

Chapter 2

The Unarmed Left Against Third Peronism (1973–1976): An Analysis of the Positions of Argentine Stalinism and Trotskyism Towards the Agrarian Policy of Peronism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter tackles the junction between these two phenomena: the growth of the Argentine left and the politics of the third Peronism in the 1970s in Argentina. The authors study the positioning of the first actor against the measures of the second. To this end, they examine two political parties from two opposite traditions within Marxism: the Communist Party (CP), formed in the Stalinist tradition, and the Socialist Workers Party (PST), part of Argentine Trotskyism. These are, in both cases, organizations that did not bet on the deployment of forms of armed struggle and thus have been relegated by the historiography. Indeed, the main contributions to the study of the left were concentrated in the main political-military organizations: Montoneros.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1970's was a convulsed stage throughout Latin America. Labor mobilizations, the rise of the agrarian insurgency and student revolts were the norm across much of the continent. Argentina did not escape that scenario and even attended a marked insurreccional process, which began with the famous mass political strike known as "Cordobazo" in 1969 (Balvé & Balvé, 2005). At that time sectors of the working class and the students staged large mobilizations and classism emerged, i. e. the growth of a combative and class positions based leadership in unions and the consolidation of left-wing political organizations that aimed at a profound radical transformation. Thus, parties emerged that bet, following the example of the Cuban Revolution, to the formation of armed structures of various types (regular armies, rural guerrillas, urban guerrillas), without neglecting their insertion in union structures. Two political parties stood out among this group: Montoneros an expression of "left Peronism", and the Workers Revolutionary Party and its People's Revolutionary Army (PRT-ERP), which became the maximum expression of the Marxist left of the stage. However, there were also parties that ruled out the immediate adoption of forms of armed struggle, and prioritized instead the construction of mass fronts that would bring them closer to the mobilized workers and students.

This process of social activation and growth of a left that challenged the foundations of capitalist society, alarmed the Argentine ruling class and forced it to seek alternatives to decompress the growing social discontent. The Cordobazo had been an important political coup to a military dictatorship, the so-called "Argentine Revolution", which had been postulated in 1966 as a long-term regime that came to make deep political, economic and social transformations. Between 1971 and 1972, a process of democratic opening began, rehearsed under a "Great National Agreement" (GAN), which included Peronism, a political movement banned for almost two decades. The GAN intended to reestablish the institutional channels to contain the social conflict. In this project, Peronism, which would finally come to power in 1973, played an important role. The new government bet to redirect the protest under a nationalist rhetoric, which exalted what they considered were great social and economic achievements of the first Peronist governments (1946-1955), and a series of economic measures that included a "Social Pact" and an "Agrarian Pact".

This article tackles the junction between these two phenomena: the growth of the Argentine left and the politics of the third Peronism, in the 1970s in Argentina. We study the positioning of the first actor against the measures of the second. To this end, we examine two political parties from two opposite traditions within Marxism: the Communist Party (CP), formed in the Stalinist tradition, and the Socialist Workers Party (PST), part of Argentine Trotskyism. These are, in both cases, organizations that did not bet on the deployment of forms of armed struggle and thus have been

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