

THE NAZI INFLUENCE IN ARGENTINA

A Thesis
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by
Mary Alice Walton
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A THESIS

Approved:

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to determine the amount of influence exercised by Nazi Germany over the political and economic affairs of Argentina from 1933 until 1945. Because of the large numbers of German settlers in Argentina, the initial consideration was the German appeal to them. Additional considerations prior to the Second World War were Germany's attempts to influence the military through Nazi-oriented leaders and the civilian population through propaganda and espionage. The major consideration during the Second World War was the basis for neutrality and continued ties with Germany.

Methods

A major portion of this thesis was based upon information derived from primary sources. Published diplomatic papers of the United States and official publications of the United States and Argentina were used, many of which are housed in the Latin American Collection Library at the University of Texas. Also utilized were the memoirs and accounts of United States' and

Argentine diplomats and officials, such as those of Cordell Hull, Sumner Wells, and Enrique Dickmann. In addition, much material was obtained from prominent observers of the Argentine scene during the period covered, including Sax Bradford, Ruth and Leonard Greenup, and Ray Josephs of the United States and Sergio Bagú and Silvano Santander of Argentina. Finally, reports in the New York Times by correspondents John W. White and Arnaldo Cortesi were important sources. Several sources obtainable only in Spanish were translated.

Findings

Almost as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, German interest in Argentina increased. German capital, German or German-linked management, German militarism, and German fascism exerted a major influence in Argentina throughout the Nazi regime. During the Second World War there occurred a flirtation by successive Argentine governments with Nazi ideology and superficial neutrality which was actually pro-German. The pro-German movement within Argentina included supporters in the Castillo administration and successive regimes; the nationalist press; and propaganda and subversive efforts of the German Embassy. The Nazi collaborators and the totalitarian individuals and groups, both military

and civilian, who controlled the Argentine government, especially after the June, 1943 coup, pursued a common aim: the creation of a totalitarian state in the Western Hemisphere.

Approved: 

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Chapter I

BASES FOR GERMAN INTEREST IN ARGENTINA

Humanity has traditionally divided itself into two political classes. One of these groups is composed of those who believe man capable of governing himself, while the other group believes the collective will to be ineffective, making necessary the existence of resolute political leaders.¹

One such leader, General José Félix Uriburu, led a military coup on September 6, 1930, in Argentina.² This overthrow of the government of President Hipólito Irigoyen marked the end of the constitutional continuity which had prevailed in Argentina since the popular uprising of 1890 and returned the landowning conservatives to control for more than a decade.³

The Uriburu revolt ended such democracy as there was in Argentina. It ended democracy as surely as did Fritz Thyssen and Gustav Krupp the day they decided to throw their powerful fortunes behind Adolf Hitler in Germany. It was ten years between the time Germany's big business started to support Hitler and the instant the Reichstag burst into flames. Nearly thirteen years were to elapse between the Uriburu coup and the colonel's revolt which finally brought fascism to Argentina.⁴

The Uriburu revolt had its seeds in the First World War,

after which one-sixth of the world turned to socialism, and the reactionaries of the rest of the world turned to fascism as the only means of retaining what was theirs. In Italy and Finland fascism came in immediately. In other countries, such as Germany and Spain, fascism was longer in coming.⁵

Long before 1933, Germany's reactionaries looked to fascism to achieve power not only in Germany, but also in many other parts of the world. The chemical, industrial, and financial cartels which helped Hitler to succeed started to prepare the groundwork for world hegemony almost at the same time that they began the work of destroying the Weimar Republic.⁶

One of the chief instruments of this German world-empire scheme in Latin America was General Wilhelm von Faupel of the Imperial German Army. He first went to Argentina in 1912 as a young instructor of military science in the Argentine War College. After spending the war years in Germany, he returned to Buenos Aires as military counselor to the Inspector General of the Argentine Army, where he remained until 1926. He was an excellent drill master, but he was also a profound enemy of popular government. He imported former Reichswehr officers to impart his creed to Argentine officers. Several years after leaving Argentina, he became chief of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin, the agency which organized the Italo-German War against

the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War and created the overseas Falangist movement as the key to fascist penetration in Latin America and the Philippines.⁷

It was the ideology of Faupel and his German aides which found its first expression in Argentina in the Uriburu coup. For with the Uriburu action, as Argentine Deputy Raul Damonte Tarborda pointed out in a report in 1941, "Uriburu attempted to unite all the reactionary forces, give them a program and throw them into action against the democratic groups that had survived. He inaugurated the Argentine Civil Legion, which was organized on the pattern of European fascist organizations. . . . The oligarchic caste that came to power had the intention of transplanting certain attitudes of Mussolini and Hitler."⁸

Although in 1930 Hitler still was at least three years away from the time he could help Uriburu,⁹ Germany was no less interested in Latin America than she had been before the First World War. The expansion of her trade during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth was phenomenal, and German settlers in the Latin republics were numbered in the hundreds of thousands.¹⁰ With the coming of National Socialism in Germany, German interest in Latin America increased. Although in Mein Kampf Hitler had written scornfully of the racial background of the Latin American people, he could not ignore the benefits to be derived from intensified German

penetration of the Western Hemisphere.¹¹

National Socialist penetration in Latin America depended for much of its success on the close organization of the numerous settlers there who were either German or of German origin. Although most of the German inhabitants of the Latin American republics had never seen Germany, their attachment to it was no less intense.¹² Germany clung to the jus sanguinis theory of citizenship in which the nationality of the parents determines the citizenship of a child, regardless of where he is born. Thus, the German government claimed in 1939 that some 1,300,000 German nationals resided in Argentina, although only 43,626 of them had been born in Germany, and the majority of them were naturalized Argentine citizens. "We are one people; we are united by destiny and we will never cease to be united," declared the Deutsche La Plata Zeitung, a pro-Nazi German language newspaper in Buenos Aires.¹³

Moreover, there was a significant difference between the Germans and the more numerous Italians in Argentina. The Italian immigrants were easily assimilated into the Argentine culture and were Argentines within a few years after their arrival. The Germans, on the other hand, came to the country later and did not assimilate readily. They remained German in culture and orientation.¹⁴

These Germans were ideal instruments in the hands of the

Auslands Organization, the foreign branch of the National Socialist Party, which was incorporated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich by a decree signed by Hitler on January 30, 1937. Its leader was Ernest Wilhelm Bohle, who until then had been chief of the Bureau for Germans Residing Abroad.¹⁵

In accordance with this measure, a branch of this organization, the Deutscher Volksbund für Argentinien, was established in the German Embassy at Buenos Aires. Under the direction of Fritz Küster, an embassy official, this agency assumed control of Nazi organizations and activities in Argentina. By December of 1938, 1629 registered members of the National Socialist Party were enrolled in Argentina, and 131 Nazi organizations had been set up in Buenos Aires alone. At that time, 203 German schools were counted in the country. These had enrolled an estimated 15,000 students, of whom 74 per cent were Argentine citizens according to Argentine law, 11 per cent were Germans, and the remaining 15 per cent were nationals of other countries.¹⁶

The propaganda activities of the Auslands Organization were widespread. To maintain "cultural contact" with the Fatherland it published thirty-seven newspapers and weeklies in countries outside the Reich and also controlled a news agency service, the Ausland Deutsche Nachrichten Dienst, which worked in close co-operation with the Ministry of Propaganda. This agency supplied a regular service of news and articles to all its foreign branches

from its central office in Berlin.¹⁷

The Auslands Organization ran a correspondence school with thousands of subscribers among Germans employed abroad as school teachers, governesses, and clerks. It had a special section devoted exclusively to carrying on Anti-Semitic propaganda among Germans overseas, who were supplied regularly with literature issued by the National Socialist Department of Racial Hygiene.¹⁸

The German Foreign Institute at Stuttgart, Germany, aided the Auslands Organization in these contacts with Germans abroad. It had in its library some 45,000 volumes and files of 800 newspapers and 400 magazines published in German. It specialized in keeping in contact with individual Germans abroad. These Germans were required to keep in close touch with their local consul or be subject to loss of citizenship. The Hitler government sought control over these citizens in various ways: listing the storekeepers they could patronize; forbidding them to retain Jewish lawyers or physicians; appointing regional leaders, under supervision of Berlin, to inculcate Nazi principles in Germans abroad; establishing German clubs; providing those clubs with films, newspapers, and books which reflected Nazi ideology; encouraging the club members to give the Nazi salute and observe Nazi holidays; and discouraging Germans from marrying or

mingling with Jews.¹⁹

This close supervision of German residents abroad was especially useful to the National Socialist policy in Latin America. Although the Reich possessed no territorial colony in the Western Hemisphere, the degree of control exercised from Berlin over German settlers in the Latin American republics had the effect of creating what were virtually German colonies in those areas where they lived. Their local organizations were given moral and material help from Germany. Patriotic meetings and lectures, Hitler youth groups, and Winter Help Fund collections helped to retain these overseas Germans in the National Socialist fold.²⁰

Germans were required to pay a fixed percentage of their income to the Winter Help Fund and other funds under threat that if they did not, something would happen to their relatives in Germany.²¹ Money collected for the Winter Help Fund, or for some such cause as the assistance of Germans stranded in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, was diverted to local German firms and agencies, who used such funds to pay political agents sent out from Berlin.²² Edmund von Thermann, Nazi ambassador to Argentina in the 1930's, later confirmed that the Winter Relief Fund was used to finance the subversive activities of the German Embassy.²³

Such attempts by Germany to organize a state within a state were bound to result in a conflict of loyalties. Evidence of such conflict was most apparent between the rural inhabitants

of German origin, who remained for the most part loyal to Argentina, and the urban German population, who were more loyal to the Reich. Nazi Party ceremonies in Buenos Aires and other Argentine cities were well attended; German institutions throughout Argentina were purged of "non-Aryan" elements, and Germans exhibiting anti-Nazi tendencies were kept under surveillance. But in at least one suburb of the Argentine capital several Germans were driven out of business by fellow Germans solely because of their political opinions.²⁴

In a mostly favorable atmosphere, however, the National Socialist movement in Argentina continued to grow. Attempts to bring all Germans under the control of Berlin and the application of "sanctions" against those who proved obdurate, occupied many months after 1933.²⁵ Yet, local conditions made it difficult to establish National Socialist political institutions in the Western Hemisphere.²⁶ Nazism in Argentina would have had to be a Latin American brand of fascism. European fascism admitted to no class distinctions, while Latin American fascism was designed purely to keep one class in power at the expense of the other class.²⁷

Political penetration in Argentina, however, was not the sole purpose of German propaganda. Political penetration was a vital factor in economic penetration. Economic penetration, indeed, might have resulted in a state favorably disposed to

Berlin granting the Reich economic concessions which would be as vital, if not more vital, than any political concession. Berlin's aim was to trade with Argentina, as well as with other Latin American states, on such terms that their entire economic systems would eventually become tied.²⁸

Immediately after the First World War German trade with Latin America bore no comparison with the pre-war days. German investments had been lost, and in 1929 only Colombia took a larger percentage of its imports from Germany than in 1913. Germany's total exports in 1933 had fallen from the 1932 figure of 5,739,000,000 marks to 4,167,000,000 marks, resulting in a conversion of a favorable balance of trade of 1,083,000,000 marks into an adverse balance of 284,000,000 marks.²⁹

Raw materials were needed abroad. The rearmament program was already straining the national economy, industrial production was slowing because the relatively high value of the mark in international markets impeded the export trade, and foreign exchange was difficult to obtain.³⁰

Thus, it was that the Reich, seeking to check deflationary tendencies, turned with interest towards Latin America, where states had large resources in raw materials.³¹ In fact, during the 1930's Latin America's raw materials composed as much as ninety-nine per cent of her total exports.³² And Germany needed

those raw materials, but she did not wish to devalue the mark. The only alternative was to devise a scheme which would stimulate German exports to Latin America by reducing their price without disturbing the mark, thus enabling the Reich to obtain in exchange the primary products needed by her industries.³³

A plan devised by the Nazi financial wizard Hjalmar Schacht involved the use of compensation marks, generally known as Aski marks. This "mark" was not money at all but a credit. The process, worked out by treaty between Germany and Latin American countries, involved paying Latin American countries for their raw materials in marks which had twice the value of those marks outside Germany and could be used only for the purchase of German goods.³⁴ The Aski mark was, therefore, a discount in relation to the mark. Thus, while the Reich could claim that her currency had been maintained at its old parity, she also enjoyed the advantages to be derived from a depreciated currency in her trade with Latin America.³⁵

That this system of trading, which was, in fact, barter was to the advantage of the Reich may be judged from the fact that between 1932 and 1936 German imports from Latin America rose 21 per cent, and German exports to Latin America rose 83 per cent; while in the same period, total world imports from Latin America increased only 1 per cent, and exports rose 34

per cent.³⁶ In the case of Argentina, imports from Germany in 1936 increased 50 per cent over 1935, while exports to Germany increased 150 per cent. And in 1937, Argentine imports and exports increased 50 per cent.³⁷

To the Reich the economic riches of Argentina had long been attractive. But it was not only her agricultural riches which attracted Berlin. The Reich had not overlooked Argentina's potential oil fields. Nor is oil the only mineral found in Argentina, for she also possesses tin, manganese, and uranium. But perhaps most important of all to Germany was the discovery in 1938 of a rich vein of iron ore.³⁸

By the late 1930's the future course of Argentine economic policy, and of German economic penetration was not easy to determine. In his 1939 message to the legislature, Argentine President Roberto M. Ortiz, in defending the barter agreement with Germany, stated: "It is only natural that by mere force of gravitation our purchases should be directed towards countries which accept payment in kind." These words had an ominous ring, and although Ortiz claimed that such a procedure was in no way preferential, and that by concluding barter agreements Argentina was not adopting foreign doctrines or systems of economic policy, their effect was bound to be felt in her future

economic policy, and to be an encouragement to those within Argentina who sought to change her political system.³⁹

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Adolfo Tejera, Penetración Nazi en América Latina (Montevideo: Nueva America, 1938), p. 15.

²Ray Josephs, Argentine Diary: The Inside Story of the Coming of Fascism (New York: Random House, 1944), p. xviii.

³James W. Rowe, "A Note on Argentina," AUFS Reports: East Coast South America Series, 11 (June 1964), 53.

⁴Josephs, p. xviii.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. xix.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. xx.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰N. P. MacDonald, Hitler over Latin America (London: Jarrolds, 1940), p. 10.

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹²Ibid.

¹³George I. Blanksten, Peron's Argentina (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 40.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁵Hugo Fernández Artucio, The Nazi Underground in South America (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), p. 24.

¹⁶Enrique Dickmann, La infiltración nazi-fascista en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sociales Argentinas, 1939), p. 15.

¹⁷MacDonald, Hitler, pp. 11-12.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁹Samuel Guy Inman, Democracy versus the Totalitarian State in Latin America, No. 7 (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1938), pp. 14-15.

²⁰MacDonald, Hitler, p. 12.

²¹Don Modesto, Background: The Key to Current Events: Spies and Saboteurs in Argentina, News Background Report No. 7, ed. Kurt D. Singer (n.d., n.p.), p. 10.

²²MacDonald, Hitler, p. 16.

²³United States Department of State, Consultation among the American Republics with Respect to the Argentine Situation (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 51.

²⁴MacDonald, Hitler, p. 32.

²⁵Ibid., p. 35.

²⁶Ibid., p. 21.

²⁷John W. White, Argentina: The Life Story of a Nation (New York: The Viking Press, 1942), p. 156.

²⁸MacDonald, Hitler, p. 21.

²⁹Ibid., p. 22.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 22-23.

³¹Ibid.

³²Tejera, p. 77.

³³MacDonald, Hitler, p. 23.

³⁴Inman, p. 16.

³⁵MacDonald, Hitler, p. 23.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 23-24.

³⁷Tejera, p. 46.

³⁸MacDonald, Hitler, p. 65.

³⁹Ibid., p. 72.

CHAPTER II

THE GERMAN INFLUENCE ON THE ARGENTINES DURING THE 1930's

Nazism grew in Germany as an ultra-nationalistic force.¹ And the most successful Nazi propaganda in Argentina was that which emphasized Argentine nationalism.² The basis for Argentine nationalism is rooted in the political liberalism of the nineteenth century, as illustrated in the writings of Bartolomé Mitre and Domingo Sarmiento. Its objectives, after the fall of the Juan Manuel de Rosas tyranny in 1852, were to combat provincialism and to attain the unity of the country. The movement shifted after 1890 from a benevolent endeavor to the emotional assertion of cultural superiority and the demand for economic independence from foreign capital. It expressed an aggressive, if not expansionist, position regarding international affairs.³

During the 1930's there emerged two basic types of Argentine nationalism: liberal and integral. Liberal nationalism was defined as belief in international cooperation and an emphasis on personal liberties within the state.⁴ Integral nationalism, on the other hand, rejected sympathy for and cooperation with other nations and opposed all liberties when they interfered with the aims of the state.⁵

After a brief interlude of integral nationalist dictator-

ship in 1930 and 1931 under José Félix Uriburu, the liberal nationalist faction won control of the army for more than a decade. And its position was strengthened by the fact that its leader, General Agustín P. Justo, served as president from 1932 until 1938. This period of corrupt pseudodemocracy under the restored landed aristocracy and their political allies became known as the Infamous Decade, 1932-1943. This period was characterized by electoral fraud, government corruption, and a free field for foreign investment in Argentina. During this decade, nationalistic army officers lost all faith in professional politicians.⁶

The Justo regime bore marks of fascism. But European fascism attracted many Argentines at that time, particularly members of the military.⁷ German activities in Argentina benefited by the fact that the Third Reich was regarded with a certain sympathy by the Argentine armed forces.⁸ The Germans had tried for many years, even before the advent of Nazism, to influence the Argentine military. Germany followed the same principle as used in other Latin American countries: that of inviting officers to study in Germany.⁹ Hundreds of Argentine officers were sent to Germany at some point in their career for additional training. There they received an acceptance

not offered to them by the governing classes at home.¹⁰ Most important, German indoctrination developed an awareness among the Argentine officer class that they were a superior group, having an heroic mission to perform.¹¹

Officers destined for key posts in the general staff and high echelons of the army were given advanced training in the Escuela Superior de Guerra. This war academy was the hub from which German influence spread through the Argentine army. Organized in 1901 on the Prussian model, it was staffed largely by a German training mission under its first director, Colonel Alfred Arendt. From 1901 until 1914, German officers instructed the future Argentine military leaders. Beginning in 1905, Argentine army officers were sent to Germany for military training, and from 1909 until 1914, six students from the war academy attended German maneuvers annually.¹²

When the German mission was recalled in 1914 to serve in the First World War, its influence was perpetuated by Argentine officers who had served as assistants. Soon after the war, the Argentine government engaged a six-man mission headed by General W. J. Kretchmer.¹³ The Socialist bloc in the Argentine legislature, through Deputy Juan Antonio Solari, denounced the existence in the Argentine army of these German instructors in 1932. Nevertheless, they remained in the Argentine budget until 1939.¹⁴

France had traditionally been Germany's rival for military influence in Latin America. After the First World War, French efforts to make inroads into the Argentine army were effectively blocked by then Inspector General Uriburu, who had spent six months in training with the Uhlan Guards of Berlin in 1908. When appointed inspector general in 1923, he named as his adviser General Wilhelm von Faupel, who exercised considerable influence in the army until 1927.¹⁵ There were eighteen Argentine officers studying in Germany by 1939, but only five in France.¹⁶

Sympathy with Germany was especially strong in the air force.¹⁷ General Armando Verdaguer, the air force chief, made an extensive trip through Germany in 1938 at the invitation of Field Marshal Hermann Goering. Verdaguer was personally decorated by Hitler with the order of the German Eagle.¹⁸ And as a result of this visit Argentina ordered twenty German planes for training purposes.¹⁹

German military organizations in Argentina were among those organizations found in a publication entitled Deutsche Vereine, published in Berlin in 1935. Listed were German organizations of all types in South America. The names and addresses of those organizations in Argentina covered thirteen pages.²⁰ There were several German military organizations, com-

posed mostly of German citizens, within Argentina: the Unión Alemana de Guerreros Imperiales, made up of former German soldiers; the Unión Nacional Socialista Alemana de Marina, a naval organization; the Unión Germano-Argentina, made up of Germans and Argentines; the Federación Imperial para ejercicios físicos, composed of various athletic groups;²¹ the Reiter Sturm, the Brown Shirt cavalry; the Fleiger Sturm, the Nazi Air Corps in Argentina.²²

There were also pro-Nazi organizations of types other than military in Argentina; organizations whose membership was mostly Argentine.²³ The largest of these nationalist organizations was the Alianza de la Juventud Nacionalista, the Nationalist Youth Alliance, which had about 10,000 members. It was headed by General Juan Bautista Molina, a retired army officer, who operated the Alianza on a storm trooper basis. Nazism was not openly advocated, but the organization did favor internment camps for liberal deputies and politicians and it was flagrantly anti-Semitic.²⁴ Enrique Osés, the editor of the pro-Axis newspaper El Pampero, was a member of the organization.²⁵

The Alianza was the major successor to the Legión Cívica Argentina, or Civic Legion, the oldest nationalist organization founded in 1930 by Uriburu to keep surveillance over his poli-

tical enemies. Strongly influenced by Italian fascism, it developed support in the Argentine army.²⁶ The Legion gathered in young radicals, organized them, uniformed them in brown shirts, and drilled them for military duty.²⁷ The Legion directed much of its energy against a conservative workmen's organization known as the General Federation of Labor.²⁸ The Legion had 150,000 members by 1938.²⁹ However, after 1938, the policy of the Legion was largely taken over by other groups such as the Alianza which were more clearly affiliated with and instigated by Nazism and which were more audacious and belligerent than the Legion.³⁰

All these clamoring factions produced many propaganda organs, most successful of which was El Pampero, a big daily newspaper under German subsidy.³¹ It first appeared in 1939 and was more thoroughly a tool of the German Embassy than any other nationalist organ.³²

Almost as thoroughly organized and as effective as Nazi printed propaganda, German radio broadcasting in Argentina developed rapidly in the 1930's. Local stations relayed 89 programs from Germany in 1934, the number was 145 in 1935, and the total was 239 in 1936.³³ Directional radio broadcasts from Germany to Argentina were well planned and popular with

the Argentines, according to a report from Assistant United States' Trade Commissioner Roland Welch in Berlin in 1938. Welch reported that only those German announcers who could speak Spanish fluently were assigned to the broadcasts. Latin Americans visiting Germany were invited to appear on these programs and discuss their impressions of Germany. Latin American students living in Germany appeared on a special program each month. These radio appearances by Latin Americans were usually not rehearsed, but the content of the messages was supervised to a certain extent, according to the report.³⁴

The most active German propaganda agency operating in Latin America was the Ibero-American Institute. Operated from Berlin by General Faupel, this agency was very hospitable to Latin American students and writers. It controlled as much as possible what students said about Germany after returning home. It maintained a close watch on all Latin American nationalist movements, reading as much pro-Nazi feeling into them as possible through its card index control of writers and speakers. The entire organization was a masterful example of German thoroughness and understanding that ideological penetration should be guided first by cultural penetration, which could be achieved

Minister brought a powerful new instrument into play, a combination of German diplomatic establishments and German private citizens abroad.⁴⁰

The effect on the German Embassy in Buenos Aires was electric.⁴¹ In Argentina in the fiscal year 1939, it spent 884,500 pesos; in the fiscal year 1940, 3,136,400;⁴² and in the fiscal year 1941, 5,983,100.⁴³ In addition, the embassy's volume of banking operations increased after 1938. In the fiscal year 1941, the embassy received 6,157,400 pesos from local bank accounts of Berlin financial institutions.⁴⁴ An analysis of payments showed that of the total expended by the embassy, only 221,150 dollars, or approximately 1,105,800 pesos, was necessary for actual running expenses.⁴⁵ Expenditures were in the form of checks issued to "bearer." But it was impossible to determine the destination, since the Argentine banking laws did not require endorsement by the payee.⁴⁶

The intensive propaganda activities of the German Embassy in Buenos Aires were first reported to the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1936 by the Argentine Ambassador in Berlin, Eduardo Labougle, but no steps were taken to curb these activities. Ambassador Labougle sent to the Argentine government in 1938 a map showing how Argentina was to be deprived of Patagonia, the Territory of Misiones, and parts of the provinces

of Corrientes and Santa Fé when the Nazis got around to redrawing the map of South America. Yet Argentine government officials and army officers laughed at the idea that Argentina might have anything to fear in the way of a Nazi invasion or interference with its political and economic status quo.

Labougle was transferred to Rio de Janeiro.⁴⁷

The first public note of the alleged plot was taken early in 1938, when the governors of two Argentine territories, Misiones and La Pampa, charged that Germans in their areas were engaged in "anti-Argentine" activities. The governors' accusations went almost unnoticed. But on May 18, 1938, Argentines were electrified by a speech in the national Chamber of Deputies. Deputy Enrique Dickmann, a Socialist from Buenos Aires, made a copiously documented public exposé of Nazi activities in the country. His speech was so startling to the Chamber that it suspended its rules to permit Dickmann to speak for two and one-half hours. He named Nazi leaders in the country and presented a detailed list of their organizations and membership.⁴⁸

This speech proved to be one of four delivered by Dickmann in 1938 and 1939 in an attempt to rouse Argentina to face the Nazi menace. "The evil of Nazi-Fascist infiltration has acquired extension and depth," he asserted; "its venom is so subtle and so penetrating that many people in our country have succumbed to it."⁴⁹ Dickmann was soon joined in his crusade by

Deputy Raúl Damonte Taborda, a Radical from Buenos Aires. Together they urged the Chamber to establish a committee on anti-Argentine activities. The Chamber was at first reluctant to form such a committee; and it was not until 1940 that the Committee on Anti-Argentine Activities was at least created under the chairmanship of Damonte Taborda. This committee did what it could to expose and stem the rising tide of Nazi influence in Argentina.⁵⁰

Damonte Taborda declared to the Chamber in 1939 that Nazi penetration of Patagonia had already begun.⁵¹ In fact, German designs on South America can be traced as far back as the 1880's, when a German author named von Valser [sic] stated: "North America belongs to the Anglo-Saxons; but in Latin America a new, thriving Germany ought to rule within thirty years."⁵² Wilhelm Sievers, a professor at the University of Giessen, in 1903 in his book, Sudamerika und die Deutschen Interessen, stated: "If the German empire wishes to recover its threatened power position on land, it ought to acquire influence . . . in South America."⁵³ Then, R. Tannenberg wrote a book in 1911 entitled Gross Deutschland, which contained two inscriptions: "English South America" and "German South America," the southern part. The German section was composed of Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay,

Argentina, and Chile. Tannenberg explained in detail how to populate these countries and how by 1950 they would be dominated by Germany.⁵⁴ And there were other German writers, like E. von Liebert, for example, who in 1907 advised Argentine conquest by means of German emigration.⁵⁵

The first instance in which written matter had been submitted to support charges of German designs on Patagonia occurred on March 31, 1939. On that date, the Argentine newspaper Noticias Gráficas published a document which was supposed to be a facsimile of a report concerning German occupation of Patagonia.⁵⁶ The report, dated January 11, 1937, was purported to be a dispatch to the Reich Colonial Office signed by the counselor of the German Embassy in Buenos Aires, C. von Schubert, and the head of the German National Socialist Party in Argentina, Alfred Müller. Included were military and communications maps, photographs of strategic points, plans of Argentine defenses and oil reserves, and other pertinent data.⁵⁷

The document detailed plans for organizing Nazi espionage in the six Argentine territories comprising the southern part of Argentina formerly known as Patagonia, an area which possessed vast oil supplies and was of great strategic importance since it dominated the Straits of Magellan. Describing this region

as "only sparsely populated," it alleged that the Argentine government had never established full control over the territory in the manner required for its effective occupation and colonization, and it could be thus legally considered a no-man's-land suitable for annexation by Germany for use as a German colony.⁵⁸

The document declared that espionage contacts had been established in the Argentine Ministries of War, Marine and Agriculture, in the Coast Defense headquarters, the Bureau of Mines, the Standard Oil Company, and the National Bank. The espionage system was directed from seven key points: first was the German Embassy and Consulate, second the German Chamber of Commerce, third were two German banks, and fourth was Lahusen, a German firm controlling the export of wool from Patagonian sheep farms; the fifth point was a German shipping company, Antonio M. Defino, agents for the Hamburg South America Line, the sixth two local German societies, and the seventh the German Labor Front in Argentina.⁵⁹

A photostatic copy of this document was sent to Argentine President Roberto M. Ortiz, by a certain Heinrich Jürges, who offered him "a whole trunkful" of documents revealing Nazi activities in Argentina. Jürges declared he was at one time secretary to Goebbles but had become anti-Nazi following the

imprisonment of his wife in a German concentration camp. He said that for revenge he had used his position as Buenos Aires representative of a German electrical firm to collect facts about Nazi ambitions in Argentina.⁶⁰

Following five weeks of investigation by Argentine courts, however, the prosecuting attorney found the authenticity of the document could not be proved.⁶¹ And the German Embassy issued a statement that the document was "a gross forgery".⁶² The news of this plot, however, effectively dispelled any illusions that still might have existed in Argentina that there were limits to the ambition of the German dictator.⁶³

President Ortiz issued a decree on May 15, 1939, making mandatory the dissolution of the Nazi Party and all other political organizations directed from abroad. The new decree banned all foreign political insignia, uniforms, banners, or songs and forbade activities for or against political institutions of foreign countries.⁶⁴

However, the first report of the Committee on Anti-Argentine Activities on August 29, 1941, revealed that, even though President Ortiz had dissolved the German National Socialist Party in 1939, it continued to operate. It had merely changed its name to the Federación de Círculos Alemanes, drawing its leader-

ship in Argentina from the German Embassy and from German business and industrial leaders in the country.⁶⁵

In the city of Buenos Aires the Nazi Party had at least 400 meeting places by 1940, some in private residences, others in beer halls, German business houses, and export-import warehouses. The Party had 30,000 members in Buenos Aires, of which 20,000 belonged to the Storm Troops. In addition, the Gestapo had agents in separate groups in forty-seven zones in the capital.⁶⁶

A document presented to the Argentine Congress on May 18, 1938, by Deputy Dickmann revealed the perfect coordination between the Buenos Aires organization and other component parts of the River Plate organization.⁶⁷ This document, published in Germany in 1933, set forth everything which must be done in foreign countries for the spread of Nazi ideas in order to win converts. Giving special attention to Argentina and Brazil, it stated how radio and news services were to be controlled. Careful details were given about the tourist and cultural propaganda which must be carried out, offering free trips to Germany with all expenses paid for certain selected persons in order that they might receive impressions and instructions there. It also gave details for motion picture and radio propaganda and especially for broadcasting Nazi doctrine at certain times.⁶⁸

Referring to propaganda in Latin America, the document stated:

As a general rule, whenever an effort is made to exercise such material influence over certain foreign personalities, care must be taken that there shall be no trace whatever left of the operation. Payments must be made only in cash and privately from person to person.

It is particularly important that all possible forms of propaganda be brought to bear on university students and that their sympathy be won to National Socialist ideas. According to information in our possession, the students, especially in Latin America, have acquired an ever growing political influence, and it is imperative that we exploit this influence in favor of German propaganda in foreign countries. It is also just as important to gain the sympathy and support of university professors, because they naturally exercise great influence on the students and usually are easily bribed.⁶⁹

Nazi propaganda, Dickmann alleged, was far more dangerous than that of the Italian fascists. While Italians usually merged their personality with that of the countries where they established themselves, Germans remained aloof and provided excellent soil for the growth of extremist ideas, no matter how opposed they might be to the institutions of their adopted country.⁷⁰ And while the German population was much smaller than the Italian, the Germans were more methodical than the Italians and more aggressive in their propaganda.⁷¹ The Germans in Argentina belonged to a higher social class than did the Italians. Most Germans were artisans or professional and business men, while the bulk of Italians were laborers.⁷²

However, both fascist and Nazi penetration in Argentina was facilitated by the fact that there was much more fear of leftist extremism than rightist.⁷³ Argentine sympathy for the fascist and Nazi regimes was a result of a strong fear, either real or pretended, of Russian communism.⁷⁴

Consequently, there were leaders in Argentina who defended fascism. Senator Matías Sánchez Sorondo, a wealthy landowner and one of the most reactionary of the Conservatives who had been minister of the interior under President Uriburu, delivered a speech in defense of fascism in the Argentine Senate on November 24, 1936:

Fascism is respectful of our social organization; the States of this type, whatever be their methods of action, intend to invigorate the solicitorship of their own country; they want the collective happiness of their inhabitants; they want the betterment of life.

You can argue about the rightness of their institutional principles, of their political concepts, of their economic ideas, but you cannot deny that they are founded upon the same bases as our civilization . . . The Russian revolution with its tragic consequences for those enslaved people; the Sovietization of Spain with its courting of inexpressable horrors; the abyss in which France is sinking little by little. And the magnificent resurrection of Italy and Germany, which dominate the European scene with their realist politics and are forging a new conscience disciplined to oppose the international terrorism of the Bolsheviks who are trying to impose on the world the ideologies of Marx and Lenin.⁷⁵

When a proposed law for the suppression of communism was

under consideration in the Argentine Senate in 1937, several senators expressed an opposite view from that of Matías Sánchez. Senator Lisandro de la Torre stated, "The dictatorship of the proletariat . . . is not the only danger . . . Equally fearful are the fascist dictatorships. There is no difference between dictatorships; all equally offend human dignity."⁷⁶

A similar speech was made by Senator Eduardo Laurencenia:

My personal and political position in regards to this proposed law is well known. My liberal position, my opposition to despotic regimes, my repudiation of violence as a means of imposing ideas and institutions, the respect that I profess for human rights and liberties, my devotion to democratic forms of government, my resistance to excessive intervention by the State in the economic and social order, place me decidedly in front of all extremes, whatever their denomination or tendency.⁷⁷

When I consider the situation of Russia and Germany, it grieves me that those countries have arrived at a socio-political state that make tolerable three violent dictators . . . And I fervently desire . . . that Argentina does not fall under the yoke of moral perversion.⁷⁸

The Executive Branch **does** not see more than the communist danger in the workers' movement, in the field of production, and in education. It has not seen, nor does it give importance to the danger of fascism, which appears in the disguise of nationalism,⁷⁹ and in the mask of political regeneracy . . .

The Nazi threat in Argentina had become real by 1940. It was a growing impulsive, revolutionary movement which took ad-

vantage of every favorable opportunity. It was characterized by uninterrupted propaganda attacks through newspapers, leaflets, radio stations, and by attempts to bring pressure on private individuals through personal contacts. Meeting few serious obstacles, the movement became bolder.⁸⁰

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II

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CHAPTER III

NAZI INFLUENCE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The outbreak of the Second World War was a critical date in the growth of the Nazi movement in the decade from 1933 to 1943. The propaganda and activities of the Nazis were intensified soon after the war began. Periodicals and newspapers were published to serve the German cause; the information services and espionage and counterespionage organizations sought sympathizers to collaborate in their tasks. Nationalists of all shades appeared most suitable for such jobs, although some of them, out of a sense of honor, refused to collaborate, whereas others accepted, on the principle of uniting for a cause.¹

The nationalists, a great majority of whom were members of the oligarchy, attacked the imperialist powers from the outset, particularly Great Britain. German sources contained abundant materials for ascertaining the character and measuring the rate of penetration of British capital into Argentina, and there was no lack of investigators to study the data and thus feed the anti-imperialist zeal of the nationalist groups. With that material, and with less substantial data, nationalism forged the belief that it was necessary to shake off the English yoke. To accomplish this, Great Britain and the entire democratic

world would have to be smashed by the German forces. These ideas had unity, and nationalism was pro-Nazi by virtue of these beliefs.²

Prior to the war, the illusion prevailed in Latin America, as in the United States, that the Atlantic Ocean would be enough to protect the Western Hemisphere from the effects of a Nazi victory in Europe. And the idea fitted admirably into the schemes of Hitler's propaganda office. In the case of Latin America, however, Nazi agents had a much richer field for exploitation than this false feeling of security; they had at their disposal, and waiting only to be manipulated, the deep distrust which certain Latin American circles reserve for any action or proposal originating in Washington. As soon as the European war started, the "geopoliticians" and historians of the Third Reich set themselves with Teutonic zeal to the task of scrutinizing the archives for every unhappy fact which could be recalled to the minds of Latin Americans concerning their relations with the United States.³

There existed, however, a more potent appeal: the argument that only a Hitler victory could save the Latin American economy from complete stagnation. Nazi agents emphasized that Latin American countries not only had nothing to fear from Hitler

so far as their independence was concerned but would benefit economically by a "New Order" in Europe. Latin American goods would flood Europe after the war, taking the place of those exports which formerly came from the defeated countries. The exploited proletarian nations of the Western Hemisphere would free themselves forever from the humiliating tutelage of the "Bad Neighbor of the North" and join the splendid "New Order of the Haves Nations."⁴

Norman Armour, the United States ambassador in Argentina in 1940, acknowledged the Nazi threat to the Western Hemisphere in a telegram to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull:

Referring to the communications stressing the vital importance of economic considerations in connection with questions of continental solidarity and defence, with particular reference to Argentina, I am forced to conclude that a crisis is at hand and that a choice may have to be made in the very near future between taking decisive and perhaps unprecedented steps to provide these countries with an economic alternative to what the totalitarian states have in prospect to offer, or seeing this and possibly other South American countries take the first steps preparatory to falling within the German economic orbit with a probable end to American solidarity and an opening of the way to the establishment of German economic, if not political, hegemony in this part of the Western Hemisphere.

Special reference is made to . . . statements by Dr. Federico Pinedo, former Minister of Finance under President Justo and long and outstanding au-

thority on Argentine economic and political matters. It is impressive that he considers Argentina's economic situation critical and that he accepts as a matter of course that his country's ultimate alignment will depend primarily upon markets for its exports. He is fully aware, because of his close association with persons highly placed in governmental and financial circles, that German and Italian influences are already actively at work in an endeavour to convince the Argentines that it is in their best interest to do nothing that might close to them their European markets in the event of a German victory. . . .

Dr. Pinedo considers the issue of the greatest importance, since he believes that if Germany can be excluded from South America and the British possessions, that country can and will be defeated ultimately, but that if it should succeed in becoming entrenched in South America its position might easily be invulnerable. It is believed that there is much truth in what he says both with respect to the immediate danger and the consequences of failure to combat it in time.

Whereas the present Government and the majority of the public are inclined to favor a continental policy of cooperation and . . . would prefer to be associated with the United States rather than Germany in the present crisis, there is no blinking to the fact that many doubt the desirability of cooperating with the United States in continental defence, some because of national vanity, some because of pro-totalitarian sympathy or feeling that there is no danger or both, but most because they really doubt the ability of the United States to afford adequate protection to the whole Western Hemisphere in the first place and particularly have little hope of any American solution of their economic problem in the second. Although as previously reported the danger of any serious attempt to replace the present Government by one more friendly to the Germans appears to have passed for the time being, this does not mean that the situation is not rather finely balanced. . . .⁵

The traditional principles of Argentine diplomacy have been an insistence on the absolute sovereignty of the nation, an avoidance of "entangling alliances" with any other nation, and the rejection of any proposal for intervention, either unilateral or multilateral.⁶ These same points were found in the "Good Neighbor" policy of mutual respect and cooperation outlined by Roosevelt in his inaugural address of 1933. Secretary of State Cordell Hull agreed to a partial abandonment of intervention at the Montevideo conference in December of 1933, and his good will in this matter was demonstrated by the nullification of the Platt Amendment in May, 1934, and by the departure of the United States Marines from Haiti that same August.⁷

But Hull did not want non-intervention to serve as an excuse for the United States to isolate herself from the affairs of Latin America. The rising cloud of National Socialism in Europe goaded the United States Secretary of State by 1936 to consider the transformation of the Pan-American movement into a regional security system. He would implement this course of action at inter-American conferences held in Latin America in the years prior to and during the war.⁸

Of all the problems and dangers that confronted President

Roosevelt and his advisers in the critical months of May and June, 1940, the issues of Latin America and of hemisphere defense appeared among the most urgent. Though it appears somewhat strange in retrospect, it is a fact that the United States Chiefs of Staff at the time regarded the Nazi threat to South American countries as perhaps the most immediate danger to national security. They therefore assigned questions of hemisphere defense the highest priority.⁹

At the Pan-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace, held at Buenos Aires in 1936, it was agreed that foodstuffs and raw materials destined for the civil populations of warring nations could not in any circumstances be considered contraband.¹⁰ Hull, heading the United States delegation, recommended that the American states resort to compulsory consultation in case of an attack by a non-American power. His proposal also included the establishment of a permanent committee of the foreign ministers to initiate consultation procedures and the adoption by the other American republics of United States neutrality principles.¹¹

But the Hull program was not greeted enthusiastically by Argentine Foreign Minister Saavedra Lamas. Vehemently defending the principle of sovereignty, he rejected any plan which

would impose on a state the obligation to consult or collaborate with its neighbors. Also in the name of sovereignty he denounced the proposal for the Pan-Americanization of neutrality, insisting that Argentine trade relations with Europe were to be left untouched. He successfully nullified the United States objective of close inter-American cooperation by forcing the other delegations at the conference to accept voluntary consultation in the face of a common danger and by further proscribing any act of intervention by one of the contracting parties.¹²

The new Argentine Foreign Minister, José M. Cantilo, showed some reluctance to participate in the next inter-American conference at Lima in December, 1938, and stayed only long enough to deliver an opening address. By direct appeal to Argentine President Roberto M. Ortiz, Hull was able to get the chief executive to approve Argentine participation in regular consultative meetings of the foreign ministers. But Cantilo's vacillatory attitude prefigured difficulties that Hull would face in getting Argentina to activate her agreements.¹³

When the war broke out in Europe in September, 1939, most American republics were prepared for the impact. Nearly all of them had been made sharply aware of how the impending strug-

gle would affect their security, internal stability, and national economy.¹⁴ At the Panama conference in September, 1939, even Cantilo consented to a common declaration of hemispheric neutrality that would allow Argentina to regulate her own relationship with Europe.¹⁵ This meeting also issued the Declaration of Panama, which set up a "safety belt" around the Western Hemisphere. Within this area the belligerent nations were warned not to commit any hostile acts.¹⁶

Cantilo showed himself to be less cooperative in the intervening months between the Panama conference and the calling of the Havana conference in July, 1940. The demonstration of German military power had strengthened nationalist and pro-German sympathizers in Argentina. Also, President Ortiz, suffering from what would prove to be a terminal illness, had transferred executive responsibility to his Vice President, Ramon Castillo. Ortiz had long been an admirer of Roosevelt, but his successor was an arch-conservative.¹⁷

Cantilo's delegation at the Havana conference balked at Cordell Hull's two security measures: (1) that an attack upon any nation by a non-American state would be considered as an act of aggression upon all American states and (2) that territory in the Western Hemisphere could not be transferred from one non-American power to another non-American power.¹⁸ As in the case of the Lima conference, Hull sought the direct ap-

proval of President Ortiz, and, in doing so he by passed not only Foreign Minister Cantilo, but Acting President Castillo.¹⁹

Even though President Ortiz accepted the Convention of Havana, he still refused to join any hemispheric program which was coercive in principle or to agree to a collective platform which showed preference among the European powers. He stated his position as follows: In as much as Great Britain had a stake in the economic interests of the Argentine oligarchy, the natural sympathies of the latter favored the cause of the Allies; but since the economic independence of Argentina depended upon the existence of a total European market, this larger economic consideration dictated a policy of "classic" neutrality to all nations.²⁰ The Havana conference concluded Hull's goal to insulate the continent from the menace of European totalitarianism. With the loss of President Ortiz as the active leader of the country after July, 1940, Argentine loyalties became too confused to provide the United States with much support in future efforts toward inter-American solidarity.²¹

However, a clear act of aggression, the attack on Pearl Harbor, led to the Rio De Janeiro meeting in January, 1942.²² Although this meeting fell short of the expectations many held

for it, its achievements demonstrated the strength of the new inter-American system which had emerged since the Montevideo conference in 1933. It adapted a plan to mobilize the resources of the Western Hemisphere for victory, established an Inter-American Defense Council, and approved a resolution to curb subversive activities through an inter-American committee sitting at Montevideo.²³

Above all, it recommended that all republics sever diplomatic relations with the Axis.²⁴ But Argentine Foreign Minister Enrique Ruiz Guiñazú defeated Hull's goal to obtain unanimous support for an immediate rupture in diplomatic relations with the Axis. Rather than obligatory action, the Argentine Foreign Minister pressured the head of the United States delegation to the conference, Sumner Wells, to accept a compromise which reduced the United States resolution to the status of a mere recommendation.²⁵

The Argentine Chamber of Deputies approved a resolution in September, 1942, recommending a break in diplomatic relations with the Axis. President Castillo, however, informed the president of the Chamber that the conduct of foreign affairs rested with the executive.²⁶ Edmund Smith in his book Yankee Diplomacy summarized these events from his own point of view:

In Argentina, the Castillo regime had moved to prevent the neutrality issue from becoming public opinion. A state of siege was declared, and Argentine newspapers were forbidden to discuss the Government's foreign or domestic policies. Pro-Ally organizations such as Acción Argentina and Junta de la Victoria were strictly regulated. President Castillo made a few public declarations concerning foreign policy, but no steps were taken which suggested that a break in relations with the Axis governments was contemplated.²⁷

Acting President Castillo, who for some time had been looking for an excuse to declare a state of siege, seized upon the entrance of the United States into the war as a pretext for suspending the constitutional guarantees in Argentina. The state of siege is a modified form of martial law which suspends all constitutional guarantees and gives the executive dictatorial powers. It differs from strict martial law by the fact that civil courts continue to function. In Argentina, a strict censorship was also established in an effort to control public opinion. In the elections of March 1, 1942, Castillo effectively used the state of siege to prevent the opposition from discussing his refusal to line up with the other American republics against the Axis.²⁸

In the months following the Rio conference the "Argentine Question" found its way into the hemisphere headlines with increased regularity.²⁹ The United States government viewed with alarm the Nazi movements and propaganda taking shape in

Argentina under cover of "official toleration."³⁰ As a result of the Argentine government's failure to prevent group or individual activities detrimental to the security and welfare of the American republics, Axis agents immediately engaged in espionage undermining democratic institutions, newspapers, and radio stations. In addition, publishing houses were disseminating totalitarian propaganda. Argentina had literally become a communications center for the Axis nations.³¹ In its second report on September 5, 1941, the Damonte Taborda investigating committee in the Chamber of Deputies reported: "The statistics supplied by the Director of Posts and Telegraphs for the period from July 1 to August 13, 1941, . . . on the parcels of propaganda dispatched by the British and German embassies to other South American countries are impressive regarding the propaganda activities of the German Embassy."³² These detailed figures revealed that the German Embassy in Buenos Aires dispatched 499 packages, weighing a total of 9,670 pounds, to other Latin American countries. In contrast, the British Embassy in Buenos Aires dispatched only 109 packages, weighing a total of 1,786 pounds, to other Latin American countries. These statistics referred only to the British and German embassies, since neither Italian, Japanese, nor United States embassies dispatched packages or parcel post.³³ According to the September 5, 1941, edition

of the Argentine newspaper, La Nación, the Argentine government opened seventy-nine packages addressed to the German Embassy. The majority of these were found to be children's books written in German. Their subject matter included various topics: German life, legends, military deeds, biographies, and preparation of youth for the military.³⁴

Revelations of the Germans "boring from within" in such countries as Norway and the Netherlands roused anxiety among Hispanic Americans. Sensational stories of "fifth column" activities in Mexico, Central, and South American began to fill the United States press. They varied from the high pressure anti-Allied and anti-United States propaganda in Mexico, which led the Mexican government to demand the recall of the German press attaché Arthur Dietrich, to charges by the Uruguayan government that Germans were actually plotting to seize that country. The Damonte Taborda investigating committee reported that it had documentary evidence of a Nazi military plot to take over Uruguay with the help of German war veterans from Argentina and to transform the country into a German agricultural colony. Details of the plot were given to a secret session of the Chamber, and twelve Nazi party leaders were arrested.³⁵ In a conversation in 1938 with the United States

Charge in Brazil, R. M. Scotten, the Brazilian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Oswaldo Aranha, told of a German plot to foment trouble in Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. Aranha stated that a letter to Ribbentrop from a suspected German general living in Brazil had been intercepted. The letter convinced Aranha that the German government was making plans through the German elements residing in those three countries to cause serious trouble and eventually establish a Brazilian government sympathetic to the Nazis.³⁶

In June, 1940, there was discovered the Fuhrmann Plan--a plot to seize the territory contiguous to the Uruguay River. The plan was drafted by Arnulf Fuhrmann, Julio Dalldorf, and seven other Nazis. Eight were arrested, but Dalldorf enjoyed diplomatic immunity as press attaché of the German Legation in Montevideo. Otto Langmann also threatened to break off diplomatic relations, and all eight Germans were released. Public outcry was so vociferous they were all rearrested and brought to trial. Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina forestalled several military uprisings in 1941 that in most instances were traced to the Nazis. There was also evidence that the Nazis encouraged and helped prolong the Peru-Ecuador War, a dispute over a stretch of territory along the Marañon River. Such dis-

orders among the Latin American republics were a serious form of sabotage against the United States, which badly needed hemispheric unity in order to defend itself and keep raw materials coming in from the south.³⁷ It was likely that Hitler was interested in fostering internal and international disorder among the American nations rather than preparing a frontal attack.³⁸ The German High Command was acutely aware of the danger of leaving the United States to its own devices while they pursued the war against England. The German strategic problem of 1940-41 was to create a diversion on the American continents which would not commit Germany to military action, and propaganda became the weapon with which to attack the problem.³⁹

At the time of the outbreak of the war, the members of the coalition of Axis agents and civilians and military pro-fascists in Argentina neither controlled Argentine public opinion nor were they able to control the foreign policy of the government then headed by President Ortiz. The position of these groups was greatly strengthened by 1942 by the aid which they obtained from a powerful pro-Axis press, generously subsidized and greatly controlled by the Axis embassies. They had formed a firm political alliance with the new Acting President Castillo

and a number of his cabinet, and placed "long standing and tested friends of the Axis" in high federal positions.⁴⁰ A major instrument of this Axis-Argentine alliance was a continuing body of pro-Axis newspapers and periodicals in Argentina, Argentine in appearance but created by the joint efforts of Axis and Argentine partners, Axis-subsidized, and dedicated to the furtherance of the Axis aims.⁴¹ One of the group, El Pampero, was favored with subsidies by all the Axis Powers.⁴² Almost as thoroughly organized and as effective as the Nazi printed propaganda, Nazi newsreels had a tremendous influence. Berlin sent its best war pictures, complete with Spanish subtitles, directly to Buenos Aires. The most successful of these was the screening of the march on France, Blitzkrieg in the West.⁴³

Aims of the pro-Axis press in Argentine domestic politics were suppression of such potentially pro-democratic institutions as Argentina's Congress, elections, free political parties, and free press. Such aims included replacement by a pro-Axis dictatorship under President Castillo or a more dynamic pro-totalitarian successor.⁴⁴ Although Castillo's regime was probably not Nazi, it was composed of cunning conservative politicians who preferred the freedom to use both groups of

belligerents to its own advantage rather than accept the restrictive responsibilities of commitment to one side. Publicly, Castillo himself favored an allied victory because of the reliance of Argentine trade on British markets, but it was well known that he was an admirer of German nationalism and saw in the movement many parallels to Argentina's own search for national identity. Also, the pro-German Argentine Army demanded a policy of non-involvement with the Allies.⁴⁵ But if the Argentine President was to make Argentine neutrality appear creditable, he had to show some effort toward limiting Nazi influences.⁴⁶

As early as June, 1940, the government ordered all radio stations to broadcast only official communiques regarding the war so as not to create a favorable or unfavorable atmosphere for any of the nations involved. A year later, postal regulations were tightened to ban the circulation of subversive literature through the mails.⁴⁷ In February, 1942, the Argentine government barred Axis diplomats from entering the country after their departure from those republics that broke diplomatic relations with Germany.⁴⁸ That following August, Argentina recognized Brazil as a non-belligerent after Brazil's declaration of war against the Axis.⁴⁹ In September, 1942, the Ministry of Interior declared the German Federation of

Cultural and Welfare Societies illegal. In October, Castillo announced that the government would intervene any telecommunication network where the transmission of information might endanger Argentine security or the security of any other American State; it would also militarize national ports and order the registration of maritime personnel.⁵⁰ Embarrassed by information on Nazi operations in Buenos Aires sent to it in early November by the United States' State Department, the Argentine government responded by ordering a police investigation of the matter.⁵¹ In early December, thirty-eight suspected Axis agents, among whom numbered several German embassy officials, were arraigned before the Argentine federal courts.⁵² At the end of January, 1943, the German naval attaché, Captain Dietrich Niebuhr, was forced to leave the country because of espionage charges against him.⁵³

The fact that the German secret intelligence had an effective espionage system already in operation in the Western Hemisphere by the outbreak of the Second World War was well recognized.⁵⁴ In Argentina, two independent Nazi organizations were working with the Argentine population for Germany. One of these was under direct orders from the German High Command and was known as the Abwehr (Defense). By far the most sinister, however, was the second group, the S. S. which was controlled by Himmler

and known officially as the Sicherheitsdienst.⁵⁵ Regarding Argentina, there was ample evidence that Axis agents were working with pro-fascist sympathizers in the army, government, and press in an effort to manipulate public opinion over to the side of the Axis.⁵⁶ Some 30,000 leaflets were printed daily by the Axis propaganda machine in the late 1940 and by mid-1941, the figure had risen to 300,000 a week. The Axis were also eagerly sponsoring pro-German demonstrations in the provinces. But as months passed after Pearl Harbor, the Axis espionage network was uprooted in successive American republics.⁵⁷

In defense against these measures, the Nazi leaders fled the borders of these countries to safer territory; and by the spring of 1943 they were centralized in one country, Argentina, under the absolute command of Johannes Siegfried Becker, S. S. chief for all South America.⁵⁸ German espionage was organized on a system of separate cells, at least four of which existed in Argentina. Most of the agents did not even know the names of other agents working in the same group and certainly not those agents in another group. By this means, the German embassy, where all information was concentrated, could check the news gleaned by one group against that gleaned by another and ascertain its accuracy before transmitting it to Germany.

Moreover, the arrest or confession of one or more agents in one group could not jeopardize the operation of the system as a whole.⁵⁹ In addition to the Abwehr and the S. S. organizations, which worked mainly with the Argentine population, a third department, the Gestapo, was active among the German population. The Argentine chief of the Gestapo was Gottfried Sanstede, a young S. S. officer from Germany. Sanstede was equipped with tremendous amounts of money which enabled him to organize the Italian fascists, the Spanish falangists, and certain extreme Argentine nationalists.⁶⁰ Using these German organizations in an atmosphere of terror, Sanstede maintained a constant vigilance of Nazi party members and Argentine government officials, politicians, and generals.⁶¹

Throughout the war the Argentine government deliberately countenanced subversive activities conducted by the Nazis and permitted economic support for those activities to continue substantially unchecked.⁶² But one of the most striking areas of collaboration between Argentine leaders and the Nazis consisted of Argentine efforts to procure military assistance from Germany. During Castillo's presidency, negotiations for German arms were designed to give Argentina equipment for use

against the other American republics, if their remonstrances that Argentina break relations should require that his government formally align itself with the Axis. The Germans quietly delayed arms negotiations from late 1942 until mid-1943 because of their own equipment needs.⁶³

In the meantime, however, the Castillo administration was forced out of office on June 4, 1943, by the GOU, or Group of United Officers, a collection of pro-Nazi military men.⁶⁴ The GOU hoped to bring to Argentina the unity, strength, discipline, and progress it thought characterized Italy and Germany, but the group itself lacked the unity it hoped to bring to the whole nation. Generals Arturo Rawson, Pedro Ramirez, and Edelmiro Farrell followed one another in rapid succession as head of the government.⁶⁵ Under the Ramirez regime, negotiations were continued for German arms in the summer of 1943. These negotiations culminated in October, 1943, in the Hellmuth mission. In this affair, the Argentine government and German agents in Argentina selected Oscar Hellmuth, an Argentine national, as their common representative. He was to enter into broad negotiations with Germany for arms and other types of mutual assistance.⁶⁶ This mission failed when the British arrested Hellmuth in Trinidad enroute to Germany.⁶⁷

While formally absolving itself of any complicity in the

Hellmuth affair, the Ramirez regime nevertheless persisted secretly toward its objective of obtaining arms from Germany. In early January, 1944, the Argentine military and air attaché in Madrid submitted to the German air attaché there in Madrid detailed arms proposals which Hellmuth was supposed to have presented in Berlin. The fact that the Ramirez regime did not succeed in its subsequent efforts to obtain arms and equipment from Germany was not due to any decrease of Argentine desire or activity but to the conduct of the war itself. It was the Allies who effectively prevented Germany from furnishing assistance.⁶⁸

Cordell Hull threatened to publish all the evidence he had assembled concerning the pro-Axis activities of the Ramirez regime, unless diplomatic relations with Germany, Italy, and Japan were immediately broken. The Ramirez government was afraid that release of this information would impair its standing with the other American states.⁶⁹ It was also apprehensive over the possible freezing of Argentine funds in the United States.⁷⁰

President Ramirez broke diplomatic ties with the Axis on January 26, 1944, on the pretext of the existence of a "vast system of espionage" in Argentina.⁷¹ The decree of rupture was brief. Its preamble, which was considerably longer, stated that the Axis governments had been directly responsible for

the espionage activities; that these "illicit activities" had made the continued presence in Argentina of the German and Japanese diplomatic representatives incompatible with continental security; and that the obvious participation of foreign diplomatic representatives in espionage activities "obligated the Argentine government to define its international policy in the light of new circumstances."⁷² The decree also suspended commercial and financial interchange with Germany and Japan and terminated radio-telephone and radio-telegraph communications with these two countries.⁷³ The day after the decree Pampero was closed and Ramirez issued a warning against extremists.⁷⁴

Ramirez' departure from traditional neutrality was not enthusiastically greeted by most political factions in the country. The nationalists ceased supporting the government; some rightists resigned; and even certain liberal political elements considered Ramirez' compliance to United States pressure as a blow to national pride. They believed that the military had carried out an axiom of the pro-democratic program, and, in effect, had compromised the opposition. In their view, the break in diplomatic relations with the Axis enabled the military to strengthen their hold on the country and prevent the re-establishment of democratic institutions. The masses were

apprehensive over the government's decision, and they feared that the end of neutrality would bring war-controls on the economy.⁷⁵

By February, Ramirez was no longer able to control the nationalist faction. On February 15, Foreign Minister, Alberto Gilbert, the only cabinet officer who had signed the rupture decree, was forced by the army to resign.⁷⁶ Ten days later, Ramirez gave up the presidency because of "fatigue" brought on by "intense government tasks." Vice-President Edelmiro Farrell became Acting President and General Diego I. Mason, Minister of Agriculture, became Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁷⁷

The true ruler was then Juan D. Perón, leader of the GOU, the organization through which he made the transition from the military to the political arena. Perón henceforth directed the floundering revolution over which Ramirez had presided for eight months. Ramirez had given the masses no slogans to stir them to action. He had, in effect, told them to hate the United States, England, democracy, communism, and Jews; and to love Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. Such hating and loving meant little to the average citizen. It remained for Perón to furnish a fighting issue; the emancipation of the common man.⁷⁸

Perón built his power base from the military and extended it to a popular mandate through organized labor. For most of the war, Perón was unabashedly pro-Axis. Indeed, many of his ideas about a corporate state were learned during the two years he spent studying political philosophy in Mussolini's Italy. Shortly before the 1943 coup which propelled him to power, Colonel Perón wrote a widely circulated document in which he announced that "Hitler's fight in peace and war shall be our guide. Civilians will never understand the greatness of our ideal; we shall therefore have to eliminate them from the government, and give them the only mission which corresponds to them: work and obedience."⁷⁹

In a speech on September 21, 1944, Perón stated: "Capitalism is a cold force of accumulation, international in character and without Motherland or soul. It is, in other words, the agglomeration of everything that is spurious in money. It is also the cornering of wealth."⁸⁰ Two years later, on June 26, 1946, presenting his alternative to capitalism, he stated: "Traditionally . . . our political economy rested on the conviction that the state should refuse to take any part in the exercising of industrial activity. Experience has shown us, however, that it is impossible for a young vigorous

economy such as ours is, to wait until private enterprise reaches the necessary maturity or, without taking adequate precautions, to entrust to private initiative enterprises or riches closely connected with state concerns."⁸¹

Holding three offices, Department of Labor, Ministry of War, and the vice presidency, simultaneously by July, 1944, Perón became the most powerful man in Argentina. Although the backing of labor was necessary for his long-range possession of power, Perón's first need was to consolidate his military support. To strengthen his hold over the armed forces, he accelerated military expenditures. They soared from 291 million pesos in 1941, to 1,428 million in 1945, representing about fifty per cent of the government's annual expenditures. He also intensified the production of army equipment in Argentine factories and reorganized the army in a way that pleased commanders under him.⁸²

Government under the Peronists became a decree-issuing mill, with an average of eighty-seven decrees being issued daily to govern everything from morals to heavy industry.⁸³ The resolve to establish social order by authoritarian means was made clear with the announcement of three important decrees on December 31, 1943. The first dissolved the political parties. The second regulated the press, depriving newspapers

virtually of all freedom of expression. Censorship was also imposed on radio stations and movies. "Alien," or "communist," Jewish newspapers were closed. The third decree reversed the secular, liberal nationalist tradition in education by making religious, that is Roman Catholic, teaching obligatory in the public schools.

Military decrees were to cleanse society. The "new" Argentines were to be reared on the virtues of supernationalism and militarism. And along with this dose of Spartan traditionalism, modern industrialization was to come to Argentina. Measures characteristic of a war economy were adopted, and all factories were to devote themselves to defense-related industries.⁸⁴ More attention was, of course, devoted to the production of armaments than to any other industry. Arms made in Argentina by Argentines was the theme which linked militarism to industrialization to nationalism.⁸⁵

Hurriedly contrived and lacking essential raw materials, especially coal, iron, and steel, the industrial war machine moved slowly. However, the new leaders preached of expansion. Inspired by German conquest, the nationalistic military leaders issued sensational secret circulars which told of the coming

of Argentine hegemony in a South American bloc freed from Yankee influence. One of the circulars read:

Argentina is surrounded by hostile governments, which are inspired by ideas different from ours. We must not give in to this Bloc of United Nations, but on the contrary oppose them with all our force.

The United States is our enemy.

Russia is our enemy.

The anti-Argentine circle will be broken by defeating the present Spanish-speaking governments surrounding us, replacing them by governments supporting our own purposes.⁸⁶

Despite the fact that the Argentine government had severed diplomatic relations with the Axis on January 26, 1944, collaboration with Germany persisted.⁸⁷ Since the breaking of relations the Argentine government had officially suspended telecommunications and ceased financial and commercial transactions with the Axis. However, Axis espionage continued, and business with Germany was conducted subrosa.⁸⁸

Until Argentina terminated diplomatic relations with Germany, Nazi penetration into South America had been channeled through the Germany Embassy in Buenos Aires. After the break, however, the great German enterprises in Argentina took over the organization of financing of the Nazi movement. German investments in the electric, metallurgical, steel, construction, and chemical industries, and in sugar, cattle, and other rural

enterprises, were estimated to total 2,500 million pesos, or 600 million dollars.⁸⁹ The Argentine government on April 3, 1945, announced that 150 German subsidiaries, with an aggregate value of 40 million dollars, had been confiscated and that government inspectors had been placed in control of these firms pending transfer to Argentine hands. Assistant United States Secretary of State William Clayton stated before a subcommittee of the United Military Affairs Committee on June 25, 1945, however, that not one of 108 major Axis enterprises suspected by the Allies of being spearheads of German economic penetration and espionage had been eliminated.⁹⁰

But the situation in Argentina with respect to the Axis was rapidly changing. The Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace had met in February at Mexico City.⁹¹ The conference concluded with the signing of the Act of Chapultepec, which set up a regional security system which would consider an attack upon one American state as an act of aggression upon all members of the pact.⁹² The role of Argentina as a significant member of the inter-American system was recognized and conditions for her reconciliation to the other American states were that she declare war on Germany and Japan and carry out all hemispheric defense arrangements.⁹³ As a bonus the United States informally promised to set the machinery into

operation for Argentina's admittance to the United Nations. The Farrell Government declared war on the Axis on March 27, and the following day it informed the Pan American Union that it had accepted the Chapultepec resolutions. On April 9, the United States, Great Britain, and the Latin American republics who had adhered to the nonrecognition policy, reestablished diplomatic relations with the Argentine government.⁹⁴

After the Chapultepec Conference, the Farrell government appeared to move in the direction of continental solidarity against the Axis Powers. Taking the first steps toward the elimination of enemy spearhead firms, the government placed all Axis businesses under military control on March 26.⁹⁵ By August, most pro-Axis German newspapers were closed; seventy German agents were under arrest; fifty-three German firms were under the direction of receivers or control commissions with the avowed purpose of eventual liquidation; and German banks had been liquidated.⁹⁶ Officially, at least, Argentina had identified herself with the goals of the United Nations.

But many United States' officials found the Argentine attempts insincere. The United States' Secretary of State, James Byrnes, believed the Nazi economic spearhead in Argentina to be as powerful in late 1945 as it had been four years before. He

held that Argentina deliberately constructed a facade of controls for the sole purpose of creating an appearance of compliance with her international commitments. In support of this charge, he stated that each successive measure was taken only after persistent protest and prodding, and once taken, the measures were executed so slowly that they were rendered practically ineffective.⁹⁷ Byrnes was concerned that Argentina might become a center for Nazi revival in the Western Hemisphere. He feared such a revival might be led by men such as Ludwig Freude and Ricardo Staudt, leaders of the Germans in Argentina who controlled large economic empires. The Argentine government continued to permit Freude and Staudt to enjoy complete freedom and to operate their commercial interests unrestricted. Moreover, they were thought to be quite influential through their financial contributions to the party in power.⁹⁸

The United States' diplomatic community in Argentina took it for granted that the Germans would reorganize. That fact, however, did not create a major worry, since Germany was out of the war. The underground, it was thought, would concentrate its future efforts on aiding Nazi refugees and Nazi capital to become established in Argentina. Furthermore, the Germans living in Argentina realized they were among the most fortunate group of Teutons in the world. No matter what happened in Europe,

they would continue to lead a comfortable existence. Basically, the Germans living in Argentina were "old settlers" who dated from the days of the Kaiser, and for them Nazism had been no more than a passing phase. Most of them were not Nazis, strictly speaking, but their longing for Teutonic world conquest was no less fervent on that account.⁹⁹

As for the Argentines themselves, the rising sentiment of nationalism in Argentina provided fertile soil for Axis activities which, in the early part of the war, had as their object maintenance of the neutrality of that country, that could serve as a base of operations for the Axis powers. The character of German penetration in Argentina since the turn of the century, through military missions, strategically located colonies, and through the German Embassy, was well known. It was not so evident that there were native groups who not only admired totalitarianism but wished to take it over and adapt it to the peculiar circumstances of Argentina. Moreover, there was a continuing link between these groups and representatives of the defeated German Nazis. These elements ranged from frustrated army officers, government employees, and scions of the landed aristocracy to militant nationalists, fanatic Catholics, Hispanists, and local representatives of the Axis

economic and cultural front. The army coup of June 4, 1943, which brought these heterogeneous groups to power, was ostensibly staged to prevent the country from abandoning its policy of "prudent neutrality." Only gradually did it become evident that the revolution was anti-democratic, pro-Nazi, and intent on creating a totalitarian economy geared for war.¹⁰⁰

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

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This thesis was typed by Betty Hernandez.

Signed,
