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The Santa Cruz Strikes:
A Case Study of Labor Relations in the Yrigoyen Era

by

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Thesis

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The Santa Cruz Strikes:
A Case Study In Labor Relations In The Yrigoyen

A Thesis Presented

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

From October of 1920 to January of 1922, the sheep-raising territory of Santa Cruz, at the southernmost tip of Argentine Patagonia became the scene of violent labor disorders which pitted a largely foreign-born laboring population against a largely foreign-born proprietary group. The Santa Cruz strikes were part of a general wave of labor unrest which swept Argentina at the close of World War I. The most severe incidents, like the Santa Cruz strikes, affected the vital export sector. The Radical president, Hipólito Yrigoyen, who had entered office in 1916 appearing to favor an official reconciliation with organized labor, found himself uncomfortably poised between the contending forces of labor and export interests. Yrigoyen's response to this wave of labor disorder has been one of the most controversial aspects of his presidency.

Regarding the Santa Cruz strikes, themselves, the sharply contradictory versions of what occurred still arouse partisan feeling. Amidst the continuing debate, there is one point of agreement: Yrigoyen's handling of these strikes and others of the period, provides insight into the play of political forces, both domestic and international, during the era of Radical Party dominance.

While a variety of political considerations shaped the Radical government's response to the strikes, the conditions which gave rise to the labor unrest in Santa Cruz resulted from decades of official neglect of the territory's development. The lackadaisical approach to the distribution of public lands typified this neglect. During the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, the public domain had been marked off on maps in checker-board style without reference to topography or prevailing climatic conditions and then offered for sale or lease. The varying quality of the land and the need for each rancher to possess both winter and summer pasturage were ignored. Limitations on individual landholdings were enacted but not enforced. The rough and tumble grab for land that ensued favored those with capital who were willing to brave the wind-swept plains.

The results of the government's failure to adopt a land distribution policy that responded to local conditions and also to the aspirations of native-born Argentines seeking an opportunity for a better life were apparent in the censuses of 1914 and 1920.* In each of the five administrative divisions of the territory, persons of foreign birth outnumbered the native-born by a margin of more than two to one. Furthermore, since census figures included all children born on Argentine soil regardless of parentage, as Argentine, the actual role of the Argentine in the settlement of Santa Cruz was even less significant. Only one out of every four or five adult males in the territory was Argentine-born.**

*Appendix I

**Appendix II

The only exception to this pattern was found in the northernmost district, that of Deseado, where the national government had payed some belated attention to land policy. By provision of Law 5559 of 1908, the government had made available medium-sized parcels of grazing land. In addition, a railway was constructed which linked these properties to the coast. These conditions proved more favorable to Argentine settlement than had the earlier approach, as the figures indicate. Yet, a German geographer familiar with the territory, described Deseado as containing by far the poorest lands in Santa Cruz.¹ As one moved southward onto more fertile lands, the size of the average holding increased, and the amount of investment per hectare also increased, but the proportion of Argentines holding land decreased.* The official neglect had made the Argentine a stepchild in Santa Cruz.

Another indication of the failure to create conditions favorable to the permanent settlement of Santa Cruz was the numerical imbalance between the sexes. The general predominance of males in the immigrant population, and the absence of economic opportunities for women in the territory would seem to account for this phenomenon. Whatever the reason the inability of the average ranch worker to enjoy normal family life emerged during the strikes as an underlying grievance.

The years of neglect and haphazard development resulted in an exceedingly fragile economy. The settlers had concentrated, to

*Appendix III

¹Lutz Witte, "Consideraciones económicas sobre la patagonia austral" in Sociedad Científica Alemana, Patagonia V. II (Buenos Aires, 1917) pp. 391-3.

the exclusion of other activities, on the raising of sheep and the export of its by-products: meat, tallow, and especially wool. Residents of the territory were obliged to import food-stuffs, fuel, and building supplies, all at great cost.

Ironically, local consumption of several commodities could have been met, at least in part, by local production.² Lumber was plentiful in the Andean mountains to the west, and outcroppings of coal were known to exist in the southwestern corner of the territory. The well-watered valleys in the Andean foothills might have been farmed intensively to provide dairy and vegetable staples. Instead, the fertile Andean zone, like the rest of Santa Cruz, was divided into huge lots and grazed by sheep.

From 1900 to 1918, the national government had permitted the settlers of Santa Cruz to trade directly with Europe rather than having to import via the entrepot of Buenos Aires. Seeking to increase customs revenues and perhaps foster some degree of import substitution, Yrigoyen withdrew this privilege in 1918. The net result was higher prices for a number of essential commodities purchased by the residents of Santa Cruz.³

The timing of Yrigoyen's removal of trading privileges coincided with the heyday of the wool export industry of the territory. Demand for wool by the Allies had created a boom, which was immediately followed by a collapse in the international wool

²Ibid. 402-404.

³Edelmiro Correa Falcón, De la llanura, del bosque y de la montaña. (Buenos Aires, 1966), p. 47-53.

market.* The full effects of the rising prices for imported goods and a falling price for Santa Cruz' major export commodity were soon felt. Faced with a falling price for wool after 1919, the producers in Santa Cruz responded by increasing rather than decreasing production. The results were bankruptcies and unemployment. Several small to medium-sized producers who had become overextended during the boom years were forced to sell their lands to larger neighbors.⁴

Thus, severe economic recession was the backdrop to the labor unrest that developed in Santa Cruz after 1920. Twenty-five years of haphazard settlement had significantly excluded the native-born Argentine while it left the dominant immigrant population divided both socially and economically. Economic stagnation added to the accumulated frustration of an already harsh existence.

*Appendix IV

⁴Ibid. 28-30. Sociedad, 404. Col. José María Sarobe, La Patagonia y sus problemas. (Buenos Aires, 1935), 138.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST STRIKE

The history of organized labor in Santa Cruz was a short one prior to the outbreak of the first strike in late 1920. The origin of the movement lay, in part, with the arrival of dockworkers and railway men who were organized elsewhere. In addition, unions in Santa Cruz received a strong stimulus from the turbulent labor movement in the neighboring Chilean territory of Magallanes. In late 1918, a strike of railwaymen and stevedores in Deseado was crushed by police intervention and by the employers' threats to import strike breakers.¹

Simultaneous to the strike in Deseado was a general strike in Magallanes, which proved harder to suppress. There, ranch laborers had joined with transport workers in a work stoppage that lasted from December 1918 well into February of the following year. Sporadic violence accompanied this strike. In late January, the governor of Magallanes contacted his counterpart in Santa Cruz to despatch forces to help bolster the Chilean carabineros. Diego Ritchie, a rancher of mixed Argentine and British parentage who served as chief of Santa Cruz' territorial police, immediately departed for Magallanes with forty men.²

¹Sebastián Marotta, Movimiento sindical argentino. III (Buenos Aires, 1973) p. 200.

²Col. José Rodríguez, Riquezas y bellezas australes. (Buenos Aires, 1921) pp. 168-175.

This official cooperation in order to crush the unions in Magallanes led to a parallel cooperation between the leadership of organized labor on both sides of the international boundary. Veterans of the Magallanes strike sought safety in Santa Cruz once the authorities had gained control of the situation. In 1919, the governments of Argentina and Chile recognized the need for continued cooperation along the boundary by formalizing their understanding in a diplomatic protocol.³

In 1920, trade union activity in Santa Cruz intensified. In January of that year, groups of workers on the docks and in the hotels and stores of Río Gallegos formed the Workingmen's Society. In July, this group struck for higher wages. Diego Ritchie arrested the Workingmen's Society's leaders, Antonio Soto and Baltazar Lórido and charged them with fomenting revolution. Soto, who was the recognized instigator of the strike, had arrived only months before, traveling with a theatrical troupe from which he separated. To Ritchie's surprise, he was quickly ordered to release the two prisoners by the judicial authority of the territory, Judge Ismael P. Viñas. Viñas, himself, was a recent arrival to Santa Cruz. The Radical Administration had appointed him to the sole judicial position in the territory, apparently because of his loyalty to the Radical Party. After Viñas' action, the strike ended in a partial success for the Workingmen's Society.⁴

³Congreso de la Nación. Cámara de Senadores. Diario de sesiones. 1920. I, pp. 628-30.

⁴Oswaldo Bayer, Los vengadores de la patagonia trágica. I (Buenos Aires, 1968) pp. 71-79.

Ritchie protested Viñas intervention to Edelmiro Correa who was serving as acting governor since the removal of the incumbent for malfeasance the previous years. Correa in turn made these views known to his superiors in Buenos Aires and requested federal forces to assist the police in preventing any further labor trouble. In mid-September, however, Correa was formally replaced by an appointee of the Administration, Angel Yza, a retired naval officer. Yza, a man associated with Radicalism, was not to assume actual control of the territorial administration until February of 1921. Thus Correa and Ritchie were allowed to remain in their offices on an interim basis but without enjoying the confidence of the national authorities.

Aware of the split among territorial officials, and particularly of Correa's and Ritchie's vulnerability, the Workingmen's Society resolved to take the initiative. In the last week of September, Soto announced plans to commemorate the martyrdom of Francisco Ferrer, the famed Spanish anarchist who had been executed on October 11, 1909 during the semana trágica of Barcelona. The gesture was provocative. Diego Ritchie announced his intention to prevent the mass meeting planned by the Workingmen's Society. A strategy session held by Soto was broken up by Ritchie's police on October 1st.⁵ A forty-eight hour protest strike was declared, and Soto appealed to Judge Viñas to permit peaceful assemblies of the union's membership. This Viñas granted, but plans for the commemoration of Ferrer's death were shelved. The Society's leaders directed their efforts instead to the

⁵La Vanguardia. October 16, 1920. p. 5

organization of ranch workers in preparation for the opening of the new shearing season in October.⁶

Hoping to forestall just such efforts, Ritchie proceeded to harrass the union's membership. On October 18th, the police surrounded the headquarters of the Workingmen's Society where a meeting was taking place and arrested twenty persons. These included Antonio Soto and José Maria Borrero, a political associate of Viñas, who had taken up the cause of the workers.⁷ Borrero, a Spaniard, was also serving as legal counsel in Río Gallegos for the largest commercial firm in Santa Cruz. This was the Sociedad Anónima Importadora y Exportadora de la Patagonia, owned by the Menéndez interests who were also dominant in ranching.⁸

Both Soto and Borrero, and nearly all those arrested were non-Argentines and as such were subject to deportation under the Residence Law, which provided for the expulsion of dangerous foreigners. This prospect stirred such concern among the union membership that on the nineteenth the warehouses, docks, hotels and restaurants of Río Gallegos were deserted by their employees. Police Chief Ritchie, confident that he could subdue the Workingmen's Society with its leadership behind bars, had chosen the path of direct confrontation.

The arrests of the eighteenth aroused angry protest not only from Río Gallegos' largely foreign-born working population but

⁶Bayer I, p. 79.

⁷Ibid. p. 90.

⁸Ibid. p. 113.

also from the press of the nation's capital. In a rare show of unity, both the Conservative La Prensa and the Socialist La Vanguardia denounced the arrests in Río Gallegos as an abuse of police powers.⁹ La Vanguardia announced that the Workingmen's Society had wired Socialist deputies, asking them to take the matter to the floor of Congress.¹⁰ La Prensa published a telegram signed by 239 residents of Río Gallegos, including the Spanish consul there, which protested what they termed a wave of "police violence" which had continued since the arrests. The group charged Ritchie and Correa with responsibility for the indiscriminate beatings administered to innocent Spanish workers by police and gangs of "armed Englishmen". They criticized Ritchie for closing El antártico, a newspaper owned by Diego Meneses, a Spaniard who was friendly with José María Borrero.¹¹

Along with such unfavorable press reaction, Correa and Ritchie faced the continued opposition of Judge Viñas who ordered the release of all the prisoners. With the support of Correa, Ritchie refused to obey. Not until October 29 after the Minister of the Interior had directed Correa to comply with Viñas' order did the last of those arrested leave jail.

Having achieved the release of the prisoners, the Workingmen's Society chose to broaden the conflict both with local businesses and the territorial administration. On November 12 it presented to the Río Gallegos branch of the Rural Society a

⁹La Prensa. October 26, 1920. p. 12. La Vanguardia. October 23, 1920. p. 1.

¹⁰La Vanguardia. loc. cit.

¹¹La Prensa. loc. cit.

list of demands calling for improvements in pay and working conditions for those employed on the ranches.* The Rural Society, a nationally affiliated organization of livestockmen, served as the ranchers' bargaining agent. The union insisted on acceptance of each one of its demands before a single member, in the port of Río Gallegos or on the ranches of southern Santa Cruz, would return to work. Two of these demands were particularly odious to the ranchers. These were the adoption of a strict code governing the room and board provided ranch workers and the recognition of the Workingmen's Society of Río Gallegos as the sole representative of rural laborers in the adjacent hinterland. However, the demands for increased pay and for several lesser points were accepted in the counter offer made by the Rural Society to the union on November 16th.¹²

The response of the strikers to the ranchers' proposal demonstrated the importance of living conditions among their grievances, but also their willingness to yield somewhat on the question of achieving exclusive recognition for the Workingmen's Society. The Rural Society, in turn, refused to give ground on the question of living conditions except for the Clark family and a Spanish rancher named Benjamín Gómez.¹³ By the end of November, striking members of the Workingmen's Society were fanning out from Río Gallegos spreading the word to isolated ranches throughout southern Santa Cruz. Many of these ranches, just beginning the active season when sheep drives and shearing took place, were

*For the complete text see appendix V

¹²Bayer I, pp. 118-9.

¹³La Vanguardia. December 11, 1920. p. 5.

paralyzed by the strike.

The speed with which the strike spread through the southern part of the territory can be explained, in part, by the effectiveness of the Workingmen's Society. However, several factors made the rural area particularly receptive to the idea of organizing to strike: the long-standing grievances over living conditions on the ranches; the painful effects of the recession that began in 1919; and the displacement of small landholders by large ranching companies.

As far as living conditions for rural workers were concerned, one observer familiar with conditions on ranches in northern Argentina frequently remarked on the high standards prevailing on ranches in Santa Cruz.¹⁴ José María Borrero, who perhaps shared the expectations of his fellow immigrants, found the quality of life for peones deplorable.¹⁵ Another foreigner, a New Englander, who spent most of his life working on ranches in Santa Cruz, felt that conditions were about as good as could be expected in such an isolated corner of the world. As far as he was concerned, most of the workers turned their attention to living conditions only when the recent period of rapid expansion had ended and chances for upward mobility were limited.¹⁶ The highest paying jobs on the ranches, those that conferred higher status, had been in the construction of ranch buildings and fencing. After 1919,

¹⁴Lutz Witte, pp. 403-408. Rodríguez, pp. 156-8. Correa Falcon, p. 30.

¹⁵José María Borrero, La patagonia trágica. (Buenos Aires, 1957) pp. 204-212.

¹⁶Katherine and Robert Barrett, A Yankee in Patagonia. (Cambridge, 1933) p. 282.

there was very little of such work in Santa Cruz.

One specific grievance which united many of the rural workers was the practice on certain ranches of paying wages in foreign currency or on checks drawn on foreign banks. Conversion of the currency or cashing of foreign checks inevitably resulted in discounts and service charges born entirely by the individual worker.¹⁷

As for the effect of the recession on the average worker, we need only recall the impact of the inflation suffered throughout Argentina in these years combined with the widespread unemployment experienced in Santa Cruz. A weekly publication of the British community in Argentina described the current situation in Santa Cruz in the following terms:

A year or so ago, the far south territory of Santa Cruz was enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity owing to the practically unlimited demand at record high prices, created by the war, for wool of all sorts. Now that wool, particularly the coarser classes has become, for the time being, a drug on the market, that situation has changed to one of distress. A recent telegram from the township of Rio Chico says that as a consequence of the depressed situation of the wool market, building and fencing work are at a standstill. Local traders, as well as the banks, have restricted credits. Transport enterprises are in a critical state, owing to a lack of merchandise to transport. 18

When faced with unemployment, the rural worker had to choose between uninviting alternatives. He could remain in the hinterland and live by odd jobs or by his wits. He could join the long line of those seeking some kind of job in the ports, where the

¹⁷Lutz Witte, p. 395.

¹⁸Review of the River Plate. December 10, 1920. p. 1561.

recession was also being felt. Or, he could emigrate and try to make a start somewhere else. José María Borrero, in his account of the strikes, claimed that the threat of unemployment was the chief cause of unrest among working people in the territory in this period.¹⁹ A British rancher interviewed by the English language Buenos Aires Herald at the time of the outbreak of the strike in late 1920, argued much the same point.²⁰

The displacement of the small landholder and the squatter also contributed to the tense situation prevailing in the interior. The actions of large ranching concerns on both sides of the international boundary had, by 1920, given rise to a vagrant population made up of those who had been ousted from lands they had settled in some cases without the benefit of clear title. Contemporary observers warned of the potential danger of this on-going process.²¹ In late 1920, the Socialist La Vanguardia publicized one such case. An Argentine settler named Juan de Dios Figueroa traveled to Buenos Aires in October 1920 on the pooled funds of several small landholders such as himself who lived in the northwestern corner of Santa Cruz. Figueroa had come to present their case before the Ministry of the Interior. He claimed that an Englishman named Gutt, who managed several large ranches on both side of the border, had used violence to intimidate settlers in the vicinity of Colonia Manuel Quintana into deserting land provided them by the government. He sought the cooperation of federal officials since repeated appeals to the territorial

¹⁹Borrero, pp. 63-69.

²⁰Buenos Aires Herald. January 11, 1921. p. 7.

²¹Lutz Witte, pp. 403-8. Rodríguez, pp. 126-36.

authorities had gone unheeded.²² It is not known what response they got but what seems clear is that displaced ranchers were increasingly receptive to the idea of organizing to fight the power of the large-scale enterprises.

Motivated by all these reasons, workers readily joined the ranks of the strikers. As they abandoned the ranches, they took horses and firearms, signing I.O.U.'s in the name of the Workingmen's Society. Fresh mutton was obtained by simply seizing animals. Other supplies were gotten from ranches or from bolicheros, proprietors of small general stores, who sympathized with the strikers in many cases. The strikers congregated near Lake Argentina in the western part of the territory. Here, they sought the protection of the hills and the proximity of the border.

Four men quickly emerged as leaders of what soon swelled into a group of six hundred strikers. Two were Italian immigrants: José Aicardi, nicknamed "68", which had been his prison serial number while serving a sentence in the Ushuaía penal colony on Tierra del Fuego, and Alfredo Font, known as "El Toscano", who also had had several brushes with the law. The other two were Argentines: Bártolo Diaz and Florentine Cuello. The latter had served a five year sentence in the prison in Río Gallegos after a barroom knifefight.²³ These four were the men who would exert control over the striking rural workers in the southern part of the territory.

While the rural strike was taking shape in the interior, a round of negotiations began in the port of Río Gallegos. This was

²²La Vanguardia. October 31, 1920. p. 4.

²³Bayer I, pp. 202-4.

brought about by the visit of Alejandro Menéndez Behety and Mauricio Braun, the two most influential leaders of commercial and ranching enterprise in the territory. While on the one hand threatening to introduce strike-breakers, Menéndez Behety and Braun encouraged the Rural Society to make another offer to the Workingmen's Society that yielded slightly on the question of union recognition. These tactics brought about a split within the Workingmen's Society. The majority, lead by Antonio Soto, decided to reject the new management proposal, convinced that the imminent arrival of the new territorial governor would bring greater concessions. In this hope they were encouraged by the actions of Judge Viñas and the counsel of José María Borrero.²⁴ Thus, the strike in Río Gallegos and adjacent areas of the interior continued.

Events in Río Gallegos were echoed by labor unrest elsewhere in the territory. In Puerto Deseado, employees of the large commercial houses walked off the job on November 13th in demand of increased wages and a voice in the management of the concerns.²⁵ Maritime workers soon joined the commercial employees. Local authorities reacted by banning all public meetings and arresting the local secretary of the Federation of Maritime Workers, a national organization. This brought about a strike by railwaymen on the Deseado-Las Heras line on December 2nd. Six days later, police arrested twenty persons associated with the various groups. Then on the sixteenth, a protest march by two hundred strikers was fired upon by the police. Two of the strikers were killed

²⁴Ibid. pp. 135-7.

²⁵La Prensa. November 30, 1920. p. 13.

and six seriously wounded.²⁶

To the south of Deseado, commercial employees and maritime workers in San Julián and Puerto Santa Cruz joined their compatriots in the other two ports by declaring strikes in early December. In San Julián, the bombing of the home of a leading businessman resulted in the arrest of thirty persons identified with the striking unions.

In the region west of Río Gallegos, meanwhile, the continuation of the strike was bringing about a confrontation between the territorial police and the ranch hands holed up near Lake Argentine. On January 2nd, nine policemen who had been sent to reconnoiter the area, stumbled into the encampment of Aicardi and Fonte. In the melee that ensued, two police were killed, a third gravely wounded while all were captured by the strikers. Diego Ritchie, with another detachment of police, wandered into the same location a few hours later. Ritchie managed to extricate himself after a protracted gun battle which left one policeman and two strikers dead.²⁷ As soon as Ritchie had returned to Río Gallegos, Correa wired news of these incidents to the Interior Ministry, repeating his request for federal troops. He also alerted the Chileans of the possibility that strikers would attempt to cross the frontier.²⁸

Correa's messages were joined by those of ranchers and merchants demanding federal protection for their property. Two

²⁶La Vanguardia. December 27, 1920. p. 5.

²⁷Bayer I, pp. 158-68.

²⁸Buenos Aires Herald. January 20, 1921. p. 3. La Prensa. January 20, 1921. p. 11.

addition incidents lent credence to their appeals. On January 4th, Aicardi and Fonte seized four ranchers as hostages, hoping thus to force the others to reach a settlement with the strikers.²⁹ In an unrelated incident, on the eighth, an arsonist burned down a warehouse in Río Gallegos owned by a German which contained a valuable supply of gasoline. More repressive actions by police against strikers and their sympathizers took place after these two events.³⁰

At this time, President Yrigoyen finally yielded to the pleas for deployment of federal troops. On the sixth, he ordered a detachment of marines under Lieutenant Luis Malerba to depart for Río Gallegos aboard the tanker "Aristóbulo del Valle". Four days later, fifty members of the Tenth Cavalry Regiment departed under the orders of Captain Laprida. The arrival of the marines and the cavalry at Río Gallegos on the fourteenth and fifteenth, respectively, enabled Correa to enforce martial law in the port, but the strikers in the interior operated freely.

During the second week in January, as the troops departed for the south, both the British and Belgian consular officials in Buenos Aires urged the government to adopt strong measures in dealing with the strikers and in protecting the lives and property of their countrymen. The rumor circulated in Buenos Aires that a British destroyer, the H.M.S. Petersfield, was at that moment steaming from Montevideo to Río Gallegos. On January 12th, the British minister in Montevideo, Sir Claud Mallet, quashed the story

²⁹La Prensa. January 7, 1921. p. 11.

³⁰Review of the River Plate. January 14, 1921. p. 85. Buenos Aires Herald. January 20, 1921. p. 3. La Prensa. January 20, 1921. p. 11. Bayer 1, p. 177.

stating that "the British government could be confident that the Argentine authorities would guarantee by their own means, and in the amplest manner possible, the lives and interests of British subjects." Mallet affirmed that "the British government would never take an attitude such as that attributed to it, and which could be qualified as discourteous to the Argentine government."³¹ Such disclaimers only served to draw further attention to the British attitude over the situation in Santa Cruz.

Domestic political opinion was sharply divided on Yrigoyen's handling of the situation. Both the Socialist and Conservative press were critical of the President for different reasons. The Socialists saw the President's actions as clearly favoring the ranchers while the Conservative press lashed out at the President for the months of indecision which showed favor to the unions.³² Both of these opposition groups, however, were united in blaming the trouble in Santa Cruz on Yrigoyen's decision to end its privileged trading status.³³ In late December, officials of the syndicalist F.O.R.A. IX (Federación Obrera Regional Argentina of the Ninth Congress) demanded that the government declare its neutrality in the conflict between Santa Cruz' ranchers and their employees.³⁴ The Anglo-Argentine Buenos Aires Herald, reflecting the cautious approach adopted by the British, urged conciliation and warned against further polarization of Santa Cruz' sharply

³¹Review of the River Plate. January 14, 1921. p. 85.

³²La Vanguardia. February 4, 1921. p. 2. La Prensa. January 14, 1921. p. 6.

³³La Vanguardia. loc. cit. La Prensa. loc. cit.

³⁴La Vanguardia. December 27, 1920. p. 5.

divided population.³⁵

However, Yrigoyen's political enemies saw no reason to limit their criticism of the President's handling of the affair. For instance, on January 20th, Matías Sánchez Sorondo, a leading Conservative deputy, took such criticism to the floor of Congress. He likened the situation prevailing in Santa Cruz to that in other frontier areas prior to the Conquest of the Desert, the military campaign in 1879-80 that put an end to periodic Indian raids. Painting a lurid picture of Santa Cruz' "descent into barbarism", Sánchez Sorondo blamed Yrigoyen for failing to act when requested to do so by the territorial authorities.³⁶

The clamor for forceful action by the federal government was echoed outside the halls of Congress. Alejandro Menéndez Behety led the outcry of ranching and commercial interests of Santa Cruz against what they felt to be inadequate government measures.³⁷ Yrigoyen's stilled these critics by taking a series of dramatic steps in the final days of January. On the twenty-first, newly appointed governor of Santa Cruz, Angel Yza, and several subordinates departed for the territory amid much publicity. On the same day, twenty marines were placed aboard the Santa-Cruz-bound transport "Río Negro".³⁸ On the twenty-seventh, the President announced the imminent departure of the remaining members of the Tenth Cavalry Regiment under Lieut. Colonel Héctor Benigno Varela.

³⁵Buenos Aires Herald. January 8, 1921. p. 6.

³⁶Congreso de la Nación. Cámara de Diputados. Diario de sesiones. 1920 VI, p. 24.

³⁷Buenos Aires Herald. January 25, 1921. p. 8. Review of the River Plate. January 28, 1921. p. 217.

³⁸La Prensa. January 19, 1921. p. 12.

They were supported by a machinegun section of the Second Cavalry Regiment. Taking advantage of the turmoil over Santa Cruz, Yrigoyen announced simultaneously that he would resubmit a bill to create special territorial gendarmes which Congress had repeatedly voted down in the past.³⁹

At this juncture, the Federation of Maritime Workers, who had ties to the President, suddenly announced their decision to lift their boycott of private shipping to the four ports of Santa Cruz which had been in effect for over a month. The President's actions, along with that of the Maritime Workers, created the impression that no effort would be spared to bring about a speedy conclusion to the trouble in Santa Cruz.

In the territory, itself, meanwhile, Correa's tough posture had been bringing results. On January 21st, the day his replacement departed from Buenos Aires, commercial employees and stevedores returned to their jobs, ending a two month strike. This decision signaled the near collapse of the Workingmen's Society, but Antonio Soto, its Secretary, refused to abandon his rural compatriots.

Just as the hard-line policy adopted by Correa and Ritchie seemed to be having its desired effect, Governor Yza arrived in Río Gallegos on January 29th with the announced intention of seeking a negotiated settlement. Once he had assumed control of the territorial administration, Yza set about to achieve his goal. On February 4th, the Rural Society agreed to Yza's offer to arbitrate their differences with the ranch workers. As a sign of

³⁹La Epoca. January 27, 1921. p. 1. La Prensa. January 29, 1921. p. 6.

good will to the union, Yza freed two hundred or so prisoners in the territory who had been held by his predecessor due to their activities in the strike in and around Río Gallegos. This action so shocked the members of the Rural Society that on February 11th, they renounced their earlier acceptance of the new Governor's bid to negotiate a settlement. The president of the Rural Society addressed a telegram to the Minister of the Interior complaining about Yza's decision to end the strike without retribution for the violence and damage perpetrated by the strikers. He urged the government to allow the armed forces to "perform their duty".⁴⁰

However, the cavalry forces which arrived on February 2nd, were under Yza's orders and were used primarily to patrol in and around Río Gallegos. Lieut. Col. Varela, meanwhile, participated with Governor Yza in the negotiations aimed at a peaceful end to the rural strike. A tentative agreement was reached on the fourteenth by which those strikers who surrendered with their weapons and any stolen property would be allowed to return to work unmolested. Work was to commence immediately on ranches where the union's demands had been met, and the Governor promised to intervene to gain acceptance of the workers' demands on the rest. Yza simply overlooked the dissatisfaction already voiced by the Rural Society. On the sixteenth, approximately four hundred strikers led by Cuello and Díaz rode onto the "El Tero" ranch and surrendered their arms to Varela. Aicardi and Fonte and upwards of two hundred others refused to give up and dispersed, hoping to

⁴⁰La Prensa. February 12, 1921. p. 11.

elude capture.⁴¹

Although Yza had succeeded in bringing the rural strike to a speedy close, considerable numbers of both strikers and ranchers resisted the terms which amounted to a dictated settlement. Eager to salvage something from the season, some ranchers gave grumbling assent to these terms. The general feeling among the ranchers was, however, that the "agreement" was a sell-out to the Workingmen's Society.

The surrender of four hundred strikers was taken by the government to signify the end of the unrest in Santa Cruz. This optimistic outlook was largely due to the way in which Governor Yza reported the events to the Interior Ministry. In a telegram on February 17th, he termed the surrender of the strikers "unconditional" which it clearly was not. He also promised speedy prosecution of all those responsible for criminal actions, a statement that amounted to wishful thinking. The Radical newspaper La Epoca proclaimed:

The rebelling workers have yielded before the determination of the national authorities and order has been restored. The Governor will now proceed with the task⁴² of pacification through energetic and reasoned actions.

However, La Vanguardia's characterization of the settlement as a "complete victory" for the strikers was closer to the truth.⁴³

⁴¹Bayer I, pp. 214-7. La Vanguardia. March 15, 1921. p. 5. March 19, 1921. p. 5. March 20, 1921. p. 5. March 21, 1921. p. 6. Col. Fued. G. Nellar, "Clarificación sobre la campaña realizada por el Regimiento 10 de Caballería, años 1921 y 1922, en base de fuente oficial documental," Revista de la Escuela Superior de Guerra. LIII (July-August 1974) pp. 126-7.

⁴²La Epoca. February 18, 1921. p. 3.

⁴³La Vanguardia. February 21, 1921. p. 5.

That the Administration was willing to accept Governor Yza's version at face value was an indication that the major concern of the President had been the political impact of the news from Santa Cruz. The fact that the labor problems of the territory appeared to be resolved was of primary importance. Officials in Buenos Aires had little way of knowing how tenuous was the imposed settlement.

CHAPTER III
THE FAILURE OF
CONCILIATION

If the Administration in Buenos Aires hoped to create the impression that Santa Cruz' labor problems had been resolved, it was soon to realize the extent of its failure. Deep-seated conflict between capital and labor could not be resolved by fiat. In San Julián and Puerto Deseado, strikes of commercial employees and maritime workers were unaffected by the end of the strike in the south. Railwaymen in Deseado were also still on strike. Shortly after the settlement of the rural strike was achieved, workers at Swift's meat-packing plant in Río Gallegos walked off the job in a brief, frustrated attempt to alter the conditions of their employment. The worsening economic conditions in the territory made the local capitalists little inclined to make concessions.

The strikes in Puerto Deseado and San Julián which had begun in late November 1920 became increasingly bitter with the passing months. Not even the decision by the Federation of Maritime Workers to restore private shipping service to the ports of Santa Cruz budged the determined unionists. Employers had recruited non-union labor and had blacklisted the strikers. The situation was particularly acute due to the threat of violence between

strikers and strike-breakers.

In early March, Governor Yza personally traveled to San Julián and Puerto Deseado to request that the commercial houses readmit the strikers and agree to some of their demands. In addition, Yza secured the release of thirty-four prisoners held in Puerto Deseado since December 10th.¹ The leading merchants, including the Menéndez Behety firm, Watson y Gordoniz Compañía, and Compañía Argentina del Sud, refused to accept the demand for consultation with shop stewards over company policy. F.O.R.A. IX's delegate in Santa Cruz, Santiago Lazaro, reported that merchants in both ports refused to sell food to the families of the striking men.² However, after considerable effort by the Governor, the strike in San Julián ended on April 1st.³

In Puerto Deseado, however, the efforts of Governor Yza were to no avail, nor were the intervention of F.O.R.A. IX and the Maritime Workers. In mid-April, a delegation representing the strikers traveled to Buenos Aires to dramatize their case. They made a report to F.O.R.A. IX's Federal Council and appeared in front of the Buenos Aires headquarters of the trading companies against whom they were battling. Not until May did the strike in Puerto Deseado come to an end. In both San Julián and Deseado, the strikers had been readmitted but the merchants had avoided making any tangible concessions.

In Río Gallegos, a strike at the Swift plant began on March

¹La Vanguardia. March 17, 1921, p. 5.

²Ibid. April 1, 1921, p. 3.

³Ibid. April 2, 1921, p. 6. April 24, 1921, p. 5. Bayer II, pp. 17-18.

25th. The participants were seasonal workers recruited in Buenos Aires and transported over a thousand miles to work in the Río Gallegos plant or Swift's other plant in the territory, located at San Julián. Working conditions in these plants were not markedly different from those prevailing in any such place at the time. Long hours were spent on one's feet in damp, freezing, gore-spattered lockers. The situation in Swift's Santa Cruz plants was made worse by the contractual terms under which the seasonal labor was brought to the territory. The January-to-May contracts signed by each laborer left much discretionary power in the hands of Swift management. The employee was promised a wage of sixty-five cents an hour for "all the work he wants" which frequently amounted to more than any man could withstand. The ship passage plus a thirty peso "deposit" were subtracted from the first month's pay. The local manager reserved the right to discharge any worker who contributed to a work stoppage. If fired, the worker forfeited his return passage. The housing and rations supplied by Swift were described by one worker as inhuman.⁴

Workers at the Río Gallegos plant were organized by the Workmen's Society which drew up a list of demands that included: a maximum required working day of eight hours, required rest periods for those working in the refrigerated chambers, and freedom to elect representatives to take grievances over food and housing before management.⁵ Some violence attended the walk-out on March 25th, but within a week the men were back at work without

⁴Borrero, pp. 219-238. La Vanguardia. June 26, 1921, p. 1.

⁵Bayer II, p. 31.

having won a single concession from Swift.

The failure by the employees of the Río Gallegos plant to win any improvements in their situation was a reflection of the immense power wielded by the meat-packing firms in the territory. After all, with wool exports at their nadir, the only industry that the ranching interests could rely on was the exportation of meat. Faced with the threat of a strike in Santa Cruz' only healthy industry, Governor Yza once again intervened but without the salutary effects expected by the workers. Yza was able to drive a wedge between the workers at the Swift plant and the Workingmen's Society by promising to win Swift's acceptance of their demands should the workers return to their jobs immediately. Yza's promise was not kept.⁶

The failure of the Swift strike was not the only setback suffered by the Workingmen's Society. After the general strike had ended, the union remained sharply divided between those who had broken with F.O.R.A. IX for its "lack of solidarity" and those who wished to retain ties with the central labor organization.⁷ For its part, F.O.R.A. IX's delegate in Río Gallegos worked to oust Antonio Soto as secretary of the Workingmen's Society because of the latter's anti-F.O.R.A. views. Soto managed to rally the majority of the membership behind him, but the victory was a pyrrhic one for printers, drivers, and mechanics formed separate unions in defiance of Soto.⁸

The alienation of certain trades from the Workingmen's

⁶Ibid., p. 33.

⁷La Vanguardia. February 27, 1921. p. 2.

⁸Bayer II, pp. 34-39.

Society in Río Gallegos encouraged Soto and his supporters to reemphasize the organization of rural workers who were as yet not unionized. The dead season from June to September brought many of the ranch workers to the coast where they were available for proselytization by the Workingmen's Society.

Local ranchers became uneasy when confronted with the prospect of renewed union activity among rural workers. Several decided to express their concern to officials in Buenos Aires, hoping to impress upon the Administration the precarious economic situation of the territory and the "subversive" nature of the Workingmen's Society. Forty ranchers were in Buenos Aires in July to press for the creation of permanent cavalry units for Santa Cruz and other national territories. They succeeded in having a bill submitted to Congress on July 14th which would have accomplished exactly that.⁹

On August 16th, the group broadened its scope by including merchants and shippers in their campaign to ensure the security of enterprises in Santa Cruz and to provide for the introduction of non-union labor.¹⁰ On September 12th, Yrigoyen met with a delegation of this group. He told them that their concern for the protection of their property was "natural", and he promised to reiterate to Congress his desire for territorial police. He urged them to lobby among Congressmen in order to aid in the passage of the President's bill. La Epoca reported that the delegation left the meeting "highly satisfied" by their discussion with the

⁹ Congreso de la Nación. Cámara de Diputados. Diario de sesiones. 1921, v. III, pp. 38-9.

¹⁰ La Prensa. August 17, 1921, p. 11.

President.¹¹ The following day Yrigoyen sent a message to Congress reminding the members that a bill to create a special civilian police force for the territories had been pending for several months. He pointed to the special urgency of the situation in Santa Cruz whose leading residents had made repeated requests for such forces.¹²

Congress refused to act on either Yrigoyen's proposal or that submitted in mid-July by a group seeking regular cavalry units for Santa Cruz. In partial response to the pleas of ranchers, the President despatched a cutter with a detachment of marines to serve off Santa Cruz. However, engine problems forced the mission to be cancelled. Santa Cruz' ranchers had won a measure of support from Yrigoyen, but had failed to achieve their specific goal of having federal forces stationed in the territory before the new season began.

The local entrepreneurs in Santa Cruz did not limit their efforts to pressuring federal authorities. In July, they formed a brigade of the Argentine Patriotic League. Brigades were also established in Puerto Deseado and Puerto Santa Cruz at the time, while San Julián's brigade dated from the previous December. Alongside the Rural Society, the League would serve as defender of local business interests and as the focus of anti-union activity.

A national organization, the League had been born of the "Tragic Week" of January 1919 when its members participated in

¹¹La Epoca. September 13, 1921, p. 1.

¹²Congreso de la Nación. Cámara de Diputados. Diario de sesiones. 1921, v. III, p. 568.

violence against supposed anarchists and many innocent Jews in the City of Buenos Aires.¹³ It drew support from a variety of respectable groups, including Conservative and Radical politicians. Unlike adhoc vigilante groups recruited from the upper class that had arisen in the past, the League took firm root in the polarized social milieu of the period just after World War I. The transformation of the League into a truly national body was the work of its president, Manuel Carlés. Carlés had served as a national deputy from 1904 to 1912, allied with conservative groupings. Yet, in 1918 the Radical Administration named him federal interventor in the province of Salta. Under Carlés' direction, the League evolved into an influential pressure group espousing an ideology of nativism and unrestricted private enterprise.

The League denied the existence of social classes, arguing that the only distinction between Argentines was their willingness to work. This stand was designed to attract the immigrant or first generation Argentine who had achieved a measure of material success.¹⁴ League members declared war on anarchists and sindicalists who in their view would only obstruct Argentine development.¹⁵

The League's success in establishing itself in Santa Cruz was due not so much to the ideology it espoused, however, as to

¹³ Carlos Ibarguren, La historia que he vivido. (Buenos Aires, 1969) pp. 223-5. Nicolas Babini, Enero de 1919. (Buenos Aires, 1956).

¹⁴ Manuel Carlés, "Definición de la Liga Patriótica Argentina," (Buenos Aires, 1920) pp. 5-23.

¹⁵ Manuel Carlés, "Declaración de principios, organización y propósitos de los soviets argentinos," (Buenos Aires, 1920) pp. 4-7.

its willingness to act upon that ideology. The president of the Río Gallegos brigade, Ibon Noya, announced that the newly-formed body would devote itself to bringing non-union laborers to the territory. With cooperation from Buenos Aires, the League began to recruit workers in late July.

Thus, the confrontation between contending social groups in Santa Cruz showed no sign of lessening as the new season of ranch operations neared. Each side was convinced that the future well-being of the territory rested with the advancement of its own interests. Each side, composed primarily of foreigners, attempted to present its cause as an expression of Argentine nationalism while denouncing that of its foe as a "foreign" and "subversive" conspiracy.

CHAPTER IV
THE SECOND STRIKE

During the dead season from June to September 1921, when economic activity on the ranches of Santa Cruz was at a standstill, the leadership of both the ranchers and the Workingmen's Society attempted to strengthen its position. The Workingmen's Society did so by organizing among rural workers temporarily lodged in the ports during the winter months. Ranchers and other businessmen presented their views to the highest federal authorities, in hopes of winning guarantees of protection against the threat of continued labor agitation, and began recruiting non-union labor.

In late September, when activity on the ranches resumed, seasonal workers returning to the ranches found fewer jobs than in the previous season. The slack demand for wool was one cause; the introduction of non-union laborers was another. The ranchers, moreover, were offering conditions that fell below the agreement of the previous February, and many workers lacking an alternative, accepted them. In response, the leaders of the Workingmen's Society threatened to strike any and all ranches that failed to abide by the agreement. By mid-October, the Menéndez Behety properties were struck as well as the Douglas' "Rincón de los Morros", reputed to be the largest single sheep ranch in Santa

Cruz.

Although the stoppage was not yet general, police in Río Gallegos responded to these scattered strikes by setting up a dragnet and arresting several persons identified with the Workingmen's Society. Those caught were shipped immediately to Buenos Aires, where, to their surprise, they were set free. Antonio Soto, himself, managed to elude capture and fled to the interior.

On October 24th, the Workingmen's Society announced a general strike in southern Santa Cruz. Their demands included the release of all those arrested for labor union activity and the acceptance of the February agreement. Within a few days, strikes began in and around the other three ports of the territory, where organizing activities had gone on during the preceding months.

In Puerto Santa Cruz and its environs, Ramón Otorello, a Spaniard who had worked as a hotel waiter before working on various ranches, came to exercise leadership. Albino Argüelles, a Chilean, was chief in the San Julián area. He had been employed as a ranch hand for several years in that region. An Argentine from the province of Entre Ríos, José Font, was the major figure in the Deseado district. He was a teamster, who had hauled for local ranchers for many years. Soto was the most influential leader in the south.¹

Although these men had none of the previous criminal records of such figures as "68" or "El Toscano", they resorted to tactics similar to those employed by the leaders of the previous strike. The reason lay in certain characteristics of the territory which

¹Osvaldo Bayer makes an effort to distinguish among these leaders. Los vengadores de la patagonia rebelde. v. II and III.

presented unavoidable logistical problems. The most important of these was the fact that few centers of population existed outside of the ranches and the port towns. The former were easily overcome by a large number of strikers but the latter were well defended by police. This forced the strikers to seek a means of survival by looting or "requisitioning" supplies of food, horses, and weapons. The seizing of hostages, it was hoped, would serve as a safeguard and speed the negotiation of a settlement.

Reaction to the outbreak of the second strike was vehemently negative on the part of the ranchers. The Rural Society of Río Gallegos met on October 30th and formally rejected the strikers' demands, which were no more than those grudgingly acceded to in February. The ranchers argued that their own straitened circumstances precluded acceptance of the Workingmen's Society's original demands. Ibon Noya, local president of the Rural Society and of the Patriotic League, wired President Yrigoyen asking him to send a regiment of cavalry to restore order and to allow the entrance of non-union labor.²

In Buenos Aires, Alejandro Menéndez Behety called on the Interior Minister on October 30th and "presented all the information in his possession" with regard to the situation in Santa Cruz. He reported "attacks" of an unspecified nature on his own "Bella Vista" property and those of several other ranchers in southern Santa Cruz. Menéndez Behety offered to supply the government with trucks, automobiles, and mounts for cavalrymen in the event forces were despatched to the troubled territory.³

²La Prensa. November 1, 1921, p. 10.

³La Epoca. October 30, 1921, p. 1.

This information was passed on to Yrigoyen who announced the following morning that one hundred and seventy-five members of the Tenth Cavalry Regiment under Lieut. Col. Varela would depart on November 2nd for southern Santa Cruz. In so ordering, the President turned to the very commander who had aided Governor Yza in negotiating the February settlement so roundly criticized by the ranchers. Nonetheless, the speed with which the President acted was reassuring.

Seeking further to dispell any appearance of indecision, Yrigoyen published an executive decree creating a territorial police. In circumventing Congress, the President pointed to the violence in Santa Cruz as justification for preëmptive action.⁴

The National press' response to the events in Santa Cruz indicated a readiness to see the worst. La Epoca, indicating the newly adopted hard line of the administration, labeled the strike "incendiary and revolutionary in every sense" whose purpose was "the destruction of the ranches, the spreading of terror among the inhabitants, and the ruin of the livestock industry in the territory."⁵ The Buenos Aires Herald declared that the trouble in Santa Cruz was the work of "crooks whose ranks are momentarily augmented by unemployed estancia hands or striking laborers from the towns."⁶ Moreover, the Herald questioned the wisdom of sending to Santa Cruz regular army forces unfamiliar with the terrain:

⁴For text of decree see La Epoca, November 10, 1921, p. 1.

⁵Ibid. October 30, 1921, p. 1.

⁶Buenos Aires Herald. November 2, 1921, p. 1.

It would be better to organize a special force of hard riders and good shots, provide them with all the supplies and munitions they require, and give them a carte blanche to bring in the outlaws, dead or alive. 7

The tactics employed by the strikers certainly placed them outside the law. Yet, the difficulty of sustaining such large groups away from points of supply, a fact which helped to explain the looting, was virtually unknown outside the territory. Disturbed by the stories emanating from Santa Cruz, the British Consul General in Buenos Aires telegraphed several British subjects residing there, asking for information as to the true state of affairs.⁸

Chilean authorities in Magallanes, close to the scene of the strife, labeled the strike "revolutionary" and blamed it on so-called Argentine "weakness".⁹ The United States Consul in Punta Arenas, capital of Magallanes, reported to the embassy in Santiago that Chile had placed fifty carabineros and one hundred infantrymen on the border near Puerto Natales and that another seventy were poised for action on Tierra del Fuego. Such measures, it was hoped, would prevent the spread of the movement to Chilean territory.¹⁰

⁷Ibid. November 3, 1921, p. 6.

⁸Ibid.

⁹La Prensa. October 31, 1921, p. 9. Buenos Aires Herald. November 1, 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰The consul's report is to be found in: Ambassador William Collier to Secretary of State, November 22, 1921, in Department of State Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Argentine. National Archives Microcopy M -514, Reel 22, 835.5045/201. Hereafter referred to as DSNA.

Events in Santa Cruz, itself, confirmed the seriousness of the situation. On November 5th, several members of the Schroeder family which owned the "Bremen" ranch near El Cifre in southern Santa Cruz fired upon a band of strikers approaching their property presumably to seize supplies, horses, or weapons. Two of the strikers were killed, another gravely wounded.¹¹ Not all of the ranchers were as determined as the Schroeders, however. Most abandoned their properties in the face of threats of violence.

Five days after the "Bremen" incident, Lieut. Col. Varela, six other officers, and seventy-five enlisted men landed near Río Gallegos. Varela was briefed by the acting governor Cefaly Pandolfi, since Governor Yza was on leave in Buenos Aires.

Wasting no time, Varela gave orders to Captains Viñas Ibarra and Campos on the eleventh to depart for the interior. Viñas Ibarra, with fifty-one men was to reconnoiter the southernmost part of the territory following a route through Tapi Aike, Fuentes del Coyle to Punta Alta and Cancha Carrera near the Chilean border. Thirty-one men under Captain Campos were sent to patrol the southern bank of the Santa Cruz river westward toward Lake Argentine. Their orders were to pacify the countryside, using whatever means available to restore normal activity on the ranches in the area. They were to operate in consultation with local police and property owners. Strikers were to be summarily arrested, and those found bearing arms were to be dealt with "militarily".¹²

¹¹Bayer II, pp. 132-5.

¹²Report of the Viñas Ibarra Squadron, MS in Papers of General (R) Elbio C. Anaya, p. 52. This is a collection of some three hundred pages of material in xerox copy made available through the kindness of Professor Roberto Etchepareborda. Hereafter referred to as Anaya Papers.

Varela, himself, along with another officer and twelve men set out to patrol the area immediately surrounding the port of Río Gallegos. The remaining troops secured the port, itself.

Captain Viñas Ibarra's probe into the region of Fuentes del Coyle and Punta Alta brought almost immediate contact with a large concentration of strikers. Upon arriving at Fuentes del Coyle, Viñas Ibarra learned that a group of strikers was camped two miles outside of town. He promptly led his detachment to the area and surprised eighty strikers. Contrary to the cavalry's expectation, these strikers offered no resistance. They surrendered unconditionally after a few warning shots had been fired over their heads.¹³

After rounding up another fifty or so strikers in the vicinity of Fuentes del Coyle, Viñas Ibarra took forty men southward along the range of foothills which extended the length of the boundary with Chile, in search of a large group reported to be camped at Punta Alta.

On the morning of November 16th, in dense fog, Viñas Ibarra and his men stumbled upon this encampment. Viñas Ibarra later reported that his squadron was fired upon by concealed gunmen. One of the strikers claimed that these were warning shots fired by sentinels.¹⁴ In either case, a brief exchange ensued which resulted in several casualties among the strikers but none among the troops. Viñas Ibarra put the total number of strikers killed at five.¹⁵ United States Consul Austin Brady, stationed nearby

¹³Ibid. p. 53.

¹⁴Bayer II, p. 154.

¹⁵Report of the Viñas Ibarra squadron. Anaya Papers. p. 58.

in Punta Arenas, reported that as many as twenty were killed that day at Punta Alta.¹⁶ Osvaldo Bayer, in his account of the strikes, quoted an eyewitness of the encounter at Punta Alta who claimed that several executions were carried out by the soldiers just after the Punta Alta incident.¹⁷ This charge remains unsubstantiated, yet so does the figure given by Viñas Ibarra.

Meanwhile, Lieut. Col. Varela returned to Río Gallegos on the eighteenth and subsequently issued a proclamation aimed at bringing about closer cooperation between his forces and the ranchers. Each rancher was urged to: 1.) Inform the authorities of the identity of any employee who joined the strike; 2.) Verify the destination of any person crossing private property; 3.) Draw up a list of the "nominal" staff of each ranch; 4.) Forego any contact with the union; and 5.) Require that each employee register with the local police.¹⁸ By these means, it was hoped that further actions by the union would be curtailed and that those involved in the strike might be isolated and then apprehended.

While Varela's forces fanned out into the southern part of the territory, strikers to the north threatened to seize the port of Santa Cruz. Ramón Otorello and his fellow strikers in the vicinity of the port had become convinced that success would depend on negotiating from a position of strength. On November 16th, therefore, Otorello led six hundred strikers and their sixty-five hostages

¹⁶Despatch from Consul Austin Brady, November 30, 1921. DSNA reel 22, 835.5045/203.

¹⁷Bayer II, pp. 150-170.

¹⁸Hector B. Varela, "Relación de la actuación del Regimiento en los sucesos desarrollados en el territorio de Santa Cruz durante el movimiento de carácter sedicioso," Anaya Papers. pp. 30-1.

into the town of Paso Ibáñez, a few miles upriver from Puerto Santa Cruz. Otorello's followers were drawn from a broad area of the central interior of the territory, where they had taken supplies and hostages. Upon their arrival at Paso Ibáñez, the group elected not to risk the capture of the port. Rather, Otorello sent delegates to discuss terms with the ranchers who had taken refuge there. The commander of the cruiser "Almirante Brown" which was anchored in the bay, with a marine landing party patrolling in the port, also entered into the exchanges. The ranch workers demanded the following: 1.) Freedom for all those arrested for union activity; 2.) Withdrawal of all non-union labor; and 3.) Acceptance of the Workingmen's Society's demands of the previous year.¹⁹ The ranchers refused to discuss these terms, choosing instead to wait for the arrival of Lieut. Col. Varela and his cavalrymen.

When the news of the capture of Paso Ibáñez reached Buenos Aires, President Yrigoyen immediately took additional steps to deal with the situation in Santa Cruz. On November 18th, he announced the imminent departure of a mixed squadron of cavalry drawn from the Tenth Regiment and part of the Second. These forces were placed under the command of Captain Elbio Carlos Anaya. Their destination although not specified was to be in the northern part of the territory. Once there, Anaya was to come under the general command of Lieut. Col. Varela.

Meanwhile, Varela had received a call for assistance from the commander of the "Almirante Brown" in Puerto Santa Cruz. He despatched First Lieutenant Schweizer and ten men to the port to

¹⁹Ibid., p. 33.

bolster spirits among the residents who feared an attack by the strikers camped in Paso Ibáñez. Then after communicating with Viñas Ibarra and Campos, Varela himself took five men and departed for Puerto Santa Cruz. With Anaya's squadron soon to land in the north, Varela decided not to pull his limited forces out of the south where they were quickly dominating the situation.²⁰

National press reaction to the deepening crisis in Santa Cruz reflected partisan points of view. The Radical La Epoca assured its readers that no extensive damage had actually been done due to the effective intervention of the cavalry forces. These reports were based directly on communiques emanating from the War Ministry.²¹ La Prensa countered La Epoca by accusing the government of covering up the true seriousness of the situation, using telegrams from frantic ranchers and merchants as evidence.²² Varela's field reports contradicted these telegrams, and he himself referred to them as "exaggerations bordering on hysteria."²³ The Anglo-Argentine Review of the River Plate reflected the confused, partisan coverage by printing both the desperate telegrams and Varela's disclaimers.²⁴ The Socialist La Vanguardia, openly sympathetic to the strikers, pointedly asked why the so-called "criminals" and "violent revolutionaries" had been so easily subdued at Punta Alta without having caused a single casualty among

²⁰ Ibid. p. 32.

²¹ La Epoca. November 25, 1921. p. 1.

²² La Prensa. November 14, 1921. p. 6. November 22, 1921. p. 12. November 29, 1921. p. 12.

²³ La Epoca. November 25, 1921. p. 7.

²⁴ Review of the River Plate. November 25, 1921. p. 1381.

the cavalry.²⁵

Notwithstanding the differences of interpretation as to what actually was occurring, the news that the strikers were holding sixty-five foreign nationals as hostages at Paso Ibáñez lent credence to the more pessimistic accounts while at the same time goading the diplomatic community into action. The United States Chargé d'Affaires made "strong representations to the Argentine Government" when he learned that one of those held at Paso Ibáñez was the manager of the Armour meat-packing plant in Río Chico.²⁶ British diplomatic agents in Buenos Aires likewise made entreaties to the Argentine government and received assurances that all necessary measures would be taken.²⁷

The six hundred strikers camped in the town of Paso Ibáñez, meanwhile, continued to seek a negotiated settlement. After Varela arrived on the scene, a delegate of the strikers sought him out to discuss the possibility of an agreement. Varela, however, demanded unconditional surrender within forty-eight hours. Should the strikers fail to submit, he threatened them with the following consequences: 1.) All those resisting arrest by the armed forces would be considered "enemies of the nation"; 2.) Each striker would be held responsible for any loss of life among the hostages; 3.) Any striker captured bearing arms against the armed forces would be "punished severely"; 4.) Any striker who fired upon any member of the armed forces would be "shot on the spot"; and

²⁵La Vanguardia. November 23, 1921. p. 1. November 27, 1921. p. 1.

²⁶Buenos Aires Herald. November 23, 1921. p. 1. Review of the River Plate. December 2, 1921. p. 1449.

²⁷Review of the River Plate. loc. cit.

5.) Once hostilities began, only unconditional surrender by the strikers could bring them to an end.²⁸

Considering that Varela had only a score of men at his disposal, his demand for such a surrender was in reality a bold bluff. Yet, he had calculated correctly, for the strikers showed no willingness to engage in combat with the cavalry. During the night of November 24th and 25th, the strikers abandoned Paso Ibáñez, and leaving their hostages behind, began a trek to the northwest. Varela's ultimatum drastically altered the situation in the central part of the territory, as regards both the tactics employed by the strikers and the conditions of combat. The cavalry had been ill-equipped to undertake the siege of Paso Ibáñez in any event. Now, if there were to be fighting it would take place on terrain and under circumstances that trained cavalry knew best.

Varela's ultimatum also served to clarify his intentions with regard to suppressing the strike. Contrary to the soothing reports which he forwarded to Buenos Aires, Varela was preparing to proceed as if the strikers were the forces of a foreign enemy. The use of warlike rhetoric persisted throughout the Santa Cruz "campaign" although official authorization of a state of internal warfare had not taken place.

On November 26th, after consulting with Varela by radio as to the best place for debarkation, Captain Anaya landed his squadron of eighty men near San Julián. On the twenty-seventh, they left San Julián under orders to cut the strikers' line of retreat westward from Paso Ibáñez. With only fifteen men, Varela

²⁸Varela, pp. 33-34.

started westward, also, hoping to overtake the slow-moving group. En route, he and his men happened upon a contingent of strikers retreating from the nearby town of Río Chico. After "a brief exchange of gunfire", the strikers surrendered. Varela reported six deaths in this encounter,²⁹ but La Prensa later estimated at least twelve deaths occurred during the exchange.³⁰ These included the group's leaders.

Anaya, meanwhile, had decided to pass through Río Chico before heading westward. There he found the town deserted and learned of Varela's encounter. Apprised of the small number of men at Varela's command, Anaya despatched twenty-one members of his squadron to join Varela's. Then, Anaya and the balance of his squadron traveled an improved road toward Cañadón Leon where they hoped to meet the main body of the strikers. Varela reached the vicinity of Cañadón Leon on November 30th before Anaya and found the strikers encamped on the "Bella Vista" ranch, owned by the Menéndez Behety interests. What followed thereafter has been called a "battle" by some, yet one of the officers participating in it estimated its length at less than five minutes.³¹ In short, thirty-five cavalymen led by three officers subdued four hundred strikers in less than five minutes, leaving twelve of the latter dead. The cavalry suffered no casualties. The strikers' leader, Ramón Otorello, was among those listed as killed in the fray.

After these events at "Bella Vista", information regarding

²⁹Ibid. p. 35.

³⁰La Prensa. December 3, 1921. p. 13.

³¹Lieut. Rafael A. Loza, "Memoria de la comisión desempeñada desde Paso Río Chico a Puesto Bella Vista," Anaya Papers. p. 50.

the nature of the group which had seized Paso Ibáñez came to light. One of the freed hostages, a Spanish rancher, reported that all internal decisions had been reached in "democratic assemblies". He further stated that women and married men had not been taken hostage by the group. Otorello, himself, he described as "very strict" in prohibiting alcohol.³²

In sharp contrast, however, were the bitter comments of a group of British ranchers and administrators who had also been held at Paso Ibáñez. On December 2nd, they sent a letter and a petition to British authorities with copies also mailed to the Buenos Aires Herald in which they described at length the terrors they had experienced. They called upon the British government to "represent to the Argentine national authorities that British subjects cannot thus be treated in civilized countries" and asked for "the strictest possible guarantees for our lives and property in the future and ample compensation for what we have already suffered."³³ They reminded the authorities that the plight of those British subjects still held by the strikers was truly precarious since "some of the revolutionaries who have fallen in the hands of the National Forces have been shot."³⁴

Approximately one hundred and fifty miles to the southwest, meanwhile, Captain Pedro Viñas Ibarra, in command of the southern zone, had reached the shores of Lake Argentine. On November 29th his squadron came upon a group of strikers on the banks of a tri-

³²La Prensa. December 19, 1921. p. 1.

³³Buenos Aires Herald. December 11, 1921. p. 1.

³⁴Ibid.

butary, the Río Perro. A gun battle ensued. Since the Winchesters used by the strikers had far less effective range than the cavalrymen's Mausers, the outcome was foreordained. The strikers finally retreated, leaving their dead and wounded.

Viñas Ibarra learned from prisoners taken at the Río Perro that the largest groups operating in southern Santa Cruz were close at hand. One was camped on the far side of Lake Argentine, in the region lying between that lake and Lake Viedma. The other contingent was located east of Lake Argentine, on the "La Anita", another ranch owned by the Menéndez Behety firm.

Viñas Ibarra decided first to knock out the group located on the northern shore of the lake. To do this, however, he would have to find a way to cross the Santa Cruz River, the effluent of Lake Argentine which flowed eastward to the Atlantic. The strikers had commandeered most of the river craft in the area, and only with difficulty did Viñas Ibarra finally locate a few small boats in which to make the crossing. On the morning of December 2nd, he and twenty men crossed the river to reconnoiter the northern bank. Within a few hours, they were approached by two delegates who told him of the desire of the group camped to the north to surrender unconditionally. Viñas Ibarra told them that his was only a patrol for a very large number of troops in the area. He demanded that they convey his request that all the strikers surrender at Puerto Irma on the morning of the fifth. At the appointed time, one hundred and eighty strikers appeared with their hostages and stolen goods.³⁵

³⁵Viñas Ibarra squadron, Anaya Papers, p. 64.

The group camped at "La Anita", after learning of their compatriots' surrender at Puerto Irma, debated their own future course of action on the sixth. That day, Captain Campos joined forces with Viñas Ibarra, bringing thirty-three men and a considerable amount of ammunition. While the strikers at "La Anita" dallied over a decision, Viñas Ibarra placed his men in strategic positions around the area. When delegates finally arrived to discuss terms with Viñas Ibarra, he took them captive.

The subsequent engagement at "La Anita" resulted in at least seven deaths among the strikers, according to Viñas Ibarra's own count.³⁶ The pro-rancher La Unión put the figure at twenty-six.³⁷ Although the end had come for the Workingmen's Society in southern Santa Cruz, Antonio Soto and others had managed to cross the border in safety.

News of the bloody encounters at "La Anita" and elsewhere occasioned a storm of comment throughout the country. The pro-rancher press in Santa Cruz was enthusiastic. El Pueblo of Puerto Santa Cruz declared,

It is the general opinion that this sort of disturbance will not be repeated due to the energetic campaign being carried on by the troops under Colonel Varela, whose firm purpose is to cleanse the territory of outlaws. 38

A group of ranchers in Río Gallegos petitioned the Interior Minister to name Varela governor of the territory.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid. p. 69.

³⁷ Quoted in Bayer II, p. 258.

³⁸ El Pueblo. December 3, 1921. n. p. From a selection of xeroxed news clippings provided by Lieut. Col. José Luis Picciuolo of the Superior War College in Buenos Aires.

³⁹ Ibid. December 3, 1921. n.p.

In Buenos Aires, La Prensa also applauded Varela's apparent success in dealing with the "violent elements" which had threatened the territory.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the Socialist La Vanguardia denounced the "battles" which had resulted in death and injury on one side only. The Socialists charged Yrigoyen with aiding "international capitalism" by sending the army against "authentic Argentines" who sought only a fair wage and slight improvements in their living conditions.⁴¹ F.O.R.A. IX, the syndicalist labor central, which had disowned the Workingmen's Society, now wholeheartedly embraced the cause of the rural workers in Santa Cruz. Like the Socialists, the leaders of F.O.R.A. IX saw the conflict as one that pitted a brutal, foreign capitalist class against a working class of Argentines.⁴²

The massing of strikers in the vicinity of both San Julián and Puerto Deseado, areas which Varela's troops had not yet reached, left Varela's task of suppressing the strike still unfinished. Frantic messages arriving daily from northern Santa Cruz blunted whatever criticism of Varela's tactics was heard. The Review of the River Plate printed the following wire sent to it by the manager of the Anglo-South American Bank Ltd. in San Julián:

Whole San Julián district being sacked by armed bandits. They have seized farms only seven miles from port and have carried off all able bodied men as prisoners including many British subjects.

⁴⁰La Prensa. December 3, 1921. p. 13.

⁴¹La Vanguardia. December 6, 1921. p. 1. December 7, 1921. p. 6.

⁴²Ibid. December 7, 1921. p. 6.

Forces, seventy soldiers, landed twenty-sixth instant but it is feared will prove totally insufficient cope with situation. As measure precaution in conjunction with Banco Nacional and commercial houses have closed Bank to public for time being. Entire situation intensely critical and most energetic representation to authorities in yours absolutely necessary. 43

Such reports created a sense of desperation which prevented a calm assessment of the events.

Once having crushed the major concentrations of strikers in the southern half of the territory, however, Varela was able to respond to the pleas for help coming from the northern districts. He directed Anaya and his squadron to patrol northward into the San Julián district through the interior while Varela, himself, prepared to lead another detachment along the coast. Anaya quickly learned of the presence of a large contingent of strikers located at Bajo del Tigre forty miles southwest of the port of San Julián. As he and his men traveled toward Bajo del Tigre, they captured many small bands of strikers who had escaped the engagement at "Bella Vista". Anaya dealt harshly with individuals who allegedly had sympathized with the strikers or aided them in some way. On one ranch, for example, he arrested the foreman for having dressed the wounds of one fugitive.⁴⁴ Anaya was suspicious of all whose interests diverged from those of the larger property holders. These included small holders and, of course, the bolicheros whose clientele was made up almost exclusively of ranch hands.

⁴³Review of the River Plate. December 2, 1921. p. 1451.

⁴⁴Lieut. Elbio C. Anaya, "Informe de las operaciones realizadas en el territorio de Santa Cruz por el Cuarto Escuadrón del Regimiento 10 de Caballería," Anaya Papers. p. 84. Also, "Diario", Anaya Papers pp. 127-8, 143.

The strikers at Bajo del Tigre, led by Albino Argüelles, were aware of Anaya's approach. Retreating before the cavalry's slow advance, the strikers led a chase which ended on December 17th when Anaya overtook them at Tapera del Castelán. Anaya's own report subsequent to this engagement is difficult to decipher. The group apparently surrendered without a struggle, and Anaya proceeded to "set apart" the leaders. Then, Anaya reported rather cryptically that occasional shots were heard nearby, "giving the impression that his troops were firing on fleeing strikers".⁴⁵ Among those who were buried the following day were Argüelles and Jara, the two leaders of the group.⁴⁶

The Review of the River Plate later estimated the total number of deaths in this engagement at nineteen.⁴⁷ Neither Anaya nor the Review accounted for the casualties, but both sources affirmed the importance of the surrender at Tapera del Castelán as signaling the end of the strike in the area around San Julián. Only the Deseado district further north remained to be pacified, and Lieut. Col. Varela was already preparing for a confrontation with the strikers in that area.

Just as Varela was leaving Puerto Santa Cruz for Puerto Deseado with twenty-five men, he received word that the territory's lone railroad, the Deseado-Las Heras line, had been seized by the strikers. Varela forwarded this news to Buenos Aires which the government greeted with dismay. Due to the railroad's proximity

⁴⁵Anaya, "Diario", p. 133.

⁴⁶Ibid. p. 134.

⁴⁷Review of the River Plate. December 30, 1921. p. 1709.

to the oil fields around Comodoro Rivadavia, the government despatched the "Nueve de Julio" and the "Belgrano", two navy cruisers to the latter port. The "Almirante Brown", its obligation in Puerto Santa Cruz now completed, steamed northward to Puerto Deseado.⁴⁸

Varela reached Puerto Deseado on December 17th, and the next morning sent out armed trains along the railway line to find out the strength and position of the strikers. On the twentieth, Varela's squadron, reinforced by local police and volunteers, set out for the town of Jaramillo where the strikers had reportedly dug in. To their surprise, they found Jaramillo deserted, and therefore continued their march westward until they came upon a small group on a nearby ranch. According to Varela's report, three strikers died after a short exchange of fire.⁴⁹

Varela learned from prisoners that the main body of strikers was located at Tehuelches, a station along the railway line. On their way to that town, Varela's squadron was approached by five automobiles containing strikers. According to Varela's own account, the strikers immediately opened fire on the troops, who returned it with equal speed.⁵⁰ When the melee ended, one of the cavalrymen lay mortally wounded. Varela did not report the number of strikers killed at Tehuelches. La Prensa put the figure at fifteen. Varela only reported that the Argentine José Font and another recognized leader named Leiva were among those who

⁴⁸ Ibid. December 23, 1921. p. 1645.

⁴⁹ Varela, p. 39.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

died.⁵¹ Basing his argument on a newspaperman's account, Osvaldo Bayer claimed that the deaths at Tehuelches actually occurred a day after the encounter and were the result of summary executions.⁵² The vagueness of Varela's own report lends credence to this possibility.⁵³

Seventy miles south of Tehuelches, Captain Anaya was involved in processing the prisoners taken at Tapera del Castelán and sorting the looted merchandise. Each day he sent out patrols which scoured the area for other concentrations of strikers. On the twenty-fifth, a detachment under Sergeant Baigorria captured eight strikers who claimed to be sentinels for a large encampment located at Tres Cerros. Baigorria took seven of the men into custody and sent the eighth to inform his compatriots of the cavalry's approach. "The majority opted to surrender," Anaya reported later, but when Anaya's full squadron arrived, a small group of the leaders allegedly resisted.⁵⁴ This resistance was easily overcome, however, "by a brief burst of fire." Anaya did not report the casualties, if there were any, and neither did any other source. The 225 prisoners were sorted "according to the extent of their responsibilities." Only forty-seven weapons were found among them; one for every five strikers.⁵⁵

With the surrenders at Tehuelches on the twenty-second and at

⁵¹La Prensa. December 23, 1921. p. 9. Varela, p. 40.

⁵²Bayer II, pp. 232-236.

⁵³Varela, p. 37.

⁵⁴Anaya, "Diario", p. 142.

⁵⁵Ibid. p. 143.

Tres Cerros on the twenty-fifth, the last large groups of strikers in Santa Cruz had been broken up. Now it remained to the cavalry to patrol the territory, ensuring a quick return to work, and apprehending any small groups still at large. The bulk of the prisoners were soon released into the custody of their employers, but those thought to be "dangerous" were sent to the coastal towns for questioning and trial.

Thus, the Santa Cruz strike ended with its violent suppression by the armed forces. Ironically, Lieut. Col. Varela had shown cool-headedness in his reports from the field. He had consistently denied exaggerated accounts of arson, looting, and kidnapping. The curious contrast between Varela's dispassionate assessments and the tactics he employed in terminating the strike is apparent to the careful observer.

Responsibility for the brutality with which the second strike was suppressed has been difficult to establish. Varela, it seems, was impelled by a determination to win respect for the Argentine military in the eyes of Argentina's neighbors and her own citizens of all social classes. Shortly after the campaign ended, he praised his men for "teaching the foreigner, who makes up almost the entire population of the territory, what the Argentine soldier is capable of, when a stranger wishes to disregard the Constitution and raise another banner than the immortal and glorious insignia of our nation."⁵⁶

Although Varela was inspired by such sentiments, it is un-

⁵⁶Héctor B. Varela, "Campaña de Santa Cruz, Resumen General," Anaya Papers. p. 6.

likely that he acted without orders. The government made no attempt to alter the course of the repressive campaign, even when reports of casualties began to filter back to the capital. It is very likely that Varela's general orders provided for nearly all eventualities, leaving to the commander's discretion the specific means of executing them. The harsh path chosen by Varela reaffirmed the army's role as an arbiter of social conflict under an administration willing to use its power in behalf of influential economic interests.

CHAPTER V
THE AFTERMATH

The Radical administration of Hipólito Yrigoyen, subject to considerable national and international pressure, had turned to the armed forces to end the labor violence in Santa Cruz. Yrigoyen had resorted to a similar course of action in the past when serious labor disturbances appeared beyond conciliatory measures. The intervention of the armed forces had occurred at the time of the railway strikes of 1917-18 and again during the "Tragic Week" of January 1919, as well as during the dock strike of mid 1921. These episodes demonstrated an official willingness to employ maximum force when labor's drive for recognition and benefits threatened powerful economic interests or the public order.

In the case of the Santa Cruz strikes, the failure of the government's efforts at conciliation had proven all too evident. The differences separating the entrepreneurs and the labor movement in Santa Cruz seemed irreconcilable. When Yrigoyen turned to Lieut. Col. Varela to restore order in the territory, he undoubtedly contemplated a more repressive policy than that adopted during the first Santa Cruz strike. While in all likelihood the President had not anticipated the brutality of the repression,

such was within the scope of Varela's orders, at least as the officer had interpreted them.

By supporting a policy of repression, Yrigoyen ran a number of political risks. Unquestionably, he stood to alienate organized labor, certain elements of which he had cultivated since assuming office. On the other hand, the ranchers whom the tough policy was designed to placate were in no way responsible for its execution and were free to criticize the President at will. Yrigoyen, however, was not without an escape route: If he chose to, he could dissociate himself from the army's actions by claiming that Varela had exceeded his orders.

Before the shooting in Santa Cruz had ended, the political perils of Yrigoyen's policy had become realities. Both the syndicalist F.O.R.A. IX, whose relationship to the administration was of major concern to Yrigoyen, as well as the anarchist F.O.R. A. V denounced the Tenth Cavalry's operations in Santa Cruz.¹ The Socialist Party, moreover, announced it would present a resolution in the Chamber of Deputies calling for an investigation of the affair.² Simultaneously, the conservative La Prensa criticized Yrigoyen for not having solved the Santa Cruz question earlier by stationing cavalry units there before the outbreak of the second strike.³ The Anglo-Argentine Review of the River Plate pointed to "certain disquieting and indisputable facts" regarding the events in Santa Cruz; it hinted that British interests felt no responsi-

¹La Vanguardia. December 14, 1921, p. 5. December 25, 1921, p. 5.

²Ibid. December 23, 1921. p. 1.

³La Prensa. December 23, 1921, p. 5.

bility for "possible miscalculations" on the part of the administration.⁴

Meanwhile, the Argentine Patriotic League vigorously entered the controversy. In late December, Manuel Carlés, the League's president, embarked on a "triumphal tour" of Patagonia. As the steamer "Asturiano" called at various Patagonian ports, Carlés addressed groups of supporters and curious listeners. The tour was planned to create the impression that the League had played the key role in the pacification of Santa Cruz. For his part Yrigoyen was only too happy to allow Carlés to accept responsibility for what had happened.

Carlés' tour was also aimed at gaining new converts at an appropriate moment. In Puerto Madryn, Chubut, he vowed that each hamlet and ranch in Patagonia would soon have "its own brigade with its shield, flag, and arsenal."⁵ In each of the four ports of Santa Cruz, he urged his audiences to aid the League in making Patagonia "truly Argentine" by working to establish Spanish-language schools and by using the national tongue on the ranches whenever possible. On every occasion, the League's leader praised the actions of the armed forces in dealing with the strikers. On his return trip to Buenos Aires, he had ample opportunity to learn more about the campaign. As it happened, Varela booked passage on the "Asturiano" for the return to Buenos Aires where he would make his official report to the War Ministry.

While the Argentine Patriotic League praised the Tenth

⁴Review of the River Plate. December 23, 1921, p. 1711.

⁵La Prensa. January 1, 1922, p. 13.

Cavalry for its actions, the administration had serious reservations. When the "Asturiano" docked in Buenos Aires on January 27th, an enthusiastic crowd of League members greeted Varela and Carlés, but there was no official welcoming party present. This fact was not lost on Varela's critics.⁶ The commander proceeded directly to the War Ministry, brushing aside the questions of newsmen.

Three days after Varela received this frosty official reception, Socialist Deputy Antonio de Tomaso introduced a resolution at the opening of the special legislative session calling for the appointment of a five-man committee to investigate the Santa Cruz affair.⁷ In addressing his colleagues, de Tomaso singled out Varela as the principal figure in the brutal suppression of a lawful strike. The Socialist pointed to the contradiction between the assessment of the situation made by Governor Yza during the first strike and the cavalry's actions during the second. De Tomaso asked why Yza had remained absent from his post throughout the course of the military campaign. Not without irony did de Tomaso refuse to follow this line of questioning to its conclusion, to the involvement of civilian decision-makers. Instead, he persisted in placing the blame solely on the shoulders of Lieut. Col. Varela, declaring slyly:

I do not choose to believe that there is an Argentine Minister let alone an Argentine President, who, upon sending troops to the south to restore order, would give the cruel and impious command to shoot down striking workers. ⁸

⁶La Vanguardia. January 28, 1922, p. 1.

⁷Congreso de la nación. Cámara de Diputados. Diario de sesiones. 1921, V p. 54.

⁸Ibid. pp. 61-62.

The Socialist challenge was clear. The Radical majority in the House of Deputies should explain Varela's actions, dissociate itself from Varela, or face up to the suspicion that Yrigoyen himself had given the order to shoot down the strikers.

When debate on the de Tomaso resolution began on February 8th, the Radicals were far from united as to their response to the specific charges leveled by the Socialist deputy. Valentín Vergara led off the discussion in behalf of the Radicals; he charged de Tomaso with viciously smearing Varela. Vergara defended Varela and the men of the Tenth Regiment, pointing to the threat of social revolution in Santa Cruz as justification for any "excesses".⁹ Leonidas Anastasi, a Radical deputy from the Federal Capital, also conceded that excesses had occurred. But instead of blaming Varela, he attacked the Argentine Patriotic League for its undue influence in Santa Cruz.¹⁰ Francisco L. Albarracín, himself a career officer, denied that excesses had taken place. He praised Varela for his decisiveness in forestalling any possibility of Chilean intervention, which he maintained had been a very real threat.¹¹ Despite their contrasting opinions, the Radical speakers were united in opposing a congressional investigation. Each one carefully explained why justice would be better served by leaving the issue in the hands of judicial authorities.

Conservative and Progressive Democratic members undoubtedly

⁹Ibid. pp. 89-90.

¹⁰Ibid. pp. 96-99.

¹¹Ibid. pp. 105-109.

enjoyed the Radical's discomfort over the Santa Cruz question but declined to speak on the Socialists' resolution which was defeated along partisan lines. Forty-seven of the fifty-two votes against the resolution were cast by Radicals. The twenty-eight deputies voting in favor included Socialists, Conservatives, Progressive Democrats, and eight Radicals. Four of these eight were members of the dissident Santa Fe Radicals.¹²

Although the Chamber of Deputies accorded Varela this measure of support, the administration kept the controversial officer at arm's length. In a letter to the commander of the Army's Second Division, General Luis Dellepiane, Varela complained that Yrigoyen had personally promised a presidential decree vindicating the Tenth Cavalry Regiment, yet no decree was issued. Putting Dellepiane on notice, Varela stated that, should the President fail to keep his word, he personally was "disposed to whatever sacrifice in order to save the honor and dignity of the officers that served under my orders, and that of the very army itself, as I saved the nation's honor in Patagonia."¹³ Careful to associate his own plight with that of the army, Varela hoped that high ranking officers might prevail upon the President to grant him vindication. However, efforts by Varela and Captains Viñas Ibarra and Anaya to carry their fight through the chain of command proved fruitless. To salve Varela's wounded pride, the War Ministry announced his appointment to the post of Director of

¹²Ibid. p. 110.

¹³Letter from Lieut. Col. Héctor B. Varela to General Luis Dellepiane, March 10, 1922. Anaya Papers, p. 182.

the Cavalry School, a prestigious assignment, on March 16th.¹⁴

During the height of public consciousness over the Santa Cruz affair, the Left made of Varela a symbol of repression against the working class. The Administration's lack of clear support for Varela abetted this process. Amidst the outcry, a German anarchist, Kurt Wilkens, decided that he must assassinate Varela, and after months of planning and rehearsal, he finally acted. On the morning of January 25, 1923 Wilkens threw a percussion bomb at Varela who had just emerged from his Buenos Aires home. The blast wounded both Varela and Wilkens, who had stood too close to his target in order to prevent an innocent pedestrian from walking between them. Varela, lying on the sidewalk, attempted to draw his sabre at the moment Wilkens opened fire with a revolver. When a crowd gathered, Wilkens immediately surrendered. Varela was carried to a nearby pharmacy where he died within minutes.¹⁵

Wilkens' act provoked an angry outcry, particularly within the administration of Yrigoyen's Radical successor, Marcelo T. Alvear, as well as within the army and the Argentine Patriotic League. A few hours after Varela's assassination became known, President Alvear issued a decree declaring the Lt. Colonel's death a direct consequence of the duties entrusted him by Yrigoyen.¹⁶ Alvear's decree gave full vindication to Varela - and the army -

¹⁴ La Epoca. January 25, 1923, p. 2.

¹⁵ La Prensa. January 26, 1923, p. 11. La Epoca. January 25, 1923 pp. 1, 3. La Vanguardia. January 26, 1923, p. 2.

¹⁶ La Epoca. January 25, 1923, p. 3. La Vanguardia. January 26, 1923, p. 2.

while also providing a generous pension for his widow.

Funeral services held at the Círculo Militar became a means of expressing outrage against the anarchists and also giving Varela the public exoneration denied him while alive. The Executive Branch was represented by President Alvear, Vice President Elpidio González, and War Minister Agustín P. Justo. The Congress was represented by delegations from both houses. Several members of the General Staff were present including Inspector General José F. Uriburu. And General Pablo Riccheri spoke for the Patriotic League. Former President Yrigoyen made a brief appearance to pay his respects.¹⁷

At the graveside ceremonies at "La Chacarita" cemetery, various speakers praised Varela and excoriated the anarchists. Speaking for the Executive Branch, War Minister Justo expressed his contempt for Wilkens and those foreigners "who do not acknowledge the greatness of our ideals nor the uniqueness of our people." On the issue of Santa Cruz, he maintained that Varela had acted at all times within his orders.¹⁸ Lieut. Col. Julio Costa representing the Círculo Militar, and Captain Eleazar Videla the navy, echoed these sentiments. Atilio Larco of the Center for Former Radical Revolutionaries eulogized Varela's participation in the abortive revolution of 1905.¹⁹ General Ezequiel Pereira commented briefly on behalf of fellow officers who were members of the Patriotic League, and then introduced Manuel Carlés. Carlés

¹⁷La Prensa. January 27, 1923, p. 9.

¹⁸Ibid. Also La Epoca. January 27, 1923, p. 4.

¹⁹La Epoca. January 27, 1923, p. 4.

criticized the recent abrogation of the death penalty and the draconian Law of Social Defense. He declared that Varela's assassination was but a tragic result of his performance of duty. La Prensa reported that Carlés profoundly impressed those present.²⁰ Captain Elbio C. Anaya concluded the program by reviewing various incidents of the Santa Cruz campaign and affirming that Varela had merely "obeyed orders received from his superiors with exemplary discipline."²¹

Anaya's assertion, along with the statements of Justo and Alvear, to the effect that Varela had acted with Yrigoyen's orders rekindled the controversy as to the exact nature of those orders. La Vanguardia interpreted the Alvear administration's exculpation of Varela as proof that Yrigoyen, himself, had been directly responsible for the bloody suppression of the second strike.²² The Yrigoyenist La Epoca responding to the Socialist charge and a similar one by the conservative La Razón, claimed that Varela's orders before both the first and second strikes had been identical: "to quell the disturbances without extreme measures and bloodshed if at all possible."²³ While insisting that the violent suppression of the movement had resulted from the strikers' refusal to lay down their arms, La Epoca also maintained that if any of the charges against Varela were in fact true, "he must have rashly disobeyed the instructions received from the government."²⁴

²⁰La Prensa. January 27, 1923, p. 9.

²¹Ibid.

²²La Vanguardia. January 28, 1923, p. 1.

²³La Epoca. January 26, 1923, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid.

Within a few months of Varela's death, Santa Cruz once again attracted national attention. Under bizarre circumstances, Varela's assassin, Kurt Wilkens, was himself murdered in a prison hospital. The assailant had served as a policeman in Santa Cruz and had been held hostage at "El Cerrito" by Aicardi and Fonte during the first strike.

If Varela's assassination had provoked an outcry on the Right, Wilkens' death had a similar impact on the Left. The day following his murder, syndicalist and anarchist labor centrals announced a three day general strike. While protesting Wilkens' death which they blamed on the collusion of prison guards with the murderer, leaders of national labor organizations were apologetic for their relative inaction during the Santa Cruz strikes. This note of unity inspired by the horror of the entire Santa Cruz affair ended, as so often in the past, with the termination of the general strike.²⁵

²⁵Sebastián Marotta, El movimiento sindical argentino. III (Buenos Aires, 1973), pp. 101-103.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Santa Cruz strikes, particularly the Yrigoyen government's handling of them, have remained a compelling historical question to the present day. This arises largely from their crucial importance in any appraisal of Yrigoyen's relations with organized labor and with the army. Both have proven controversial aspects of Yrigoyen's first presidency. The widely differing interpretations of his labor policy have frequently turned on the approach to the Santa Cruz strikes, whether viewed as the exception or the rule. In terms of Yrigoyen's relations with the army, we are prompted to ask whether this incident may have had bearing on the progressive alienation of many officers from Yrigoyen. The rise of these two forces, the army and labor, and their alienation from formal democratic rule, have been the most significant trends in Argentine political life since the time of Yrigoyen.

The nature of Yrigoyen's labor policy has been clouded in myth and partisan wrangling. Historians associated with Radicalism have traditionally emphasized what his policy toward the unions was not: It was not the unmitigated hostility of earlier "oligarchic" governments. However, such writers have

been hard pressed to describe the policy's positive attributes. Gabriel del Mazo called Yrigoyen's stance one of official "neutrality", permitting "the free play of labor organizations in their struggle for improvements in living conditions."¹ This, according to del Mazo, represented an "intense transformation" of the previous relationship between capital, labor, and the state. Except for the maritime workers' strike of November 1916 and the strike against the Central Argentine Railway in August 1917, when Yrigoyen appeared to intervene in the workers' behalf del Mazo has offered few concrete examples of this "intense transformation." Incidents such as the "Tragic Week", when repressive measures were freely employed, del Mazo dismissed as mere aberrations.²

Felix Luna, another Radical historian, likened Yrigoyen's support of working class interests to the old-fashioned paternalism of the estanciero. The Yrigoyen government, in Luna's view, provided a "synthesis of all social elements," demonstrating that "with mutual tolerance and good faith, there is no conflict which cannot be resolved."³ Luna explained the "Tragic Week" and the Santa Cruz strikes as instances in which "Yrigoyen was forced to take energetic measures to guarantee the tranquility of the population" making use of forces "over which the government had no possibility of exercising effective control."⁴

¹Gabriel del Mazo, El Radicalismo. Vol. I (Buenos Aires, 1959) p. 205.

²Ibid. p. 206.

³Félix Luna, Yrigoyen. (Buenos Aires, 1954) p. 261.

⁴Ibid. p. 251.

Those historians closely associated with the labor movement, itself, have interpreted Yrigoyen's labor policy from a sharply different perspective. Sebastián Marotta, a leading syndicalist and onetime secretary of F.O.R.A. IX has both praised and vilified Yrigoyen's vaunted obrerismo. His assessment of the Santa Cruz affair was couched in bitter terms. As a man who dealt directly with Yrigoyen on several occasions, however, he was more willing than many of his comrades to accept the President's claims of innocence.⁵

An anarchist such as Diego Abad de Santillán (and a neo-anarchist such as Osvaldo Bayer) pictured Yrigoyen as the sworn enemy of labor.⁶ Except for some tenuous contact in Rosario, Yrigoyen spurned the anarchists, and made them the targets of scorn and repression. Bayer saw in the suppression of the Santa Cruz strikes a vendetta against "anarcosindicalism".⁷ Yet there is little evidence that Soto and his associates pursued clearly defined goals.

Socialist writers depicted Yrigoyen's policy toward labor as a program of manipulation, coercion, and outright oppression.⁸ They saw the President's apparently pro-labor actions as ploys to undermine the electoral support for their party. Seen from this

⁵Marotta, III, pp. 46-49.

⁶Diego Abad de Santillán, La F.O.R.A. (Buenos Aires, 1933) pp. 258-267.

⁷Bayer, I. pp. 48-54.

⁸The pages of La Vanguardia amply reflect this point of view. See also Martín S. Casaretto, Historia del movimiento obrero argentino (Buenos Aires, 1946) 2 v. and Jacinto Oddone, Gremialismo proletario argentino (Buenos Aires, 1949).

perspective, Santa Cruz was but one manifestation of a uniformly hostile policy.

Recent studies by Samuel F. Baily⁹ and David Rock,¹⁰ while departing from these partisan analyses, have not provided a comprehensive explanation of this complex policy question. Baily has suggested that a chronological breakdown of labor policy during Yrigoyen's first term reveals that 1919 was the turning point from a more-or-less benevolent to a definitely hostile approach.¹¹ Rock has accepted this general schema, but has applied his own study of electoral politics in the Federal Capital to the question and has reached some additional conclusions.

Rock has largely come to agree with the Socialists that Yrigoyen's labor policy was a device for manipulating working class voters, a weapon in his struggle for control of the Federal Capital.¹² According to Rock, however, Yrigoyen was forced to scrap this strategy after 1919, when he came under severe pressure from British economic interests and certain elements of the Argentine military. From Rock's vantage point, then, the suppression of the Santa Cruz strike was a sign of Yrigoyen's submission to the desires of these groups.

As far as the military's participation in the Santa Cruz affair, Yrigoyen did not pursue a course designed to please high-ranking officers. During the first strike (1920) the forces under

⁹Samuel L. Baily, Labor, Nationalism, and Politics in Argentina. (New Brunswick, 1967).

¹⁰David Rock, Politics in Argentina 1890-1930. (Cambridge, 1975).

¹¹Baily, pp. 34-39.

¹²Rock, pp. 127-9.

Varela were subordinated to the political appointees of the administration. In the second strike, Varela was thrust into the forefront with the civilian officials absent or in the background. The result was that Varela and his men took the blame for ridding Santa Cruz of labor agitation in a brutal campaign.

The seeming betrayal of Lt. Col. Varela was the sort of political treachery that could not help but alienate the army's leadership.¹³ This betrayal is all too evident from Varela's own words upon returning to Buenos Aires in January of 1922. His expectations of the treatment to be accorded him and his men by Yrigoyen were, plain:

The glorious mission which was the lot of the Tenth Cavalry, and part of the Second, should be considered an example for our army - an actual case of warfare. The National Government can and should consider it such, authorizing the promotions to which these men are entitled and which the patria owes them for fighting in her behalf and in behalf of her flag.¹⁴

In the absence of official, public recognition, it fell to the Patriotic League to honor Varela and the members of his expeditionary force, presenting them with campaign medals at a dinner in May of 1922.

In his letter to General Dellepiane quoted earlier, Varela equated maintenance of internal order with the national honor. Such a viewpoint would hardly have seemed out of place to Dellepiane, who himself served as commander of the military

¹³For a discussion of officer discontent over Yrigoyen's presidency see Robert A. Potash, The Army and Politics in Argentina 1928-1945. (Stanford, 1969) chapter I. Also Juan V. Orona, La logia militar que enfrentó a Hipólito Yrigoyen. (Buenos Aires, 1965).

¹⁴Hector B. Varela, "Resumen General", Anaya Papers, p. 7.

occupation of Buenos Aires during the violence of January 1919. Varela, and those who have defended him subsequently, compared the Santa Cruz campaign with Rosas' defense of Argentine interests in the 1830's or with the campaign led by Roca against the marauding Indians in 1869-70. According to this version, Varela had only acted to close a breach through which British or Chilean adventurers might have entered. Those who criticized Varela's actions, have taken the view that Argentine independence had long since been surrendered to European economic hegemony. Defense of the existing order, then, was defense of the economic subjection of the Patagonian workers - and of Argentina, itself. In any case, the issue of Argentine nationalism had value to the strikers and entrepreneurs only in its manipulative qualities, as we have seen.

The question of foreign pressures exerted on Yrigoyen is as problematical as that of military pressures. While seeking positive action by the national authorities, diplomatic opinion was not united as to a specific course to be followed in dealing with the Santa Cruz strikers. The Anglo-Argentine press staked out no dogmatic position. Watchful after British interests in Patagonia, editors were willing to consider both conciliatory and violent tactics to reach an accord. No final verdict on the British role is possible, however, without reference to the diplomatic correspondence which was not available to this writer. Certainly both military and diplomatic pressures weighed in Yrigoyen's decision to shift from a conciliatory to a repressive stance on Santa Cruz between 1920 and 1921. Most likely, Yrigoyen made a deliberate rather than an accidental decision, as the

absence of Yza from his post and the broad authority given Varela indicate. In order to explain fully this shift, however, another crucial factor must be considered. That factor is party politics, particularly the struggle for control over the Radical Party as it approached the presidential election of 1922.

Gabriel del Mazo, in his history of Radicalism, has traced the split between "blues", presumably aristocratic anti-Yrigoyen Radical leaders, and the "reds", Yrigoyenists of less prestigious social credentials, to the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Yet del Mazo also maintained that this division became irreconcilable only after Yrigoyen became president. His "social policies", said del Mazo, were the major cause of the cleavage. The situation became particularly difficult during 1918 when the leadership of the Radical's party organization in the Federal Capital publicly criticized the direction taken by Yrigoyen. Among those who led this rebellion were Vicente Gallo, Arturo Goyeneche, Carlos Becú, José Tamborini, Victor Molina, Luis and Santiago Rocca. They called for a return to "the traditional spirit" of Radicalism which del Mazo, himself, described as "socially conservative."¹⁶

David Rock showed how, in late 1918, Yrigoyen assiduously courted a prominent "blue", Leopoldo Melo, to serve as Interior Minister, the key position in internal security matters.¹⁷ A few weeks after his refusal to join the cabinet, Melo and others

¹⁵del Mazo, II, pp. 27-31.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 31-35.

¹⁷Rock, pp. 175-6.

with similar views banded together with non-Radicals in founding the Argentine Patriotic League in order to combat "the soviet threat". Manuel Carles, Yrigoyen's former interventor in Salta, along with Admiral Domecq, a future Navy Minister under Alvear, were among those who played central roles in the budding organization. Subsequently, the Administration openly endorsed the League's interpretation of the violence of January 1919 as a soviet conspiracy.¹⁸

The disagreement within his own party over the labor question caused Yrigoyen discomfort, and perhaps prevented him from confronting the League even when at its most provocative. So free was the League to pursue its anti-labor activities and so prominent were Radicals within it that La Vanguardia was prompted to charge:

The League is a device dreamt up or taken advantage of by Sr. Yrigoyen in order to play his two-faced political game: the workingman's, capitalist's friend.¹⁹

This blunt analysis of Yrigoyen's relationship with the League suggests an aspect of his presidency little studied heretofore.

Combined with other factors, then, the nature of Radicalism itself appears at the very heart of this controversy. The decision to make labor policy subservient to party unification may explain not only the government's response to the Santa Cruz strike, but the dispatch of federal troops to the Chaco to end the strike against "La Forestal".²⁰ It may also help us understand the

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 179.

¹⁹ La Vanguardia. May 29, 1921, p. 1.

²⁰ Gaston Gori, La Forestal. (Buenos Aires, 1965).

government's equivocal attitude toward a series of brazen, armed attacks against labor groups carried out by the Patriotic League throughout the year 1921. A closer look at the inner workings of Radicalism from 1919 to 1921 may shed considerable light on the repression of organized labor in this period.

The nature of Yrigoyen's political movement, and its connection with the Patriotic League, have yet to receive sufficient study and analysis. Once we have penetrated the surface of these topics, we will be able to further refine our knowledge of labor policy under Yrigoyen, including the case of the Santa Cruz strikes.

APPENDIX I

THE POPULATION OF THE TERRITORY OF SANTA CRUZ IN 1913

	<u>Argentine-born</u>			<u>Foreign-born</u>			<u>Total</u>		
	<u>male</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>total</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>total</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>total</u>
Deseado	680	376	1056	1784	423	2207	2464	799	3263
San Julián	206	140	346	658	199	857	864	339	1203
Santa Cruz	480	323	803	1110	295	1405	1590	618	2208
Coyle	86	77	163	224	59	283	310	136	446
Río Gallegos	497	382	879	1386	563	1949	1883	945	2828
Totals	1949	1298	3247	5162	1539	6701	7111	2837	9948

Source: Comisión Nacional del Censo Tercer Censo Nacional.
Vol. II (Buenos Aires, 1915) p. 108.

APPENDIX II

ADULT MALE POPULATION OF THE TERRITORY OF SANTA CRUZ
 BETWEEN THE AGES OF 15 AND 60 IN 1913

	<u>Argentine-born</u>	<u>Foreign-born</u>	<u>Total</u>
15-20	145	347	492
20-25	180	1043	1223
25-30	198	1157	1355
30-40	299	1398	1697
40-50	169	618	787
50-60	62	197	256
Totals	1053	4760	5813

Source: Comisión Nacional del Censo, Tercer Censo Nacional. Vol. III
 (Buenos Aires, 1915) pp. 285-290.

APPENDIX III

DISTRIBUTION OF LANDED PROPERTIES IN THE TERRITORY OF SANTA CRUZ
IN THE YEAR 1913, BY SIZE OF HOLDING AND TOTAL INVESTMENT:

	<u>DESEADO</u>				Total
	<u>1001- 5000 hect.</u>	<u>5001- 10,000 h.</u>	<u>10,001- 25,000 h.</u>	<u>25,001+ h.</u>	
Hasta \$5,000 pesos	79	72	16		167
5001-10,000	9	19	17	2	47
10001- 50,000	10	10	24	3	47
50,001- 100,000			6	5	11
100,001+				1	1
Total	98	101	63	11	273

	<u>SAN JULIAN</u>				Total
	<u>1001- 5000 hect.</u>	<u>5001- 10,000 h.</u>	<u>10,000- 25,000 h.</u>	<u>25,001+ h.</u>	
Hasta \$5,000 pesos	6	4	2		12
5001-10,000	2	3	10		15
10,001- 50,000	1	8	39	2	50
50,001- 100,000				1	1
100,001+				3	3
Total	9	15	51	6	81

	<u>SANTA CRUZ (DISTRICT)</u>				Total
	<u>1001- 5000 hect.</u>	<u>5001- 10,000 h.</u>	<u>10001- 25,000 h.</u>	<u>25,000+ h.</u>	
Hasta \$5,000 pesos	6	7	13	1	27
5001- 10,000	4	8	14	2	28

	<u>1001- 5000 hect.</u>	<u>5001- 10,000 h.</u>	<u>10,001- 25,000 h.</u>	<u>25,001+ h.</u>	<u>Total</u>
10,001- 50,000	4	8	40	8	60
50,001- 100,000	2	1	4	6	13
100,001+			1	3	4
Total	16	24	72	20	132

COYLE

	<u>1001- 5000 hect.</u>	<u>5001- 10,000 h.</u>	<u>10,001- 25,000 h.</u>	<u>25,001+ h.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Hasta \$5,000 pesos					
5001- 10,000	1				1
10,001- 50,000		1	6	4	11
50,001- 100,000				4	4
100,001+			1	1	2
Total	1	1	7	9	18

RIO GALLEGOS

	<u>1001- 5000 hect.</u>	<u>5001- 10,000 h.</u>	<u>10,001- 25,000 h.</u>	<u>25,000 h.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Hasta \$5,00 pesos	1		5	3	9
5001- 10,000	1				1
10,001- 50,000	2	8	12	7	29
50,001- 100,000		1	7	9	17
100,001+				8	8
Total	4	9	24	27	64

Source: Comisión Nacional del Censo Tercer Censo Nacional. Vol. V
(Buenos Aires, 1915) pp. 567-8.

INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF RURAL PROPERTIES IN THE TERRITORY OF SANTA CRUZ IN THE YEAR 1913 BY NATIONALITY:*

	Deseado				Julian			
	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>	<u>Empl.</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>	<u>Empl.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Chilean	30	2	6	38	2	3	3	8
French	5	3	4	12	1	1	2	4
German	8	2	6	16	2	3		5
Spanish	56	5	25	86	2	5		7
British	2	2	5	9	3	14	14	31
Total								
Foreign	107	14	47	168	10	28	19	57
Argentine	56	9	17	82	3	18	1	22

	Santa Cruz				Coyle			
	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>	<u>Empl.</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>	<u>Empl.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Chilean	3	1	4	8				
French	6	7	8	21	1			1
German	3	5		8	1		1	2
Spanish	6	10	5	21	4			4
British	7	12	8	27	5		1	6
Total								
Foreign	25	35	25	85	11		2	13
Argentine	11	19	3	33	3	1		4

	Río Gallegos				Totals for Territory			
	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>	<u>Empl.</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>	<u>Empl.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Chilean	4		2	6	39	6	15	60
French					13	11	14	38
German	5		1	6	19	10	8	37
Spanish	6	1	1	8	74	21	31	126
British	14	5	1	20	31	33	29	93
Total								
Foreign	29	6	5	40	182	84	98	364
Argentine	10	16	1	17	83	53	22	158

Source: Comisión Nacional del Censo Tercer Censo Nacional. Vol. VI (Buenos Aires, 1915) pp. 740-1.

*Note: The Census provided figures for "directores" of rural properties actively engaged in administering the operations whether owners, renters of public land or the agents of owners.

APPENDIX IV

SHIPMENTS TO BUENOS AIRES OF UNCOMBED WOOL FROM THE FOUR PORTS OF SANTA CRUZ**

	<u>TONS</u>	<u>PESOS</u>
1818	201	202,264
1919	1720	1,576,806
1920	2505	2,030,581
1921	8014	2,471,450
1922	3622	829,047
1923	1663	735,596

Source: Dirección General de Estadística Anuario. (Buenos Aires, 1922) p. 696. Anuario. (Buenos Aires, 1924) p. 726.

AVERAGE PRICE OF TEN KILOS OF WOOL (ALL TYPES) 1910-1923 IN PESOS

1910: \$10	1918: \$30	1922: \$8
1915: 15	1919: 28	1923: 9
1916: 20	1920: 22	
1917: 28	1921: 9	

Source: Col. J. M. Sarobe La Patagonia y sus problemas. (Buenos Aires, 1935) p. 138.

APPENDIX V

LIST OF DEMANDS PRESENTED BY THE WORKINGMEN'S SOCIETY OF RIO GALLEGOS
NOVEMBER 1, 1920 TO THE RANCHERS OF SOUTHERN SANTA CRUZ:

1. The ranchers are obligated to improve the general living conditions as soon as is reasonably possible according to the following:
 - a. No more than three men shall sleep in one four-by-four meter room, and they shall sleep on beds or cots with mattresses, not on sheep skins. The rooms shall be well ventilated and disinfected every eight days. A wash stand and water shall be provided in each room so that workers may wash after returning from their jobs.
 - b. Light shall be provided at the owner's expense. A package of candles shall be distributed to each worker every month. In each sitting room a stove, lamp, and benches shall be provided by the owner.
 - c. Saturday afternoon shall be reserved for washing clothes. If necessary, another afternoon may be substituted.
 - d. The evening meal shall consist of soup, main dish, dessert, and beverage.
 - e. The mattress and bed shall be provided at the owner's expense, but clothing shall be the worker's own responsibility.
 - f. In case of especially high wind or rain, no worker shall be required to work out-of-doors, excepting cases of obvious emergency.
 - g. Each sheep station should have a first aid kit with instructions in Spanish.
 - h. The owner is obligated to provide transportation to the point where a worker was recruited if he should be fired or simply let go.

2. The ranchers are obligated to pay their workers a minimum wage of 100 pesos in national currency plus food. No salary shall be reduced that currently exceeds this amount. It shall be left to the discretion of the owner exactly what amount each worker receives, on the basis of ability and performance.

Each cook shall have one helper for every twenty men being served and a bread baker when more than forty are being served.

Permanent employees who leave the ranch during drives shall receive twelve pesos a day with horses, and temporary help shall receive twenty pesos a day but must provide their own horses. Horsebreakers shall receive twenty pesos for each horse tamed.

3. The ranchers are obligated to place at each station one or more shepherds depending on its importance, establishing a biweekly inspection to attend to the needs of the occupants. In choosing workers for the stations, preference shall be given to workers with families, to whom certain benefits shall be provided in relation to the number of children. In this way the population will grow and the country will be settled.

4. The ranchers are obligated to recognize and do recognize the Workingmen's Society of Río Gallegos as the only entity representative of the workers. The ranchers are also obligated to accept the designation of a delegate on each ranch who shall serve as intermediary with the ranchers and with the Workingmen's Society and shall be authorized to settle urgent questions in a provisional manner that affect the rights and

duties of both workers and employers.

5. The ranchers shall assist in having all their workers become members of the Workingmen's Society, but they are not obligated to require union membership, or to hire only union members.
6. The Workingmen's Society is obligated to terminate the present strike and urge all members to return to their jobs immediately after this agreement is signed.
7. The Workingmen's Society promises to use every means to promote harmony between labor and capital, inculcating its members with the spirit of order, hard work, and mutual respect.
8. This agreement shall take effect as of November 1, and all employees who return to work shall be credited with his due pay during the days missed. There shall be no retaliation on either side.

Source: José María Borrero, La Patagonia Trágica. (Buenos Aires, 1957) pp. 214-217.

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