ Speech by General Francisco Franco as it appeared in the Argentine newspaper "Un Mensaje del General Francisco Franco al Pueblo Hispanoamericano," *La Nacion* (2 January 1937) 2.

Chapter 2: Corporatism as the Organic Form of Government

When we speak of the reform of institutions, the State comes chiefly to mind, not as if universal well-being were to be expected from its activity, but because things have come to such a pass through the evil of what we have termed "individualism" that, following upon the overthrow and near extinction of that rich social life which was once highly developed through associations of various kinds, there remain virtually only individuals and the State.

Pope Pius XI, 1931¹

Corporatism as a social system had been deeply rooted in Latin America long before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Catholic nationalists attempted to promote this longstanding corporatist tradition to reinvent political organization in Argentina between 1936 and 1939. Claiming a shared tradition and heritage as championed by the Hispanidad movement, Argentine nationalists believed that Franco's vision of a corporatist state was the solution to Argentine political woes. Argentine nationalists, reacting to the chaos afoot in the Second Spanish Republic and the ensuing war, believed that corporatism was the organic and natural structure for a Spanish American government. In *Criterion*, Argentina's premier Catholic literary publication, these years witnessed an explosion of writings about corporatism. Nineteenth thirty-eight, in particular, featured a large volume of articles praising this hierarchical social system, ranging in titles from "The Corporatist Organization" to "Political Corporatism."²

The corporatist socio-political system was a third "ism" alongside republicanism and totalitarianism, a so-called "third way" as an alternative to the other two forms of government practiced in Latin America. Unlike U.S. democracy, Latin American governments, although governed by republican constitutions, had long been extremely

¹ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno: On Reconstruction of the Social Order*, (15 May 1931).

² *Criterion* article titles, 1938.

susceptible to powerful corporate groups. These groups (later named the “unholy trinity”), included the Church, the army and the oligarchy. They were not a part of the governing system but were extremely influential in Argentine politics.³ Catholic nationalists sought to unite these corporate interest groups under a viable political system, structured in a hierarchical fashion much like the Catholic Church, or the army. The corporatist system generally means the organization of society “by functional interest groups--military, business, the church, organized labor--rather than on an individualistic basis and, instead of genuine pluralism, autonomy, and freedom of association, the organization, regulation, and *control* of these groups under state authority.”⁴ Therefore, instead of upholding universal suffrage within democracy, Catholic nationalists wished to restructure “democracy” into voting groups divided by hierarchy and a person’s role within society.

Foundations of Corporatism in Hispanic Nations

General Francisco Franco championed corporatism for Spain, calling back to medieval Catholicism and the glory of Spain’s “Golden Age” as a model for the political, economic, and social structure for the nation. This “Catholic, disciplined, ascetic leader” rode to victory with the support of monarchists, centralists, and the Church. Franco believed that corporatism was more attuned to Iberian history as a Catholic, organic, structured legalistic, top-down system.⁵ Although Franco was not the original champion

³ Howard J. Wiarda, “Whatever Happened to Corporatism and Authoritarianism in Latin America?” Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America-Revisited (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004) 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Howard J. Wiarda and Margaret MacLeish Mott, Catholic Roots and Democratic Flowers: Political systems in Spain and Portugal (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001) 36. 40.

of corporatism, he drew on the popular ideas of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and synthesized the Falangist leader's ideas with traditionalist, clericalist, and monarchist elements within the Nationalist movement.⁶

In his "Speech on the Foundation of the Spanish Falange". Primo de Rivera said that "nobody was ever born a member of a political party; on the contrary, we are all born members of a family; we are all citizens of the Municipality... These are our natural units: the family, the municipality, the profession..." Primo de Rivera added that, "The movement of today—which is a movement and not a party indeed you could almost call it an anti-party,—let all know from the outset that it is either Right nor Left."⁷ Primo de Rivera's ideas about the glory of medieval Spain, the righteousness of the Spanish War, and most importantly, the necessary social and political structure of Spain were a clarion call to Spanish rightists. While often considered a staunch fascist, many of Primo de Rivera's ideas pertained to corporatism, to the benefit of the collective instead of the individual. To Primo de Rivera, Spain was founded on units, communities, and groups, and should adhere to these groups and not the trappings of individualism and democracies. As Franco united the falangists under his rightist movement, so too did he absorb their ideas and blend them with his own.

For many Argentines, Franco transcended the "left-right dichotomy" and offered a new direction for government, corporatism based on the cultural traditions of Spain.⁸ As Ernest Hemmingway wrote in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, "Since we [Republicans] do

⁶ Falange." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 12 Apr. 2008 <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9033613>>.

⁷ Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, "Speech on the Foundation of the Spanish Falange", trans. Juan Macnab Calder, *The Spanish Answer: Passages from the spoken and written message of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera* (Madrid: Artes Gráficas Ibarra, 1964) 49-50.

⁸ *Criterion*, 1937, as cited in Austen Ivereigh, *Catholicism and Politics in Argentina, 1810-1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) p?

not have God here anymore, neither his Son nor the Holy Ghost, who forgives? I don't know... If there were God, never would He have permitted what I have seen with my eyes. Let them have God, they claim Him.”⁹ In the Spanish Civil War, the two opposing sides were not just liberals versus conservatives, but rather, anarchists, socialists, communists and liberals fighting against fascists, authoritarians, traditionalists, monarchists, and corporatists. While the leftists rejected God and Catholicity, the Spanish nationalists not only embraced religion, but used Catholicism as inspiration for the structure of government. Primo de Rivera captured this idea when he stated, “We want the religious spirit, which is the keystone in the finest arches of our history, to be respected and supported as it deserved” working in unison with the government and in harmony with its structure.¹⁰

Much like the right in Spain prior to the war, Catholic nationalists saw Argentine democracy as an oppressive, failed form of government. From 1916-1930 the liberal political party the Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union) ruled Argentine politics, rising to power after the Sáenz Peña Act of 1912 granted compulsory, universal suffrage to all native born men.¹¹ The liberal regime disintegrated following the global economic collapse of 1929, and the failure of liberal democracy to restore stability in Argentina. The rising violence in Spain under the fledgling Second Spanish Republic evidenced further the inadequacies of democratic governments. Luis Chagnon, a frequent contributor to *Criterion* wrote, “The failure of economic liberalism isn't a secret...If we resign ourselves to suffer the yoke of a bureaucratic, centralizing apparatus we will

⁹ Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940) 46. They refer to the Right movement under the direction of General Francisco Franco.

¹⁰ José Antonio Primo de Rivera, 52.

¹¹

drown the human person... The corporatist institution is a necessary reaction against the abuses of liberty that has ended in a capitalist dictatorship and social irresponsibility.”¹²

In Argentina, Catholic nationalists also claimed God for themselves, and structured their ideal form of government following Franco’s plan for a Catholic, corporatist State. Linking Spain’s history to their own, Argentine intellectuals believed that corporatism, thriving in Spain throughout the Middle Ages, was the truest form of government for Argentina. *Criterion* published numerous articles describing the relevance of corporatism to Argentine politics. Basing their arguments on the tradition of corporatism in Hispanic society, contributors wrote that, “The Golden Age, [in Spain], of corporations lasted from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. The corporation included three categories of people: apprentices, workers and bosses.”¹³ The Catholic nationalist Gustavo Franceschi also believed Argentine society should be divided by corporate groups according to social class, much like medieval Spain’s division of “those who work, those who pray, and those who fight.”¹⁴

As editor of *Criterion*, Franceschi saw corporatism as the only organic form of government viable in Argentina. Franceschi, a strict Catholic and committed nationalist, derived his spiritual support for corporatism from the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Franceschi stated that Aquinas,

Divided the [governing] system in three... The optimal arrangement of government is in which one is put to the front of all by his own capacity, that under him there are others governing also through their own capacity; but that nevertheless the government pertains to all... and that although suffrage is universal, it is not inorganic because it is not derived from individualism.¹⁵

¹² Luis Chagnon, “Politica corporativa,” *Criterion* 522:10 (3 March 1938) 206.

¹³ Luis Chagnon, “La organización corporativa,” 156.

¹⁴ William Caferro, class notes, 2002. [you need a better source here]

¹⁵ Gustavo J. Franceschi, “Distinciones sobre democracia y autoridad,” *Criterion* 442: 9 (20 August 1936) 365.

Franceschi cloaked corporatism in the guise of democracy. He prescribed that people should only vote based on their station in life, or rather, their “capacity”. Meaning that if an Argentine was a common laborer, he would only vote based on issues relevant to his life. Additionally, those of the “political” class would run the government because that is what they were suited to do. The State, or government, would also control all of these groups so that although people retained a right to vote, their vote was essentially guided by an oligarchy of political elite.

The arrangement of “three” governing systems, most likely the Church, the military, and then all others, was also spiritually significant. Three was considered one of the holiest numbers based on the Trinity, and thus was, in the Catholic sense, the perfect division for society. Additionally, the division of society into three parts was reminiscent of the three orders of medieval society: those who work, those who pray and those who fight. Franceschi’s idea of “organic democracy” was corporatist based on social hierarchy according to professional prestige, and reinforced the Catholic nature of Hispanic government.

The Crusade for a Corporatist Government

The survival of the Catholic right in Spain, Franceschi and other contributors to *Criterio* believed, was fundamental to the salvation of traditional Christian society not only in Spain, but also in Argentina. Frederico Ibarra, a leading essayist and literary critic commented on the events in Spain, “Perhaps, without knowing it, in the sublime agony of these moments, is forming the true universalistic ideal that sleeps hidden in the back of the spirit: that of *integral catholicity* like a mission to complete, like heroic work

to be realized in the land.”¹⁶ Franceschi expanded on Ibarguren’s comments one month later writing, “In the Spanish War, we are discussing, principally, the salvation or total ruin of the Christian faith and the fundamentals of the entire social order.”¹⁷ This social order, Franceschi and Ibarguren believed, was the backbone of Argentine society. Catholicism provided the model for the corporatist political system and if this rigid socio-political structure was destroyed in Spain, then these Argentine intellectuals feared that their own, similar traditions would crumble as well.

Other important nationalist intellectuals echoed the opinions of Federico Ibarguren and Gustavo Franceschi. Dr. Carlos Ibarguren, father of Federico, and President of Argentina’s PEN Club wrote, “In the present hour, we should mark, as a characteristic, in the midst of this profound political and economic inquietude, an anxious eagerness to leave the rubbish of democratic liberalism to forge a new, distinct system, based not in individualism, but rather, in the group, in collectivity, in the corporation.”¹⁸ Dr. Carlos Ibarguren was inspired by the right in Spain and believed that Spanish corporatists offered salvation from liberal democratic ruin. Dr. Carlos Ibarguren cited the Spanish intellectual don Salvador de Madariaga as one of the leading corporatist theorists and used his writings as inspiration. Madariaga, the Spaniard, believed that the “sick democracies” of the 1930s should look towards Italy’s state as a new example for political structure, believing that Italy had laid the foundations for a corporate state, but had not truly succeeded in incorporating the Church.¹⁹

¹⁶ Federico Ibarguren, “La misión histórica de España,” *Criterio* 459: 9 (17 December 1936) 372.

¹⁷ Gustavo Franceschi, “A Turn in the Spanish War,” *Criterio* 506: 10 (11 November 1937) 245.

¹⁸ Carlos Ibarguren, *La inquietud de esta hora*, 54.

¹⁹ Salvador de Madariaga, as cited in Carlos Ibarguren’s book, *La inquietud de esta hora*, 91.

Some elected officials in Argentina also toyed with the idea of a corporatist state. On New Years Day in January 1937, the Nationalist leadership in Spain sent career diplomat Juan Pablo de Lojendio to Argentina as a special “delegate” in attempt to strengthen political ties with the Spanish insurgency. Lojendio met with many Argentine politicians, but spent much of his time in the company of the two senators, Matías Sánchez Sorondo and Benjamín Villafaña. Sánchez Sorondo, already in favor of repealing the Saenz Peña Act which granted universal suffrage, was particularly open to Lojendio’s influence. Sánchez Sorondo, later that year, would travel to Spain and gain fame as a correspondent for *La Nación* during the war and for visiting with General Franco as an “honored guest”.²⁰ Villafaña believed that should the Radicals (UCR) regain control of Argentina, a “social war” would erupt within the country, as it had in Spain. After meeting with Lojendio, the two senators managed to convince twelve Argentine senators to sign a telegram in support of the Burgos government, the makeshift government of the Nationalist Front.²¹

Support for Franco’s vision of a corporatist state also came from outright donations and fundraising activities from organizations and individuals alike. One group, the Legionarios Cívicos de Franco raised 64,000 pesos to fund the Nationalist campaign in Spain.²² One woman, Señora Alonso de Drysdale gave lavishly to the nationalist cause. In 1936 she made a donation of 20,000 pounds sterling, followed by 20,000 wool jackets for the nationalist army. In 1937 she donated 400,000 cans of

²⁰ Rock, 99.

²¹ Falcoff and Pike, 321.

²² Ibid.

Argentine corned beef for the nationalist troops and later that year gave General Franco an automobile equipped with two field radios.²³

These Argentines gave to the nationalist cause not solely out of concern for Spain, but because of implications for Argentina. The delegate Logendio came to Argentina because its citizens were favorable to the Nationalist cause. Argentina had its own Catholic nationalist movement underfoot and, therefore, much like the wealthy Señora Alonso de Drysdale, some of its populace was likely to support the Nationalist insurgency in Spain. Franco's corporatist state was something that Catholic nationalists in Argentina could imagine and work for in their own country and was something that, as supporters of this Hispanic tradition, was a natural progression of government for them.

Further reinforcement for the corporate state came directly from the Argentine Catholic Church. In depression-decade Argentina, ninety-five percent of the population considered themselves Catholics, and therefore were particularly attuned to the words of the Pope and the implications of Church doctrine.²⁴ Not only did the Vatican condemn the new Spanish Constitution crafted by the Republicans, but in 1931, Pope Pius XI issued a papal encyclical for the model social order, corporatist in nature. The papal decree stated that,

“It is not so surprising, therefore, that many scholars, both priests and laymen, governed especially by the desire that the unchanged and unchangeable teaching of the Church should meet the new demands and needs more effectively, have zealously undertaken to develop, with the Church as their guide and teacher, a social and economic science in accord with the conditions of our time.”²⁵

Pope Pius XI also stated that the state needed to adapt its governing style based on corporations, with “guilds” monitored by the state so that social upheaval would be

²³ Ibid., 323.

²⁴ Austen Ivereigh, 113. [cited earlier?]

²⁵ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15 1931.

avoided.²⁶ The papal decree had a profound affect on all Catholic nationalists, and the Pope's advocacy for a Catholic corporatist state further reinforced their drive for governmental reform.

Seeking to unite the Catholic Church hierarchy with the State, Argentine nationalists created a banner that combined these two institutions of secular and religious governance. The Nationalist party banner was a blue cross on a white background, uniting the national colors of Argentina with the ultimate Catholic symbol, the crucifix.²⁷ The flag represented, then, the idealized corporate state, one where the rigid hierarchy of the Church and the spirituality of the Church would be united with State authority and legitimacy, synthesized to govern the people of Argentina.

Furthering the Cause: The Military and the Family

To expand their influence, nationalists not only strove for Church endorsement but also sought the support of the army. The Nationalists encouraged the military to perceive itself as “the last aristocracy” and the guardian of a “sacred territory and the western Christian way of life” which answered not to the people or the law but “to God and history.”²⁸ Meanwhile, Dr. Carlos Ibarguren warned that, “Liberalism emasculates soldiers” and urged the army to be prepared for “rapid and decisive action.”²⁹ For nationalists, the military, like the Catholic Church, mirrored the ideal structure of a corporatist state. The military was extremely hierarchical, followed a direct, top-down, chain of command where each person knew his place and none questioned the ruling

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Deutsch, *Las Derechas*, 217.

²⁸ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, xiv.

²⁹ Ibid, 98.

authority. Nationalists welcomed and encouraged the military as an ally in their struggle for a corporatist state. Through their excessive praise and courtship, nationalists succeeded in converting many top military officials. By 1936, mandatory mass had been reinstated for all conscripts in the Argentine army.

The Argentine army echoed the importance of catholicity to the foundations of society and politics. At a banquet staged to define the political stance of the Argentine military in September of 1937, Argentine Vice Admiral Carlos G. Daileaux stated,

“For these last few years, we were a force of the past, a reactionary force, at the least a heavy hindrance. And fine, gentlemen, we have to concede to them, but it is in this past, this glorious past that we derive the most force, *the spiritual force*, unalterable and undying, more indispensable to armies than their own weapons. The spiritual force that in these days of intensity and fervent patriotic remembrance the present and the past unite to honor the forgers of our national identity.”³⁰

Vice Admiral Carlos G. Daileaux believed that, as the nationalists stated, the military derived its power from its spiritual commitment. Additionally, it derived power from its power structure and unassailable belief in a national cause, fitting perfectly with Catholic nationalist doctrine. Daileaux also believed in the unity of the “past and present”, a phrase all too similar to those of other nationalists, hinting at his belief in the traditional structure of the socio-political system. As in Spain, the Argentine military united around God and Fatherland, believing that the Catholic spiritual essence must be preserved in the political order.

Essential to the social and political structure of corporatism was the familial nucleus comprised of the traditional patriarchic structure. Sharing the same structural

³⁰ “En el banquete de anoche el presidente definió la posición de los militares frente a la política”, *La Nación* (7 September 1937) 9.

form as the Church, the family was also considered the essence of not only social order, but political order. Juan Carulla, an important nationalist intellectual, stated,

“The defense of the family in our country is composed of three principal chapters: one, The immediate necessity to help them throughout this period of economic crisis; two, To create new laws or to modify existing ones and amplify the institution of the family; three, To reform institutions, imprinting them with a spiritual and doctrinal tonality for the protection of the familial cell, the vital nucleus of society.”³¹

Carulla, one of the founders of the nationalist newspaper *La Nueva República*, (1927-1931), and other nationalist intellectuals believed that the institution of family was at the political, social and economic heart of Argentina. Carulla, like many nationalists, believed that the traditional family and familial values were under attack both in Spain as in Argentina.

Juan Carulla was of a more extremist tendency and thought the only way to overturn the failing government was through revolution, and placed highest importance on the “juvenile falange”. This juvenile falange would serve the State, as a child would honor and serve their parent, and additionally was modeled after the beliefs and physical acts of the Spanish Falange of the Spanish Civil War. Carulla was a doctor during World War I for the French Army, and his experiences led him to lose faith in anarchism and socialism. Carulla believed that nationalism could be revolutionary and could change the form of Argentine government, saying that he wanted a youth falange for the country in order to feel the “highest form of Argentiness”.³²

The structure of the family also mimicked the structure of State that corporatism prescribed. Like a corporatist state, the Argentine family would be led by a strong,

³¹ Juan Emiliano Carulla, Genio de la Argentina: deberes frente a la crisis político-social de nuestro pueblo (Buenos Aires: Distribidores, R. Medina, 1943) 185.

³² Deutsch, Las Derechas, 196-197.
Carulla, 9.

dominant father who provided for the needs of his family. The traditional structure was patriarchal, and each family member had a prescribed role which was respected. Those beneath the father deferred to his judgment as the highest authority. Nationalists wanted the same traditional respect, along with the rigid chain of authority for its new government. The family nucleus, was, like the Church and military, an exceptional social model for a corporatist government. As a result, many nationalists like Carulla, believed in the sanctity of the family and wanted to protect it at all costs.

In his essays on the importance of family, Carulla asked,

“Where is the organic law that protects the family in Argentina? . . . It is necessary not only to protect the large families, but also to protect a favorable environment for them. Subsidies, privileges and facilities of all types should be accorded to these prolific homes. For example, public employment, whenever its technical character does not impede it, should be assigned to the patriarch of the family. The men and fathers should reclaim these seats because they have also been corrupted by filling the offices with women, also mothers of the families, who are conspiring against the wellbeing of Argentine society.”³³

Carulla believed that large families should be allotted greater economic and social privileges in a corporatist society. Other nationalists agreed with Carulla. One elaborated on Carulla’s ideas, stating that, “the whole vigor of the race, the patriotism of superior men, and the Christian spirit out to be invoked... to promote the blessings of children and large families.”³⁴ Carulla feared that the traditional family was under attack, and he had reason to think so. Throughout the first three decades, and under liberal rule, social changes and new laws threatened the Hispanic, Catholic, patriarchic family.

As seen in the last chapter, Republicans in Spain legalized divorce and attacked the Catholic Church. In Argentina, as well, similar “modern” laws threatened the

³³ Carulla, 181.

³⁴ Alejandro E. Bunge “Esplendor y decadencia de la raza Blanca” as cited in Rock, Authoritarian Argentina, 113.

“nucleus” of the family Carulla so vehemently defended. Although laws were crafted to make prostitution illegal in 1919, the trade continued to flourish in the 1930s. At a 1927 League of Nations hearing, pimps testified to the horrible plights of women prostitutes, including their inability to maintain housing, and severe exploitation as a result of outlawing the practice.³⁵ Despite the hearing, rampant prostitution remained throughout the 1930s, exploiting women who were no longer afforded protection under the law.

The perceived breakdown of the family was written into tango lyrics, part of the popular culture of the 1930s. Tangos dealt with many subjects, but during the late 1920s and early 1930s they generally focused on the fears of independent working women, the desire to return to a “simpler life and the old neighborhood” and the breakdown of parental authority, (fathers are rarely mentioned, women are abandoning motherhood).³⁶ Some songs even dealt with sexual promiscuity. In one version of the popular tango “Señor Comisario” the singer states, “Señor Comisario, give me another husband; because the one I have won’t sleep with me.” The songs dealt with topics which nationalists were morally opposed to. Given the widespread popularity of the tango songs, demonstrates that ideas of promiscuity, adultery and the breakdown of the family were rampant in Argentine society.

During the 1930s, public authorities made sincere efforts to “sanitize” tango lyrics. In these more conservative lyrics, male vocalists warned against women who were too independent. The most famous tango vocalist, Carlos Gardel, often envisioned women who “were good because they were mothers. Submissive and kept at home, they were not a threat to men. Women were evil or prone to seduction by false values if they

³⁵ Donna J. Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family and Nation in Argentina (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1991) 109.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 153.

left the house.”³⁷ Although such ideas were in line with nationalist ideology, the presence of such subjects in popular culture shows that these issues were important concerns for everyday Argentines. The nationalists, who offered to protect the traditional family and the Catholic way of life were a refuge from the breakdown of the family.

The Economy and Corporatism

Although Catholic nationalists agreed on the structure of the State, nationalists were in complete disagreement as to what the corporate state would provide for its people. Dr. Carlos Ibarguren effectively summed up the nationalist perspective on Argentine democracy: “The people, the sum of personal votes, is something inorganic, vague, capricious, blind, and considered an entity of political discourse, it is one word, an abstraction. The nation does not consist of parasitic organisms called political parties... but rather in society, suffice it to say, en the organic whole of human forces, and organized interests, that elaborate, nurture and regulate the social life and the development of a nation.”³⁸ Instead, disagreement stemmed from the proper role the State should play in the economy, namely, the supervision of labor organizations.

In general, the Catholic nationalist view of corporatism sought to limit individual economic freedom in favor of the collective economic common good, in order to eliminate class warfare in the process.³⁹ This was a very different view from socialism and capitalism where social classes and class conflict are central to the social and economic system. José Antonio Primo de Rivera spoke of the problems with socialism and capitalism stating that, “liberalism brings division and unrest in the realm of ideas;

³⁷ Guy, 151.

³⁸ Carlos Ibarguren, 39

³⁹ Deutsch, *Las Derechas*, 220.

socialism opens the even more violent chasm of economic strife in our midst. Under either regime, what becomes of the unity?”⁴⁰ In a corporatist system class warfare would be eliminated by limiting individual political and economic freedom, in favor of social justice. Nationalists wanted social reform and the redemption of the working class, stating, “The lack of equity of welfare, of social justice, of morality, of humanity, has made the proletariat into a beast of burden... unable to enjoy life and the benefits of civilization.”⁴¹ The nationalists placed hierarchy and order at the head of its proposals, but then demanded land reform and labor reform to “destroy the oligarchy.”

Some Catholic nationalists asserted that all Argentines deserved to own a house, and tax experts proposed taxing excessive wealth to finance worker housing. Others suggested government-sponsored work projects to provide jobs for the unemployed. Those of the extreme Catholic nationalist agenda, such as the Federación Obrera Nacionalista Argentina (FONA) advised workers to unionize to demand economic gains and to attack capitalism.⁴² These claims clearly differed from communists because under nationalist reforms labor unions would be state controlled with compulsory arbitration.⁴³

Despite their divergences, almost all Catholic nationalists agreed on the importance of shedding “imperialist ties” with foreign investors, such as the United States and Great Britain. Although this is not a direct influence of the Spanish Civil War, it demonstrates the nationalists’ desire to assert a Hispanic-Latino economic and political identity and power. Nationalists saw Argentina as a nation comprised of values and traditions opposing those of the United States and Great Britain, and believed that these

⁴⁰ Jose Primo de Rivera, “Lecture, Madrid, 1935”, The Spanish Answer, 135.

⁴¹ “La Voz Nacionalista”, *Nacionalismo* as cited in Rock, Authoritarian Argentina, 115.

⁴² Nacionalismo Laborista in El Nacionalismo Argentina, *Voz*, 15-16: 34-36, as cited in Deutsch, Las Derechas, 222-223.

⁴³ Rock, 126.

differences set them at odds with the imperialist political agenda of these liberal, “Anglo-Saxon” nations.

Although many of these solutions were characteristic of socialist governments, Catholic nationalists believed that the solutions to economic problems were found in religious doctrine and practice. Father Julio Meinvielle believed that one could accumulate wealth, as long as it was reinvested for the general good.⁴⁴ An example of this in Church practice, aside from charity, is Church tithing. These economic reforms also fit within corporatism because the beneficiary of these reforms, then, is indebted to the State, namely, the elite ruling classes, (the “service” class). This system reinforces the value of personal relationships within government and systematizes paternalism within the government fitting the hierarchical form of power in corporatism.

Combining both economic and political incentives, many Catholic nationalists saw corporatism as a way to alleviate class conflict. By solidifying social roles and strict hierarchy, and by State provision of economic stability, nationalists believed that the threat of communism (the chief enemy above all else) could be deterred. Dr. Ibarguren claimed that, “Corporate organization is the only organization able to procure socio-economic equilibrium and detain the march towards communism. It is the solution that will maintain political power in the eminent place that should be occupied by the State. The actual disorder apparent today will bring us to economic catastrophe and revolution.”⁴⁵ Fear was often the tool used to incite support for Catholic nationalism, and their plan for a corporatist state, however, few concrete solutions to Argentina’s economic problems were offered.

⁴⁴ Julio Meinvielle, *Concepcion*, 22-23.

⁴⁵ Carlos Ibarguren, 40.

Corporatism, Communism, Fascism

The only options for government, many nationalist intellectuals believed, were corporatism or communism. Franceschi feared that ignoring the war in Spain would be a disaster, believing that the fight in Spain would end in favor of “Christ or Lenin”.

Franceschi used Mussolini’s corporatist state as an example of what could happen in Spain, stating that, “the real dilemma is not ‘Mussolini’ or Lenin, but rather ‘Christ or Lenin’, God or the satanic adoration of the material. This is the only Catholic point of view.”⁴⁶ ñ

Many intellectuals referred to the Italian state as corporatist, but not all viewed Mussolini’s Italian fascist state as the incarnation of corporatism. Some believed that Mussolini had strayed from corporatism and adopted fascism as the governmental structure. The Italian philosopher and theologian Don Julio Sturzo wrote in *Criterion* about the differences between fascism and the ideal corporate state. Sturzo claimed that, “the Christian-social corporate state has not yet been achieved...The first and most fundamental difference of fascist corporations is that they are the emanation of the state, the state gives existence, character, faculties and limits to those under its dependence.”⁴⁷ Sturzo continued by stating that the social-Christian, corporate state, “is based in the principle of self-autonomy, neither in contrast to the State, nor subject to a political, administrative, functional or professional dependency, or more exactly, to a Government.”⁴⁸ Although Sturzo was Italian, he wrote this article exclusively for the Argentine literary publication *Criterion*. Sturzo’s commentary was important because he

⁴⁶ Gustavo Franceschi, “Distinciones sobre democracia y autoridad,” 367.

⁴⁷ Don Luis Sturzo, “A Propósito del corporativismo,” *Criterion* 506:10 (11 November 1937) 254.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

believed that in both Spain and Argentina there was hope for a true corporatist state distinct from the fascist movements in much of Europe.

This distinction between corporatism and fascism was not a necessary one for all nationalists. In fact, many Argentines would support the fascist movement in Spain, and debated the merits of a fascist state. Fascism divided the ranks of Catholic nationalism. Fascist threats to government swept through Europe in the 1930s. More importantly, the fascist faction played a dominant role in the Spanish Civil War. This global focus on fascism could not be ignored by Catholic nationalists who were forced to discuss the consequences of a fascist state. Although corporatism was the ideal form of government for Catholic nationalists, some would be willing to settle for a fascist state if it meant the complete and utter repression of communism.

There is a fine line between fascism and corporatism and sometimes the difference is difficult to delineate. Even leaders who were renowned for their fascist tendencies denied that they were fascist. José Antonio Primo de Rivera stated that the Falange had, “certain coincidences with fascism in essential points” but refused to state that it was indeed fascist.⁴⁹ Nationalists in Spain and Argentina faced the same problem as the Falange. The nationalists grappled with issues of separating or dividing corporatism and fascism and most importantly, reconciling fascism with their Catholic faith.

⁴⁹ “Note composed by José Antonio Primo de Rivera and published in the Spanish Press, 10 December 1934.” *The Spanish Answer*, 160.

Chapter 3: Fascism Divides the Ranks

At this solemn hour I venture to utter a prophecy. The coming struggle, which may not be an electoral one, and which may be more dramatic than electoral struggles, will not be between outworn values that are called Right and Left: it will be between the grim, menacing Asiatic front of the Russian revolution translated into Spanish, and the national front of our generation in the line of battle.

Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, 1934¹

Perhaps one of the most controversial components of Catholic nationalism was its begrudging acceptance of fascism. While never uniformly adopted as an essential ingredient of Argentine nationalism, nationalist ideology easily blended with this authoritarian movement. Pragmatic Argentine Catholic nationalists believed that if a truly corporatist state could not be achieved, then a Catholic fascist state would satisfy their desire to reform government. Fascism was defined as authoritarian political ideology that considered the individual subordinate to the State, party, or society as a whole. Fascists tended to seek a national unity based on shared attributes, such as race, culture or religion. The term “fascism” originates from the Latin word *fascia*, meaning a bundle of sticks. Developed by Mussolini, the word inspired because a single stick alone was weak and easily breakable, yet a bundle of sticks was strong and could endure as a collective of sticks.²

Conflicts about fascism arose when the State was placed higher than religion, tipping the scales towards modernism and secularism in the eyes of many Argentines. To some nationalists adherence to fascism bordered on blasphemy. To others, fascism

¹ Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, “Speech, Madrid, 17 November 1934” trans. Juan Macnab Calder, Passages from the spoken and written message of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903-1936). (Madrid: Artes Gráficas Ibarra, 1964) 157.

² I need to find the page where I found this in the book, but it comes from Peter Kent’s The Pope and the Duce

solidified Catholicism and traditional Hispanic values as the unifying force behind temporal authority. To understand why Catholic nationalists would align themselves with such an oftentimes anti-religious movement, we must also understand how great their fear was of communism. Fascism, it seemed, could not only defeat communism but could potentially blend religiosity with State governance.

Why Italian and German Fascism Were Unacceptable

Argentine supporters of fascism differed from their counterparts in Germany and Italy because they never made religion subordinate to the State, but rather, infused religion into a new approach to fascism. Looking to the Falangists in Spain, some Argentine nationalists believed that the Civil War was an opportunity for a synthesis of corporatism, fascism and Catholicism into the ideal form of governance. For those nationalists that did support fascism, however, Spanish and Hispanic-American fascist movements differed fundamentally from those in Italy and Germany. The unique aspect of Hispanic fascism, these nationalists believed, was its opportunity to blend Catholicism with an authoritarian regime.

For some Argentine nationalists, fascism was a dangerous yet alluring means to gain political power. For others, German fascism was the worst incarnation of authoritarianism. One nationalist described the Nazi movement as “the exaggerated nationalism condemned by the Church” and as the outcome of “four hundred years of apostasy” since the Reformation.³ Typical of Catholic nationalists, these intellectuals opposed German fascism because it exalted the individual man and the Aryan race instead of focusing on religious tradition. Other intellectuals objected to Nazi-style

³ Quote by Alberto Ezcurra Medrano as cited in David Rock’s Authoritarian Argentina, 110.

fascism based on its style of education and the worldview it preached. The prolific author Jorge Luis Borges wrote frequently about his objections to Nazism. Borges was not a self-defined Catholic nationalist, though he was considered sympathetic to their causes. Borges was, however, definitely a conservative. In an article titled, "An Education of Hate," Borges lambasted Germans stating, "It personally infuriates me, less by Israel than by Germany, less by the offensive community than by the insulting nation. I do not know if the world can do without the German civilization. It is embarrassing that Germany is corrupting itself with hatred lessons."⁴ Borges did not raise objections to fascism, but to the manner in which it was approached. Those nationalists who supported fascism believed that its ideal form had yet to be attained.

To Argentine nationalist supporters of fascism, Italy represented a lost opportunity for religion and fascism to coalesce. Support for Italian-style fascism was more prevalent than support for Germany. One U.S. diplomat commented in 1937 that, "the Argentine government was among the first to become thoroughly aroused by the strength of the local Italian political organizations..."⁵ Although there was greater support for "Il Duce", many Argentine nationalists believed that Mussolini had betrayed the ultimate goal of fascism by rejecting Italy's strong Catholic heritage. In 1927, Mussolini signed a treaty with the Vatican recognizing the separate sovereignty of the state and the Church and in that same year Mussolini was baptized. Nonetheless, three years later Mussolini abolished Catholic Action, the lay organization of the Church, and consolidated his power according to his own design, and not the Church's.

⁴ Jorge Luis Borges, "Un Pedagogía del odio," *Sur* 32 (1936) 81.

⁵ Sumner Welles, "Supplementary Survey on Italian Fascist and German Nazi Activity in the American Republics", as cited in Ronald C. Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina 1931-1947* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1992) 129.

Nationalists also disagreed with Italian fascism because Mussolini frequently governed in stark contrast to papal decrees issued by Pope Pius XI. Following World War I, Mussolini crossed over from the “Marxist” left and founded Italian fascism. In creating fascism, Mussolini had to find a place for the Catholic Church in his newly formed Italian State. Mussolini allowed the Vatican to operate as its own state, and in effect formed a rival state within a state.

The loudest example of Catholic denunciation of Italian fascism came in 1931 following Mussolini’s dissolution of Catholic Action in Italy. After Mussolini outlawed the organization, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, voicing the papacy’s opposition to the Italian political state. The Pope believed that the encyclical “unmasked the pagan intentions of the fascist state.”⁶ The Pope, who once embraced Mussolini for his promise of power in Italy, denounced the authoritarian leader based on the Italian State Mussolini had created. Pope Pius stated that,

“We, Church, religion, faithful Catholics (and not We alone), We cannot be grateful to him who, after putting out of existence Socialism and antireligious organizations (Our enemies, but not Ours only), has permitted them to be so largely reintroduced that the whole world sees and deplors them. They have been made even more strong and dangerous than before, inasmuch as they are now dissembled and also protected by their new uniform... The latest events and assertions which preceded these events, accompanied them, and interpreted them, take away from Us this fondly held supposition. Therefore, We must say, and do hereby say, that he is a Catholic only in name and by baptism (in contradiction to the obligations of that name and to the baptismal promises)...”⁷

Entirely denouncing Mussolini’s regime in Italy, the Pope aligned Catholics against the Italian state and its version of fascism. The Pope also pointed out the fallacy of the Italian government; it was Catholic in name, yet never Catholic in its laws or practices.

⁶ Pope Pius XI, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, 1931.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_29061931_non-abbiamo-bisogno_en.html

⁷ Pope Pius XI *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, #26 & 55.

Although the Catholic Church stood in opposition to Mussolini, its position regarding fascism was not always clear. In some ways, fascism, similar to corporatism, reflected clerical hierarchy. The Church demanded complete allegiance to its doctrine above all else, with its own head ruling over all subjects. The Church, under the direction of Pope Pius XI did not clearly define its position towards fascism. Even in its scathing denunciation of Mussolini and his policing actions, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* did not denounce fascism as a form of government. Pope Pius did not wish to denounce fascism but rather said that, "Our aim has been to point out and to condemn all those things in the programme and in the activities of the party which have been found to be contrary to Catholic doctrine and Catholic practice."⁸ The Church, therefore, disagreed with certain incarnations of fascism, but believed that it could be an appropriate form of government. Mussolini's interpretation was wrong, but a true and Catholic version of fascism could be established.

Blending of Catholicism and Fascism

In the same year as *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, Pope Pius XI also issued the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Not only did the decree support corporatism, but it also implied support for a fascist state, if the state shared authority with Catholicism. Article 78 highlights the ambiguity of the Church's position toward fascist states:

When we speak of the reform of institutions, the State comes chiefly to mind, not as if universal well-being were to be expected from its activity, but because things have come to such a pass through the evil of what we have termed "individualism" that, following upon the overthrow and near extinction of that rich social life which was once highly developed through associations of various kinds, there remain virtually only individuals and the State. This is to the great harm of the

⁸ Ibid, #62

State itself; for, with a structure of social governance lost, and with the taking over of all the burdens which the wrecked associations once bore. The State has been overwhelmed and crushed by almost infinite tasks and duties.⁹

The Pope suggested that the State would be better served by working with the Catholic Church. The Church would organize social governance while the State would mirror the Church and enforce political order and adherence to a national identity. The Pope agreed with the “reforms” made to political institutions, but believed that such reforms would be unsuccessful without the aid of Church participation.

Reform of the State, Pope Pius XI implied, would come when Catholics rejected individualism. The solution to individualism could be fascism. The primary objective of a fascist state was that all individuals were subordinate to the interests of the State. Individualism would disappear under such a government. Interestingly, the idea related to the notion of individual salvation as well, where a Catholic must do “good works” and work for the collective good of mankind, giving to charity as well as tithing to the Church. Additionally, a fascist state derived national unity based on common attributes. In the case of Spain and Argentina, such an attribute would be Catholicism and religious unity. Furthermore, the “associations” that Pope Pius XI speaks of were not only found in a fascist state with top-down leadership, but were also a key component to corporatism.

By issuing ambiguous and ill-defined statements regarding fascism, the Vatican left Catholic nationalists in a state of confusion. Supporting or denouncing fascism became a personal interpretation of religion and its purpose in secular matters. Such

⁹ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, Article 78.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html

confusion came at a time when Catholicism was becoming an increasingly important aspect of life in Argentina. The political and social crisis of the 1930s caused reactionary religious reform in Argentina. The Argentine Church was also pervaded by a sense of crisis. Following the Eucharistic Congress of 1934, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina received a new cardinal and three new archbishops strengthening clerical hierarchy in order to restore austere and traditional Catholicism to a nation “drifting dangerously close to religious pluralism, agnosticism and secularism.”¹⁰

Looking ever to the past for the future of society and government, Argentine nationalists again called to their Hispanic heritage to harness fascism for their own purposes. Manuel Gálvez, a novelist and biographer who documented a wide range of social ills in Argentina in the first half of the 20th century, wrote that the ancient soul of Spain would “never be forgotten because it lives on in the medieval churches, in the paintings of El Greco, in the picaresque novels. But the soul of Argentina must be traced through the few traditions we have...” such as the Catholic Church.¹¹ Unlike Germany and Italy, the Catholic Church remained a powerful force in society and politics in Argentina and Spain. In Buenos Aires alone, the most culturally advanced and sophisticated city in Argentina, the number of church parishes increased from 39 in 1929 to 103 in 1939.¹² In the harsh environment of the 1930s, as economic depression held a chokehold on the world, and traditional institutions such as the Church were seriously questioned, in Argentina, religiosity expanded.

¹⁰ Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina*, 130.

¹¹ “Gálvez, Manuel.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 26 Feb. 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-3976391>. Manuel Galv ez, as quoted in David Rock’s *Authoritarian Argentina*, 27.

¹² Austen A. Ivereigh, *Catholicism and Politics in Argentina 1810-1960* (London: St. Martin’s Press 1995) 109.

¹² *Crisol*, 19 August 1934.

As a result of such religious fervor, fascism, to Catholic nationalists, was intertwined with religion. Ces r Pico’s “Response to Jacques Maritain’s ‘Integral Humanism’” article, published in *Criterion* in 1935, shows that fascism was an acceptable political order as long as fascist governments did not infringe upon the rights of the Catholic Church.¹³ Pico, a frequent commentator in *Criterion*, believed that Catholics should ally with fascists to save the world from communism. Manuel G lvez, wrote admiringly of the fascist movement throughout Europe. Galv z believed that, “Sooner or later the social war will begin. At that time to avoid the communist horror, with its crimes, its satanic destructive power, its destruction of man, its militant atheism, the iron hand of Fascism will become necessary: violent, dispensing justice and salvation.”¹⁴ For Galv z, fascism was the protector of traditional values and of religion. Fascism could reverse the social trends towards individualism and liberalism because allegiance was demanded by the State and its collective value system. Within this statement, Galv z also included religious imagery, subtly uniting religiosity with fascism. G lvez refers to communism as “satanic” and therefore against the very basis of Catholicism. He also alludes to the “violent hand of fascism” not unlike the Old Testament image of God who also dispenses “justice and salvation”. Such rhetoric not only created fear and hostility towards communism, but it also put fascism on the opposite and righteous side of the ideological battle.

Although Manuel G lvez supported fascist movements across Europe, he paid particular attention to the Falangists of Spain and their struggle to achieve a fascist state.

¹³ Ces r Pico, “Una respuesta a Jacques Maritain,” *Criterion*, 1935. *Integral Humanism* was a widely read treatise by Jacques Maritain. Maritain was one of the premier Catholic thinkers of the twentieth century, and was perhaps the most notable Thomist scholar. Source?

¹⁴ Galv z, as quoted in Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 107.

Gálvez recognized the important bond between Argentine culture and Spanish culture. He wrote, “Our concept of life... of family, morality, and the dignity of women, is in danger. Our Catholic religion is in danger. Even our language is in danger, which will become daily more bastardized by foreign voices and habits.” For Gálvez, Generalissimo Francisco Franco symbolized, “the heroic mission of authentic Christianity” and war offered an option between the “highest religious and cultural values of the West and Marxist barbarism.”¹⁵ Franco and the Falangists offered salvation for Spain from the effects of modernism and liberalism. Interestingly, Galvéz used “our” to identify the Spanish struggle, as if Argentina was also a part of the civil war. Galvéz believed that the fate of both countries was intertwined and Franco was the hero and model for leadership within government.

Other prominent nationalist intellectuals echoed Gálvez’s beliefs. Father Julio Meinvielle, the influential priest and Catholic nationalist, believed fascist violence was necessary to defeat communism. By 1937 Meinvielle decided that fascism was an acceptable form of government for Argentina. Meinvielle supported the war in Spain, claiming that the Spanish fascists were launching a “purifying war under the cross.”¹⁶ Carlos Ibarguren echoed Meinvielle’s support for the Nationalist Right in Spain, stating that, “The fields of Spain have become a testimony to God in the blood of his martyrs and heroes. In community of faith and inspired by this example, we shall embark on our own struggle.”¹⁷ Ibarguren’s words reflect the dichotomous political ideology nationalists created. The “community of faith” and the “martyrs and heroes” of Spain most definitely meant the fascists, meanwhile, the “purifying war” was launched against the communists

¹⁵ Gálvez, as quoted in Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina* 88.

¹⁶ Julio Meinvielle, *Un juicio católico*, 38-45.

¹⁷ Dr. Carlos Ibarguren, *Orígenes*, 392.

supporters. Nationalists believed that the only political options available were communism or fascism.

Using Fascism to Defeat Communism:

To Argentine nationalists, nothing was more perverse or unimaginable than a communist government. Communism, to nationalists, was not just communists, but all “others” including leftists, liberals, socialists and anarchists, and Jews, almost the exact definition Spanish nationalists used for the Popular Front in the Civil War. Dr. Carlos Ibarguren perfectly defined the nationalist perspective stating that, “A formidable fight has begun between two large currents that principally occupy today’s political scene: international materialistic communism and corporatism, fascism that is nationalist and spiritualist.”¹⁸ At stake, for nationalists, was their very way of life, based around the traditions of Spain, chiefly Catholicism. In the tense atmosphere of the 1930s, the nationalists became increasingly militant. What were once attitudes were crystallized, by the Spanish Civil War, into “dogmatic certainties, hurled at the general public.”¹⁹

Fear was at the root of this world divided into black and white, between fascism and communism. Emerging in 1937, the *Alianza Juventud Nacionalista*, (AJN), formed as a coalition of student groups aimed at converting young workers to “*nacionalismo*”. The AJN believed that if workers were not converted, they would otherwise fall prey to Marxism. By the late 1930s, the AJN attracted nearly 30,000 to 50,000 adherents.²⁰ Fear also drove governmental policy in Argentina. In September 1936, restrictions were placed on the right to public assembly, and two months later, The Argentine Senate

¹⁸ Dr. Carlos Ibarguren, *La inquietud de esta hora*, (____) 55.

¹⁹ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 88.

²⁰ Deutsch, *Las Dererchas*, 208.

passed a bill for the repression of communism. The bill was so broadly written that “virtually any expression of liberal opinion could become a matter of criminal justice.”²¹

Even those who were lukewarm to the idea of fascism, supported the authoritarian government as a means to defeating communism. While Gustavo Franceschi was sympathetic to fascism, especially Italian fascism, he saw the movement as a “slippery slope” for Catholics and advised the readers of *Criterio* to be wary of the trappings of fascism. Franceschi, however, was a great admirer of Franco, and abhorred communism, thus trapping himself in support of fascism. Beginning in late 1936, Franceschi published a weekly column on the Communist threat in both Spain and Argentina. The feature would last for over three years. Franceschi wrote that he was “disgusted by communism”, and criticized communist protests in Córdoba (Argentina). He wrote, “The past two Sundays there were parades in the city of Córdoba, with screams of ‘Franco no, Fresco no, frailes no’”.²²

Nowhere in Argentina was fascism more militant or violent than in the city of Córdoba. In Córdoba, Argentine fascists infiltrated universities, governmental positions, and other aspects of life. The organization “*Fascismo Argentino*” of Córdoba defined its version of fascism as the “violent restitution of the spiritual.”²³ The motto refers to the militancy of these nationalists, and their absolute belief in the evils of communism. Reinforced by the Spanish Civil War, the battle lines between rightists and communists hardened within the city. Previously opposing nationalist factions united to form the

²¹ Falcoff and Pike, 305.

²² Gustavo J. Franceschi as quoted in Deustch, *Las Derechas*, 245; Gustavo J. Franceschi, “Frentes Populares y anticomunismo,” *Criterio* 453:9 (5 November 1936) 221. “Fresco” refers to the governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. Fresco was a fascist sympathizer and a known supporter of Catholic nationalism.

²³ *Ibid*, 218.

“*Frente de Fuerzas Fascistas*” (Fascist Forces Front) of Córdoba in 1935, changing its name the following year to the “*Unión Nacional Fascista*”. In this important province, with the second most populous city in Argentina, the principal Nationalist groups embraced the fascist label.²⁴

Dissension Among Nationalists

Despite such militancy in the Córdoba province, not all Catholic nationalists supported fascism. In fact, many prominent nationalist intellectuals were either undecided or against the fascist movement underfoot. One of the leading nationalist voices, Federico Ibarguren, believed that nationalists were in no way fascists, and in fact, argued against fascism as a means to reforming government in Argentina. Ibarguren believed that the origins of fascism lay in socialism, but that that nationalism was a direct result of Catholicism and the “Hispanic cult of personality” present in Argentine society.²⁵ Commenting on the type of government he wanted for Argentina, Ibarguren wrote that:

The Spanish War from the beginning and with contagious force impacted the Argentine nationalism of my time: which, related to the middle of the year 1936, found its critical moment for the second time, “to lose” its [Argentina’s] own revolution against the regime. José Primo de Rivera agreed with us because his perspective, like ours, was completely Christian... The racist fantasies of Hitler and Rosenberg could not attract us in any way... Hitler and Mussolini were our allies in the critique of liberalism. But, we [Argentine nationalists] were never antidemocratic from a social point of view. We wanted a social democracy for Argentina.²⁶

Although Federico Ibarguren believed that nationalists always wanted a “social democracy” in Argentina, Ibarguren still sympathizes with the leaders of fascist states. Ibarguren praised Hitler and Mussolini for their critique of liberalism and their staunch

²⁴ Ibid., 216.

²⁵ Federico Ibarguren, quote as cited in Deutsch, *Las Derechas*, 245.

²⁶ Federico Ibarguren, *Orígenes del nacionalismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Celcius, 1969) 365.

objection to leftism in their respective countries. Ibarra was opposed to fascism, yet he admired the ousted Spanish leader, Primo de Rivera, for his commitment to Christianity and, like fascist leaders, his opposition to liberalism. Additionally, Ibarra still viewed the Spanish War as a “holy war” and throughout his memoir refers to the war as such.

Many nationalists founded their disdain for fascism on the writings of Jacques Maritain. Maritain attacked the notion that the Spanish Civil War was a “holy war” to the astonishment of Catholic nationalists in Argentina. Maritain was French and was a leading Catholic intellectual and considered “the paragon of orthodoxy.”²⁷ Prior to the outbreak of war in Spain, Maritain was the pinnacle of Christian intellectual thought, especially for Catholic nationalists. Maritain was considered the leading Thomist of his time, and his knowledge of St. Thomas Aquinas’ medieval teachings made him particularly relevant to Argentine nationalists.²⁸ The Spanish Civil War, however, caused a drastic change not only in Maritain’s theology, but also divided his supporters. Maritain traveled to Argentina in 1937 to explain his thoughts and actions, and even held open conferences to all those who wished to attend.

Maritain had been a source of inspiration to Argentine nationalists, but his opposition to the Nationalists movement in Spain and his denunciation of Franco’s approval of German test-bombing in Madrid in 1937 and Guernica later that year, splintered Catholic nationalist support for fascism. Maritain’s arguments against Franco highlighted the division among Catholic nationalists. Those who stated they valued

²⁷ Bernard Doering, 492.

²⁸ Catholic nationalists deeply admired the writing of St. Thomas Aquinas. His method of thought, his devotion to the social hierarchy of the Middle Ages, as well as his astounding influence on Catholic doctrine made Thomism extremely important to Catholic nationalists.

individual human life, above all else, subscribed to Maritain's teachings and split with the militant nationalists. Those who believed in the power and necessity of the State sided with Franco's actions in Spain. Maritain's stance appeared to advocate opting out of a struggle where the violent destruction of the Church was at stake.²⁹ Many nationalists were unconvinced by Maritain's words, but his words nonetheless sparked controversy and division among the ranks. In a jointly authored manifesto, "For the Basque People," Maritain wrote that:

Whatever opinion one may have of the parties that are at odds in Spain, it is certainly beyond question that the Basque people is a Catholic people and that public Catholic worship has never been interrupted in the Basque country. Under such conditions it is up to Catholics, without distinction of party to be the first to raise up their voices and to tell the world the pitiless massacre of a Christian people. Nothing can justify, nothing can excuse the bombardment of open cities like Guernica.³⁰

Maritain maintained that no matter one's political beliefs, Catholics should never attack Catholics. In this manifesto, Maritain outright denounced Franco's actions and as a result, sided with the Republicans in Spain.

Later, in 1937, Maritain's authored a more forceful reproach of the Nationalists in Spain. The article, "About the Holy War", was republished in the Argentine literary magazine *Sur*. This was the most prominent literary magazine in all of South America and published articles from famous Hispanic-American intellectuals as well as prominent international figures, ranging from Jorge Luis Borges to Virginia Woolf. In his influential article Maritain wrote, "We forget that evil is evil and that it is growing at the present time... It is a horrible sacrilege to massacre priests, even if they are 'fascist', (they are the ministers of Christ), out of hatred for religion; and it is another sacrilege,

²⁹ Austen A. Ivereigh, 120.

³⁰ Jacques Maritain, "For the Basque People", as found in Bernard Doering, "Jacque Maritain and the Spanish Civil War," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 4. (Oct., 1982), 489-522.

just as horrible, to massacre the poor...³¹ Maritain's words were important to nationalists for he was the standard by which they judged themselves. Maritain's articles prompted a flurry of responses, both from Argentine nationalists who supported and denounced his beliefs.

Rafael Pividal, a prominent nationalist intellectual, responded to Maritain's "About the Spanish Civil War" by echoing the Frenchman's position. Pividal wrote that, "Between one side and the other, we are not able to choose. If one side kills priests, who are the ministers of Christ, the other side kills the poor, who are also of Christ." He continued, "This war is not a holy war because it is against the people... But it is pure illusion to believe that the victory of the 'good' will rescue Spain from its deficiencies and that under the recovered order the spiritual resources will be exercised with greater effectiveness."³² Pividal was clearly influenced by Maritain, quoting him throughout the article, siding with Maritain against fascism. Pividal and Maritain opposed Franco's actions in Spain because instead of uniting Catholics behind fascism, the fascist movement was annihilating religious cohesion.

The Great Debate

The controversy over fascism reached a boiling point at the end of 1937 when the magazines *Sur* and *Criterion* ran articles featuring warring intellectuals of the Nationalist movement. The different articles represented a veritable battle of words, attacking each other for their political tendencies. Editor-in-chief Gustavo Franceschi of *Criterion* began the controversy by attacking the literary magazine *Sur*, stating that it was "a frankly

³¹ Jacques Maritain, "Sobre la Guerra Santa," *Sur* 35 (1937) 105. The article is reprinted in *Sur*, translated from its original form in French, printed in Sept/July 1937.

leftist magazine”.³³ *Sur*, in retaliation, printed a response to Franceschi’s accusations and attacked the Catholic publication for its support of dictatorships and intolerance. The opening article, titled “The Position of *Sur*”, listed all of the things that *Sur* believed in, stating,

We want simple and concrete things: We wish to continue the profound tradition of our country which is a democratic tradition...we want a better clergy, a clergy who is more interested in the eternal spiritual questions and not the transitory management of politics. We do not conceive of anything more than an apostolic clergy, a Church without excessive submission to temporal powers. We are against all dictators, against oppression, against all the exerted forms of ignominy on the dark human congregation that has been called saintly common masses of God.³⁴

Franceschi’s accusations forced the literary magazine for the first and last time to define its politics. This statement for readers was the only time that *Sur* ever explained its political tendencies. Even with its explanation, *Sur*’s words were vague and non-committal. Instead of focusing on defining its own politics, *Sur* stated what it was *not* and safely announced a naturalist belief in “eternal spiritual values”.³⁵ The magazine’s self-definition left room for different shades of liberalism, conservatism, even Catholicism and nationalism, so long as these beliefs did not interfere with the secular state.

Although *Sur* had a definite liberal intellectual tendency, the magazine succeeded in collecting the writings and thoughts of dissenting Nationalists as well as non-aligned conservatives, those who denounced fascism yet maintained their belief in religion, tradition, hierarchy and class stability. Additionally, more liberal Argentines also wrote in *Sur*, attacking Nationalists who had fascist tendencies. The opposition to the group

³³ Rafael Pividal, “Católicos fascistas y católicos personalistas,” *Sur* 35 (1937) 95-96.

³⁴ “Posición de *Sur*,” *Sur* 35 (1937) 8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8; Austen Ivereigh, 120.

was large, and the fascist-nationalists were characterized as those that, “want an authoritarian order to the point of tyranny, structured around class differences; thus the poor man is worthy of all love if he accepts his rank. They hate freedom of thought, as if it could be suppressed.”³⁶ Liberals and their new-found allies, the conservatives and Catholics who favored Maritain’s point of view, succeeded in accumulating a large and vocal response to this new nationalist-fascist strain of thought.

Additionally, all of Maritain’s essays concerning the Spanish Civil War, including the influential piece, “Integral Humanism,” were exclusively published in *Sur* and not *Criterion*. Franceschi refused to publish Maritain’s words against the Spanish Right and in doing so *Criterion* was placed in the awkward position of refuting the world’s leading Thomist, and someone who the publication previously published and openly admired. By publishing Jacques Maritain’s works, *Sur* advantageously positioned the French intellectual on the liberal, leftist side of the debate. To compensate for the “loss” of such an important Catholic intellectual, *Criterion* focused its attacks not on Maritain, but rather on the literary publication *Sur* and its effect on Argentine society.

Criterion saw Franco as transcending the left-right dichotomy, a new solution to the previous domination of the liberal-conservative order.³⁷ To *Criterion*, *Sur* and its publishers as well as readers, represented the liberal ruling order and mirrored the Spanish tragedy. Franceschi wrote from Spain that the “violence was a tragic consequence of bourgeois complacency and frivolity, of a small, self-indulgent class which had ignored wider society in favor of immoderate gains.”³⁸ By issuing a statement that chastised the Church for its intervention in politics while simultaneously remaining

³⁶ Rafael Pividal, “Católicos fascistas y católicos personalistas,” *Sur* 35 (1937) 91.

³⁷ Austen Ivereigh, 120.

³⁸ Gustavo Franceschi, “Mártires, rehenes y verdugos,” *Criterion* no. 489 (15 July 1937).

detached from the atrocities committed in Spain, *Sur* positioned itself for attack by Franceschi. Although *Sur*'s statement was meant to assure its intellectual independence, Franceschi attacked the statement as a justification of the moral detachment and unjust distribution of wealth that characterized the liberal and left-wing oligarchy. Additionally, the statement enabled *Criterio* to justify its classification of *Sur* as "left-wing", and therefore, as an incubator for communist movement and mouthpiece for such ideologies.³⁹

Despite this strong opposition, fascism remained alluring to many nationalists because it was the polar opposite of their greatest fear: communism. For many nationalist intellectuals, fascism was necessary because it offered salvation from the Red Threat. Enrique Osés, editor of the nationalist publication *Crisol* stated that, "Uncompromising hatred of leftists... The total repudiation of red internationalism is the predominant sentiment in nacionalismo."⁴⁰ For many nationalists combating communism, and the threat of individualism and secularism it espoused, was more important than disputes over fascism.

Fascism was a means to an end, and religiosity and the protection of tradition were of the utmost importance. To nationalists, it was possible to blend Catholicism and fascism, but it was in no way possible to reconcile the Catholic faith and communism. Franco, and his Nationalist Front in the Spanish Civil War, offered the possibility of a new form of fascism, one that reconciled Catholicism, tradition and anti-modernism with a new, modern government. Looking ever to the past for their future, nationalists in both

³⁹ Austen Ivereigh, 122.

⁴⁰ Enrique Osés in *Clarínada* 2, no. 13 (May 1938), as cited in Duetsch, *Las Derechas*, 218.

Spain and Argentina relied on their Catholic heritage to shape their vision of government and society.

CONCLUSION

The debate over fascism was symbolic of the predicament facing many Catholic nationalists. Argentine nationalists, the truest proponents, were Thomists who believed in the medieval Catholic order and tried to maneuver in an increasingly secular world. The Spanish Civil War was a terrifying incarnation of nationalist hopes and fears. To these nationalists, the war was not a complicated battle of many opposing ideals and goals. Instead, there were only two sides: the god-fearing and those who wished to destroy the pious. As Gustavo Franceschi commented, “one [side], truly demonic, that synthesizes everything that is hatred of Christ; another that, in spite of the shortcomings that exist everywhere in the best of human works, serves God and allows hearts to be lifted up unto Him.”¹

Conveniently, nationalists overlooked the fact that both sides committed major atrocities. In Spain, Catholics killed Catholics, and Franco was not, as they had hoped, a sincere corporatist, but rather a pragmatist looking for victory. Both Argentine and Spanish nationalists glossed over their “shortcomings,” (as Franceschi put it), from the assassination of Federico García Lorca to the bombings of Guernica. Many of Argentina’s most prolific intellectual and literary figures supported the Spanish nationalist cause, such as novelists Manuel Gálvez and Julio Cortázar, poets like Leopoldo Lugones, historians including Alberto Ezcurra Medrano and Carlos Ibarguren, and essayists such as Ramón Doll and Federico Ibarguren.

¹ “Posiciones”, *Criterio* 10, no. 493 (August 12, 1937) 350.

These intellectuals, aside from publishing, formed the group *Socorro Blanco Argentino pro-Reconstrucción de España* to raise money for Nationalist Spain in order to “confront the diabolic forces of Communism.” However, the principal task of these pro-Burgos writers was to cushion the devastating effect on the Argentine literary public of the murder of Federico García Lorca.² Gustavo Franceschi demanded that Catholics accept Franco’s version of events in Guernica—that the city had been burned by retreating Basque forces themselves—and that he himself had visited the town and seen signs of destruction by arson rather than bombing.³ Such events were problematic for nationalists and potentially undermined their version of a black and white war. However, to maintain their way of life, including their traditions, and above all, their Catholicism, sacrifices had to be made. Some of these nationalists even considered sacrificing their democratic system to preserve what they believed was their uniquely Hispanic-American identity .

Reinvigorated conservative nationalism was not peculiar to Argentina and it is important to recognize that this rise of nationalism and reversion to extreme conservative ideas was truly a trans-Atlantic process. Argentine nationalists were positioning themselves among some of the most important political and intellectual debates of the 1930s. Like many in Western Europe, Argentine intellectuals questioned the importance of modernity, secularism, traditionalism, liberalism and authoritarianism. They were asserting their own connection to Southern and Western Europe and showed the relevance of Latin America to Europe, as well as the Catholic Church. Additionally,

² Falcoff and Pike, 330.

³ “El eclipse de la moral”, *Criterio* 10, no. 482 (May 27, 1937) 77-99.

their intense relationship with Spain made these issues all the more pressing to Argentine intellectuals.

Nationalism in its multifarious forms provided an alternative vision for a country that had long been dominated by nineteenth-century liberalism. Perhaps this reconnection was also one of the greatest problems for Argentina, and created many political issues that continue to plague them today. It is within the 1930s that Argentina lost its close economic relationship with Britain, which had enabled Argentina's meteoric rise to power and prestige. As Argentina shunned its relationship with Great Britain, it experimented with new economic and political practices that in hindsight often hindered their success. The nationalists sought to reclaim their Hispanic and Latin Catholic heritage as their true and organic governing traditions.⁴

This heritage, in contrast to liberalism, was corporatist and perhaps even fascist. It was hierarchical, paternalistic, collectivist and militaristic, as well as ordered and controlled. Corporatism, structured like the familial unit, as Juan Carulla described, and was part of the Hispanic heritage. It intertwined throughout Spanish and Spanish-American history, and is still present in modern Hispanic-American social systems. Just as a family is linked by blood, so were Argentina and Spain. Corporatism was not only a part of their identity, but was an issue over which blood was spilled in Spain. For Argentines, with strong cultural ties to Spain, and with Argentina's large Hispanic immigrant population, corporatism was worth the bloodshed. It was *their* institution, unique to a Hispanic identity and it offered an escape from the world's march towards secular, individualistic societies.

⁴ Michael A. Burdick, 38

The peculiarly Spanish controversies that had ignited the Spanish war, “land reform, the role of the military in political life, church-state relations, educational and cultural innovation” were familiar to Argentines, since for the most part, the very same issues had long constituted the major debates in their political life.⁵ Although Argentina severed political ties with Spain almost 100 years prior, the influence of Spanish culture had dramatically risen throughout the early 1900s. Argentina, as stated before, had the second highest Hispanic immigration rates in the Western hemisphere.⁶ Additionally, Spanish and Argentine intellectuals were working to repair cultural ties through both the hispanismo and hispanidad movements. Liberalism, the tradition of foreigners, was failing across the world as the Depression strangled many national economies. And finally, communism, which to many nationalists was synonymous with Godlessness, was growing increasingly threatening. All of these factors, combined with the seeming parallelism of the Spanish political environment, coalesced to strengthen and unite the nationalist movement in Argentina.

Coinciding with the rise of Catholic nationalism in Argentina was the rise of Catholic activity. Religious and intellectual elites formed a Catholic political party and established newspapers and journals like *Criterio*. Although their immediate successes were marginal at best, their efforts paid off in the long term, especially as the country underwent significant social and political transformations. It was this upsurge in nationalism that produced the necessary political and cultural matrix for a renascent Catholicism.⁷ Military and political leader reasserted their Catholic roots and professed

⁵ Falcoff and Pike, x

⁶ Ibid, xii

⁷ Michael A. Burdick, *For God and Fatherland: Religion and Politics in Argentina* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 1995) 37.

their deep faith in Catholicism and the peculiar breed of nationalism it supposedly supported. As the Spanish Civil War waned, Argentina continued to experience a rise in Catholicism. In 1939, Pope Pius XII established a new diocese in Argentina, further revealing this continued growth.⁸ Catholicism and nationalism, as invigorated by the Spanish Civil War, continued to share a close-knit relationship. In 1943, mandatory religious education was established in all Argentine schools, and the ruling elite were praised by the Catholic hierarchy. In a letter to Argentina's newly instated President, Pablo Ramírez, a bishop wrote, "Your patriotism, auscultating one of the deepest yearnings of the Argentine public, has recovered for the Mother country the immortality of its great destinies, orienting them towards the thinkers and heroes that forged our nationality."⁹

The rise of Catholic nationalism also laid the foundations for the most important Argentine political figure of the twentieth century: Juan Domingo Perón. Upon the death of his first wife, Perón spent two years in Europe where he "witnessed Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and the destruction caused by the Spanish Civil War."¹⁰ Later, writing and speaking as President, Perón hinted at how these experiences shaped him. Perón would eventually rise through the military ranks to become one of the most important military officials in the country. His deep experience with the military reflected his political policies. Much like Franco, Perón was a military man who was "authoritarian in style and corporatist in policy."¹¹ The military's professional training taught order,

⁸ Mary Ruth Harlan, "The Relations of Juan Domingo Perón with the Catholic Church", (M.A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1967). Appendix V, 119.

⁹ "Letter from the Bishop to Ramírez", as found in Mary Ruth Harlan, Appendix VIII, 123.

¹⁰ Theron Corse, *Projecting the Constructed Image of Juan Perón 1945-1949*, M.A. Thesis submitted to Vanderbilt University, May, 1995, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 14-15.

hierarchy and discipline, but he also broke with the military's traditional attitude towards organized labor.¹²

Perón's rise to power and his initial years as President of Argentina, beginning in 1946, reflected many of the ideas earlier Catholic nationalists espoused. Perón closely allied himself with the Church and military, was a member of the higher echelons of Argentine society, thus appeasing what the nationalists saw as the "unholy trinity" of power. Perón was able to gain the wholehearted support of the working class, something that traditional conservatives could not do, but was something the younger, more radical nationalists sought through corporatism and religion. The figure of Perón also seemed as worthy of worship as Franco did to the Spanish nationalists. Of the day he was brought to power, one historian commented that Perón "gained a powerful mythological quality. For the Peronists, it was like Mohammed's ascension or the resurrection of Christ."¹³ At the time, Peron was viewed by many as the savior of Argentine government.

As President, to the relief of Catholic nationalists, Perón never fully rid Argentina of democracy, but rather transformed it to a more corporatist style.¹⁴ Like the corporate system, Perón's government was extremely vertical in nature and mimicked the shape of a family. In fact, one of the largest shortcomings of Peronism is its extreme dependence on one man who could not be replaced after his death or departure, a man whose vast loyalty and allegiance were given by the common people.¹⁵ Those same common people were also sent shoes, food, even pictures of Perón and his wife Eva, and were told that

¹² Ibid, 15.

¹³ Ibid, 7.

¹⁴ Gino Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism and National Populism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Basic Books, 1978).

¹⁵ Frederick C. Turner, "The Cycle of Peronism", *Juan Perón and the Reshaping of Argentina*. (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg, 1983) 4.

the gifts were “personally sent to them from the Perons.”¹⁶ Perón, in a series of essays, defended his rise to power and the shape of his government. In the first essay Perón wrote that, “All the system [democracy] was based on the equality of human rights; but as economic situations were very different, such an equality of rights was merely a form of words. This is proved by the fact that throughout the nineteenth century and the main part of the twentieth political power was wielded by those possessing economic power as well.”¹⁷ What Perón believed “the oligarchy would never forgive him” was his unification of the “State organizations” and the “working class.”¹⁸ Peron believed that he put an end to the injustices of the old Argentine democracy and reinvigorated the populace by creating economic reform and social reform. Perón was a symbol of nationalist power in Argentina and answered the prayers of these earlier nationalist intellectuals. Peron offered salvation for the Argentine State just as Franco had inspired the nationalist and pro-Burgos faction during the Spanish Civil War.

While the Argentine Catholic nationalists of the late 1930s may have been essayists, poets and columnists, their writings offered more than just literary value. Drawing on the real life crisis occurring in Spain, these nationalists convincingly argued that the same ideological battle could strike in Argentina. Their world of traditionalism, Hispanism and most importantly, Catholicism, could disappear if the evils of modernity and secularism were not staved. These Catholic nationalists used the waging of war in Spain to gain prominence and a new sense of purpose. The writings of these intellectuals were more than simply a part of a larger, global swing towards reactionary conservatism.

¹⁶ Interview with Marta Langdon, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. August 13, 2007. Langdon was about 10 years old when Perón was elected and was a member of the more “elite” classes.

¹⁷ Juan Domingo Perón. *Political and Social Situation of Argentina Prior to the Revolution of 1943*, (Buenos Aires: 1948) 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 15.

Their ideas were absorbed into mainstream Argentine politics during the 1940s and helped create the most famous and most notorious politician in Argentine history.

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