Shock and Awe; Football and the Process, The Dirty Game of the 1978 World Cup

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Shock and Awe; Soccer and the Process,
The Dirty Game of the 1978 World Cup

by
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Acknowledgments

Writing as I’ve come to learn is a lonesome and exhausting process. For me writing this Senior Project I tested myself to my absolute limits, writing on a challenging subject that required a leap of faith. Thankfully I’ve landed safely on the other side. I have an innumerable amount of people to thank in this project, first of all, my family who supported and gave me inspiration, sources, and emotional support throughout this long drawn out difficult process. I am especially grateful to my Dad, Daniel Greenberg and Uncle Gabriel Rosenzon who together went to local Argentine bookstores and found me most of the essential books for this project and whom I often had conversations with and discussed my project with. I’d like to thank my Aunt Lili and Aunt Eli, for being their for me along with my cousins who text me consistently. My Aunt Diane, constantly encouraged me throughout the process, calling in and encouraging I’d like to thank my friends for returning my calls even as I go missing writing for a day. And Joelle Powe whom has constantly been there for me through thick and thin. I’d also like to thank Jane Smith for being such a careful reader of my work and support. My advisors, Miles Rodriguez who patiently helped me organize my first chaotic ideas into some reasonable order. During my second semester Ibrahim Elhoudaiby, has helped me further organize and develop my project through extreme patience and care in providing feedback to my writing, and support to help me write to my full potential. I’m dedicating this work to my Mother Silvia Greenberg, who died of Cancer this September. Writing for me, even if about a tragic period still has provided a welcome distraction and project to keep me busy. My mother grew up in this very same period I’m writing about, she didn’t talk much about her memories of this period. Writing about Argentina, reading in
Spanish I felt as if I was keeping my connection to the Spanish language and my mother alive. I’d like to thank my professors who taught and encouraged me to be able to write a Senior Project, a feat that four years ago I would have been incapable of doing. I think that my project reflects my effort and growth experienced at my 4 years of study here, even as it’s imperfect, it doesn’t mean that it’s finished.

Introduction

The World Cup and FIFA’s global influence are experiencing exponential growth, in which Qatar the most recent host spent over 220 billion dollars in capital improvements in preparation for the eventual hosting of the World Cup.¹. On the question of sports washing much is written, on the intersection “Process of National Reorganization”, and Joao Havelange’s reforms of FIFA absolutely nothing is written. His scholarship on the relationship between FIFA and Argentina doesn’t address how Havelange’s FIFA’s reforms connected with the Junta’s efforts to attract business and stay in power. How did the Junta’s economic experiment under Minister Jose Martinez de Oz, work and or inspire Havelange’s experiment in monetizing the FIFA World Cup? In tracing the evolution of the interests of the Junta and FIFA gradually grew to work with and learn from each other.

In the 1980s, the recentness of the traumatic events and the continued military threat to Argentine democracy were still fresh. The rawness of the psychological wounds made it difficult for Argentine historians to write on this topic, as many, being in the intelligentsia, were targeted by the Junta, or had friends who were “disappeared”. As

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¹ Craig, Matt, The Money Behind the Most Expensive World Cup in History
the saying by al-Shafi goes “True knowledge is accounting for subtle similarities[in things often deemed different] and [subtle] differences [in things often deemed similar]” - so doing both. Political scientists, journalists such as James Neilson, Argentine, and legal theorists were the first to write on the "Dirty War". The most voluminous initial writings were on personal memoirs and reports from personal experience, and they had a great narrative feel but one that lacked the documentation or distance required for writing history.

Romero's "History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century," recounts almost the entire history of the century, and the Dirty War traces the origins of the disaster of the Dirty War from earlier periods. Various writers have discussed the Argentine State's planning of the World Cup to legitimize itself in the eyes of the international community. The Junta sought to consolidate and institutionalize it's authority through the festival. The Junta being naturally linguistic in its rule is in scholarship naturally connected with the convoluted language it used. The most famous instance of the morphology of the Junta’s official language was shown in Marguerite Feitlowitz’s book a "Lexicon of Terror". Feitlowitz unlike other authors solely focuses on dissecting and connecting the regime’s language with its actions, and how language was weaponized against the "Disappeared", one of the key parts of this project relates to this aspiration to unpack the ritual messages of the World Cup, and the study of how international associations such as FIFA, created for bringing humanity together through sport, act as intermediaries between big business and authoritarian states, and what values did the Junta encourage through the ceremonies and how they interconnected with the Junta’s efforts to dramatically restructure Argentine society.
Matias Bauso’s book, “A History of the World Cup”, has provided me with a treasure trove of documents and eyewitness accounts and documents for my project. Romero doesn’t center his history on this event but focuses on it primarily as a reflection of the ongoing power struggle in the armed forces. Political scientists such as Wright and Romero, political scientists analyze how the Junta used the World Cup contextualizing it within the Dirty War. Feitlowitz commented on the Fascist-derived ideas of purity that characterized the preparations for the World Cup. Yet none of these works examines the World Cup in relation to the political role of corporations. Writing on this intersection between Argentine politics, Sport, and history my paper recounts a story that covers up blind spots of this scholarship that doesn’t write on the intersection between FIFA and the Junta.

I plan to contextualize the World Cup within the context of FIFA and the ongoing administrative changes resulting from Joao Havelange’s ascension to the administrative control of FIFA. I will address the question of whether the event marked a turning point for FIFA’s transformation into an organization that today aids authoritarian leaders through sport washing. I will use first-hand sources from ”Deciamos Ayer” and Bausado’s ”An Oral History of the 1978 World Cup.”, and ”FIFA the Men the Myths the Money” by Alen Tomlinson. By reading these sources I’ve been able to find the international reactions to the World Cup. Additionally, I’ve been able to analyze whether the positive experience of football changed international attitudes toward the regime. I plan to focus a great deal on to what extent the Junta legitimate their regime on the international stage through this event. How did FIFA work with the Argentine dictatorship with evading international sanctions; and which parties were more adamant
concerning the innovations occurring during World Cup? The ascendant Havelange privately pressed the Argentine Junta to aid some wealthy Brazilians who had disappeared by the state. How did FIFA and the Junta work together during the World Cup? FIFA didn’t react to the numerous human rights violations carried out. "To what extent did FIFA contribute to the Junta's portrayal of the World Cup as a symbol of Argentina’s international success, and how did this align with the Junta's broader goal of promoting neoliberal economic policies and attracting foreign investment? Additionally, how did Havelange's focus on commercializing the World Cup align with the Junta's goals, and to what extent did this contribute to the tournament's transformation into a highly profitable enterprise? “The Process of National Reorganization was intent on breaking the power of organized labor and under economic minister Martinez De Oz re-attracting international capital to Argentina. Both the military regime and the FIFA committee were pursuing goals to transform their entities. In reading about Argentina’s World Cup from the present it seems that the timing of the ‘‘Dirty War’s’’ worst repression coincided with the preparation for the World Cup. Joao Havelange, residing in Brazil, and Admiral Lacoste were close personal “friends”, with Havelange being part of the exclusive FIFA “family” till 1986; even after the fall of the Junta\(^2\). Lacoste, FIFA, and the Junta’s right-hand man mysteriously overnight became a very wealthy man. Havelange showing up to the trial of the illicit funds defended him saying that “I personally lent him the money”\(^3\). Ultimately declared innocent despite a 400% increase in his network between 1979 and 1986\(^4\).

\(^2\) Bauso, An Oral History of the 1978 World Cup, 88
\(^3\) Ibid, 88
\(^4\) Ibid, 88
I am studying this World Cup in 1978 to learn to what extent did FIFA and the Junta collaborate; and to what extent the Junta worked with multinational corporations and FIFA to transform the world cup of 1978 into a massive for-profit event. I hope in this paper to clarify to which extent the World Cup of 1978 changed the rules for what was possible in a World Cup; regarding scale, and political importance; FIFA claims not to be in the business of changing governments or doing politics during the 1978 World Cup it aided and viewed the Argentine Junta as “friends”, personally spending time with and aiding them in their attempt to mobilize popular support for the Junta and reshape the Argentine Urban landscape, in a twin effort to host the World Cup and wipe away the very recent past. In recent years considering the recent World Cup in Qatar and the previous one in Russia, increasingly larger amounts of money are invested in this mega-event with each more ambitious than the last. This disturbing trend in which the World Cup has become a publicity tool for Authoritarian regimes arguably began during this World Cup. Did this occur organically, or rather were the twin goals a coincidence that was later copied and applied to later World Cups?

In the Seventies following administrative changes the World Cup, organized by FIFA, it has gradually evolved is one of the largest and most prestigious sporting events in the world attracting the attention and enthusiasm of billions of fans globally. This global explosion in the popularity of the World Cup has transformed it into a unique phenomenon worthy of analysis. Through studying this World Cup, it reveals deeper patterns for how exactly the World Cup can bring people together, and Authoritarian states with multinational corporations.
The 1970s was a particularly tumultuous period in the history of the World Cup, marked by controversies surrounding FIFA’s relationships with oppressive regimes and dictators. Reports from the time suggest that FIFA tended to ally itself with these regimes, to secure the hosting of World Cup events and to conceal certain forms of oppression. These alliances were seen as a tool for these regimes to consolidate power, legitimize their rule, and project a positive image to the world. In my project I hope to examine how the World Cup was used, both the preparations and the World Cup itself to build support through the commissioning of mega infrastructure projects and the massive boom in tourism. The Junta experienced a short-term boost, which was lengthened by the sugar rush to the Argentine economy caused by the World Cup.

The 1978 World Cup, hosted in Argentina during the height of the Argentine Junta’s rule, provides a clear example of how football was used as a tool to legitimize dictatorship. The Junta viewed the hosting of the World Cup as an opportunity to project a positive image of the regime to the world. Additionally, the Regime as the regime used this massive infrastructure project to build loyalty and support. The Junta’s rule was characterized by widespread human rights abuses, including kidnapping, disappearance, torture, and repression. These cast a shadow over the event and sparked criticism and controversy abroad…until the ball started moving. As the Argentine national team won the World Cup, at home, this resulted in a momentary spike in the regime’s popularity domestically. Through this synthesis of nationalist ritual, big government, and a loosening up the Junta aimed to consolidate genuine political support and respect as a global power by hosting the World Cup.
FIFA has a vested interest in working with oppressive regimes and has a history of doing Dictatorships prize this opportunity to gain prestige and boost their nations’ economies. In the case of Argentina’s hosting of the World Cup was a particularly egregious example of how oppressive practices can be obscured through football. The World Cup has immense potential to bring people together and foster a sense of unity and pride, but it can also be used as a tool to legitimize oppressive regimes and consolidate power.

Through an exploration of the history of FIFA’s relationships with the Argentine Junta, my thesis will show how the World Cup was used as a tool by the Argentine Junta; to normalize the “Dirty War” and build support among the Argentine public. Additionally, project I hope to discuss the complicated emotions Argentines felt during the tournament by analyzing oral history. Argentine culture places enormous value on the National team’s success. This complicated dynamic confounded many difficult questions over what constituted being a “real” Argentine. Like most forms of ritual, this World Cup in particular was an important stage for contesting the Junta’s conception of “Argentinidad” grounded in conservatism order, and traditionalism, with a window aimed at Europe; this contrasted with the opposition’s focus on rectifying material inequalities and moving Argentina towards socialism and or social democracy. I aim to analyze how these changes interconnect with global patterns of inequality and cooperation between Authoritarian states in the Global South with large multinationals, and how these relationships were aided by FIFA in 1978.

Chapter One: Background on the Dirty War
“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and what will never be” Thomas Jefferson

The Junta experts at manipulating language portrayed themselves as "Gentleman". Following two horrific years of murder, the Junta succeeded in establishing political hegemony; through hosting the World Cup, it sought to manipulate football to improve its reputation on the international stage; both to boost foreign investment, solidify public backing and challenge narratives of Argentine exiles which tell about the everyday horrors of living in Argentina. Notorious dictators from Francisco Franco, 1974 to the Argentine Junta, 1978, to Benito Mussolini, 1934, have all seen football not simply as a "game"; but as a ceremony showcasing and proving to the World their economic and political success. Yet with television, this event changed into a globally viewed event. For these leaders of the Military Junta, hosting the tournament; was a symbol of their own greatness.

Through the hosting of this ritual mega-infrastructure projects, roads, stadiums, and luxury hotels were constructed to impose on visitors the nation’s wealth; and in doing so showcase national "greatness". This attempt to show this greatness occurred amidst a failure to showcase effectively that Argentina as supposed to the early seventies before it took power was now a safe place. In the years preceding it’s takeover rampant political terrorism along Argentina’s ideological extremes was tearing the nation apart. This period of open confrontation and assassination was ended by the Junta’s subsumption of political groups of the extreme right into its camp. Before the Junta took power the AAA under Lopez Rega’s tutelage transformed into a tool to sow terror among the rival Peronist left, its officials, intellectuals, and rival left-wing groups
such as the Montanero’s and ERP. In this environment of near civil war, gunshots were heard ricocheting at the heart of Argentine political and cultural life, Buenos Aires.

Civil war's are fought with the most unforgiving and draconian methods. Argentina felt this trauma of civil war in the nineteen seventies. Amidst this climate of deep political polarization, worker mobilization and hyper-inflation, the military faced immense political pressure. Because of this Juan Domingo Peron, and his political movement of Peronism now in exile were allowed to return. Before this decision leftist guerilla groups aligned with Peron where staging bombings, kidnappings and bank robberies.

Amidst these troubles the almost mythic character of Peron was seen as Argentina’s savior; ironically this returns catalyzed Argentina's problems of political violence, and hyperinflation. Peronism’s ideological contradictions erupted into progressively more intense internal disputes that fanned the flames of civil war. In this climate of deep mistrust and fear, media pressure and popular support for a military coup were ongoing; the military gained ever more concessions from Isabelle the president. This clear authoritarianism and state terrorism escalated as Isabel Perón’s tottering government increasingly gave in to the military’s growing list of demands. From 1974 onwards, a state of siege was enacted, under which Isabel Perón allowed the military to use any means necessary against the ERP in Tucuman. The military demands didn't stop. In the span of a short period the military was given free rein to do as they pleased without legal checks. During the last months of nominally democratic rule the policy of “disappearances” began. In late 1975, without asking for Isabel’s
approval, the head of state, approved the use of this tactic “disappearances.”⁵. As the military during 1975 increasingly exerted greater control of the democratic apparatus, this gradually weakened democracy. While the coup is remembered as a dramatic turning point, by the time of the coup the military did as it pleased, and Argentine society was careening into a death spiral.

On the 24th of March 1976 the Coup, with widespread popular support overthrew Isabelle’s administration. Fearing a Cuban-style revolution, the Argentine military adopted a systemic effort to root out "subversion". This counterrevolutionary backlash leads militaries around Latin America to turn back the clock on democratic reforms, the newly emergent feminist movement, and workers’ hard-won rights to organize. The state terror of the "Dirty War" was profoundly connected with this desire to go back to a more autocratic value and political system.

Trapped in this paranoid mindset, the Junta systematically killed anyone who resisted their efforts to "reorganize" Argentine society. Intensely verbal, having delusions of joining the "Christian West" and modernizing Argentina it viewed the hosting of the World Cup as a perfect possibility to showcase its progress in restoring Argentine economic and political stability. In fact, at the time of the World Cup Argentina’s economy was being fed by unsustainable economic growth fueled by cheap loans from the Gulf kingdoms. Amidst this Dirty War, hundreds of people at its peak would disappear over a single month. For a moderately sized country was a profound

shock. In this shell-shocked state, Argentines prepared to party and savored this chance to for once enjoy life amidst this climate of fear.

The preparations for this event sought to create the illusion to the World that Argentina was a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous nation; a part of the "Christian West". For most Argentine's who experienced this event, it's remembered as a welcome rest from the constant fear of living under a military dictatorship. An interregnum in which the Junta pretended to not be a murderous paranoid regime Argentines took advantage to go outside without fear and celebrate the success of the National team. For the Junta the event had mixed results with reporters when they arrived initially focusing upon the issue of Human Rights and by the end raving about their joy experienced watching the games. The ambitious effort to transform Argentine society was named the "Process of National Reorganization" to dramatically restructure the foundations of Argentine society. Football and rooting for the National team in 1978 to today are viewed as key parts of being Argentine. By promoting football and the World Cup by throwing a "party for the people". The Junta in throwing this party for the World sought to build support from Argentines as well as impress the World with Argentina's what they thought of as being good governance and modernity.

Following the election of Hector Campora, a stand-in for the still-exiled Juan Domingo Peron, Peronism marked its official return. From this point in time I will explain the roots of how the Argentine Junta came to power; contextualizing the political situation leading up to the World Cup. In this chapter I begin the narrative with Peron’s interview in exile with Eduardo Galeano in 1968. I then intend to dissect why Peron’s coalition failed. My main goal in this chapter is to contextualize the roots of the coup and
give the context for the complicated climate in which the 1978 World Cup was held. I aim to provide in this chapter a background on the political environment in which the World Cup was held.

In exile Peron slowly but steadily fashioned the coalition upon which he could return to power. Eduardo Galeano, a Uruguayan journalist shed light on Peron’s strategy from exile from an interview which occurred in 1968. Interviewing Peron in Spain Galeano asked him to share his reflections on his time in power from exile, Peron responded that "Power makes you ignorant.", and that "Only in exile do I have time to read,"\(^6\). Peron now the literati, presented himself in the interview as having learned to tolerate and respect differences of opinion; a pragmatic leader willing to build bridges, working with people he had disagreements with. Yet, unfortunately for Argentine democracy, within this coalition there where groups that didn’t wish to compromise, but from the start where clandestinely sabotaging this coalition.

Peron’s long-awaited return at Ezeiza airport by millions of Argentines marked the beginning of this coalitions implosion, with calamitous significance for Argentine society. This return from exile was awaited by Argentines from a broad swath of political stripes. This "Perón promises all things to all people, he claimed to favor a socialist Argentina and promised the opposite to others"\(^7\). His welcome reception with 2 million people waiting for him at Ezeiza Airport resembled that of a rockstar. In this moment unbeknownst to Peron, and the crowd a horrific trap set by Lopez Rega and the transformed AAA, awaited the assembled crowd. What happened, who started this

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\(^6\) Ibid, 56.

\(^7\) Romero, Luis Alberto. *In A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. 58
confrontation remains to this day a highly contentious question. It seems that this confrontation between "Perónist left militants and their competitors". This plan sought to terrorize the Argentine left, and gain control of the coalition. Left wing guerilla’s that had laid down their arms, faced with this attack returned to their bad habits. This event in hindsight set the tone for Peron’s return as amidst this fractured coalition ordinary Argentines ended up being the principle victims of this power struggle. While Peron was alive Rega was more or less kept in check. As Peron died on July first, 1974, Rega and the Triple A’s activities, along with the economic shock of the 1973 oil crises which together snowballed to undermine Argentine democracy.

Lopez Rega’s creation of the Triple-A, the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, was the key cause of this coalition’s collapse. The Triple A, originally a worker's welfare fund, under Rega morphed into a criminal organization that embezzled the funds intended for workers’ pensions and funneled them into a terror campaign against Lopez Rega’s enemies. Rega while in public willing to work with Campora and Peronism’s left wing and was in private a far-right practitioner of the occult, and a former member of the Nacionalista. In the Pink house, this sorcerer, almost like an Argentine Rasputin developed a hold over the First Lady and President. Lopez Rega an early convert to Peronism, maintained his far-right beliefs formed during his time in the 1930s in the Nacionalista movement. Rega sought to both terrorize his enemies and violently repress ideas that he viewed as going against his backward beliefs. This expressed itself

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8 Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*. 212.
through his and the administration’s campaign to “depolitisize” the universities, and in
the blatantly antisemitic rhetoric and acts carried out against the Jews during this
period.

The “depoliticization” campaign implemented in Argentine universities wrecked
their civic role as a place for free thinking and political organization. For Isabel and
Lopez Rega, these places symbolized all they stood against, through challenging
conservative values and hierarchies. The regime believed that there was a “moral
emergency,” This urgent language presented this dispute as a struggle of good against
evil. The education minister explicitly labeled this “depoliticization” as a crusade. In a
Latin American context, “crusade” references to the Spanish conquest of Latin America.
Applied to a new setting, this presented intellectuals, guerilla movements and the armed
left as being the contemporary counterparts of earlier enemies. The adoption of the
word *Cruzada*, into the Argentine body politic was linguistically presented as the
military’s attack of the enemies of the Argentine nation. This fusion of language derived
from medieval discourse was a hallmark trait of *Nacionalista* political philosophy; a
homegrown fusion of different strains of Fascist ideology fashioned for Argentina.

Ottalgano’s appointment to being the head of Buenos Aires university, and his
continuation during the Junta demonstrate the ideological affinity between them.
Ottalgano had a personal guard of Triple-A and Tacuara bodyguards, organizations
with far-right cells. He was given this appointment, with a mandate to “depolitcize” the
university. Ottalongo designated his mission as being driven like the ‘’Impetus of
"Hitler’s Panzer Division". This language was being used in the highest levels of state affairs. Perónist senator Jose E. Carro, promoted the ‘‘triumph of social order over excess and subversion.’’ Carro and Ottalgano both expressed fears of moral contamination and saw violence as a legitimate tool to achieve this goal. By dulling down intellectual life, these new ideas and movements put at risk traditional power arrangements. In wrecking the burgeoning modern secular culture prominent at Argentine universities, the Lopezreguista wing succeeded in undermining a key source of Leftist and Argentine intellectual life. It is estimated that 685 people where disappeared by the Triple-A. Showing the continuity between the Lopezreguista state’s beliefs and tactics when the Junta took over it kept Ottalgano in his position as president of Buenos Aires university. Rega, finally held accountable in 1975 fled to Miami Florida, escaping from Argentine authorities. Yet already Argentine democracy was in freefall, as already by November 1974 “to carry out the military and security operations that may be necessary to annihilate the activities of subversive elements in all the country’s territory.”. This democratic experiment that began with such promise, failed as the glue, holding this coalition, Peron then suddenly died, and Isabelle took his place.

By March 1976, Isabelle was losing control of the state. Argentina faced an economy racked by union strikes, inflation, and political terrorism. In Latin America and Argentina during this period there was the belief that Isabelle and the military would end

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10 Ibid, 119.

11 Ibid, 119

12 Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights*, 19
this nightmare. These “men with a duty” created a “peace of the tomb”, that institutionalized the state as a criminal. In a cable from the American embassy to Washington, American Ambassador Robert Hill on May 25, 1976, warned that the junta wrought a “subsumption of terrorism into the state.” “These groups” [the perpetrators of kidnapping and “disappearing” of Argentine citizens “seem to operate with immunity and are generally believed to relate to the Argentine security forces. Whether they are or not, their continued operation can only be harmful to the GOA itself and cause consternation among Argentina’s friends abroad.”13 Referencing the assassination of an intellectual, a member of the Fulbright Commission reflected on the continued presence and subsumption into the military state of terrorism. In the previously mentioned telegram, Ambassador Hill explicitly named the perpetrators. Hill, who earlier had praised the coup’s moderation, unknowingly traded one evil for a greater one.

Argentines were exhausted by the constant violence on their doorsteps and overwhelmingly supported the coup. For in Argentina and other Latin American countries, there was an expectation that, faced with a faltering democratic government, military regimes would step in and “exercise their ‘historical mission’ to ‘save the patria’.14 This expectation held that militaries could act as a check on ailing democratic governments. In 1975, newspapers constantly engaged in coup mongering. After the coup, prominent intellectuals such as Jacobo Timmerman and Jorge Luis Borges publicly proclaimed support for the coup. Writing about the generals, Borges described

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them as calm, well-spoken gentlemen. “Now we are governed by gentleman,” he wrote. Playing this role of the gentleman visually showed them as being fit to lead. in 1975 Videla, this nobody, this “little man” rose up the military hierarchy. He rose as the junta had declared a state of siege. In 1975, Videla had stated “as many people as necessary must die in Argentina so that the country will again be secure.” During the modern military period, that began in 1930 with the overthrow of Hipolito Yrigoyen, there were “nine civilian backed military coups, two other presidents appointed by the army, two blatantly rigged elections, and two terms of highly theatrical, quasi fascist Perónism.” This period of deep military involvement in state affairs prepared the country to accept coups as ”normal” politics; the Junta emphasized constantly that was in no form breaking with the past, but rather was apolitical and therefore immune to the affliction of unreason which had infected “political” actors; a wholly rational entity.

The Junta framed this violence as a regrettable but necessary “Process of National Reorganization” and used technocratic jargon to make the language of government inaccessible. This language connected with its self-perception as being the saviors of Argentine society as a “supreme value”, above right and wrong which ” In extreme cases (designated as such by the authorities) the rights of individuals could be violated by reason of an alleged general interest.” Describing its Process it often used a language that like a doctor of the Argentine nation diagnosed the roots of Argentina’s problems to unresolved inner conflicts. These conflicts were only vaguely

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15 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 7.
16 Ibid, 7
17 Ibid, 5.
18 Thomas C Wright, State Terrorism in Latin America, Argentina and Chile, 26
referenced but what was very clear was the regimes belief in ‘God and Family’. They viewed new ideas from universities, “communism”, that had a broader meaning that applied to practices such as Psychiatry, Freudian analysis, Architecture, Feminism, Union Activism among many other activities. During the 20th century a key political division was between the Old Rural oligarchy, and the ascendant working class of Argentine cities, which coincided with an expansion of the urban middle classes straddling between these two camps. The Junta siding with the Rural landholders, financial interests, and Church sought to terrorize and silence the intellectuals, workers, and unions that it saw as undermining Argentine unity.

The Junta consistently described its rule as being temporary and exploited the language of democracy and human rights to rationalize the Dirty War. This happened largely because of the need to continue to receive American military aid. This military aid to South American militaries commenced during World War Two. For Washington, Latin America was not threatened by a traditional invasion but “Wars of National Liberation”.19 The USA offered military aid missions in exchange for new bases. American foreign policy had the official goal of promoting democratic values abroad. In power, the Junta constantly engaged in violence; it altered the language to hide the “Night State” in plain sight. This coded language required that people be aware that if they didn’t follow the unwritten code there would be consequences, while also leaving these consequences unsaid. While the Argentine Junta dramatically escalated its repressive state apparatus, for foreign audiences such as the United States it almost resembled the comparatively moderate Ongania regime and his successors. This

19 Loveman and Davies, The Politics of Antipollitics,163.
regime like the Second Junta was also highly dependent on American aide but tolerated dissent and presided mostly over a time of economic growth. Learning from this earlier Bueracritic Authoritarian experiment they also took advantage of the climate of the Cold War to secure investment, aid, and training, for anti-insurgency, against an insurgency that had already been extinguished. Now the “insurgents” where people who wrote articles they didn’t approve of, or workers striking to preserve their wages or families seeking to know where their relatives went.

During this period, the repression used to eliminate enemies of the state and the camps that the states adversaries where held served as a critical tool in the Junta’s drive to transform Argentine society. Inherently, bad at governing, they cultivated a climate of fear so they could rule. This “peace” took a toll on book printing. Books by their very nature forced the reader to confront their position in the present and reflect. In this climate book printing declined from 31.5 million in 1976 to 8.7 million by 197920. Rather then opening up themselves up to possible censure the Junta sought to rule through terror and by restricting the flow of ideas and information. The camps where an Orwellian space in which enemies of the state where disappeared and tortured. In these hidden spaces the regime sought to entirely break down their enemies, to break down the prisoners sense of self.

This torture and “education” taught by the Junta through terror used disappearances both to send a message but also for themselves. The prisoner’s imprisoned for their actions; but also, for who they were and what they stood for. The

torture prolonged the suffering of the prisoners who were destined to meet a gristy fate. In these camp’s the guards tortured prisoners for years, likely for the sake of sadism’s sake. These men described this work as sacred; as the confirmation of human life rather than a crime against it. In this state apparatus thousands disappeared; and in fear of it thousands had to flee their nation and flee abroad. At its apogee camps created for the explicit purpose of torturing dissidents and imprisoning “subversive’s” where present all over Argentina. These camps consolidated the regime, providing jobs to its supporters, seizing property. Adding further insult to injury the regime had many children of the disappeared adopted by trusted families of the Junta. This action sought to totally erase the memory of the disappeared’s existence even from their own family members. In Argentine society, they sought to terrorize, disappear, or drive away from the country’s voices which by their very existence or by their actions challenged the regime.

The regime’s reactionary policies aimed to reverse recent cultural and political changes that become associated with Peronism. These included the increasing power of the Argentine working class through unions, the rising influence and visibility of ethnic and religious minorities such as Jews, and the advances of the Argentine feminist movement. The Argentine intelligentsia bared a disproportionate brunt of the costs of this peace. This group with a few notable exceptions didn’t support the Far-right shift of the Junta, which at first seemed like a calming force on the Argentine political scene. Writers of the left were seen as being a symptom of a “degenerate” society.

In its ascent to power, the Junta declared a “Dirty War” which derived from French anti insurgency practice. The term “Dirty War” is a direct translation of the war
against the leftist FLA (Algerian Liberation Front). They fought against them in Algeria and colonial Indochina, today called Vietnam. The French in Algeria employed brutal tactics, designed to break the will of this seemingly invisible guerilla enemy. The French called this war the “Salle de guerre”-- or “Dirty War”\textsuperscript{21}. Both the Argentine Junta and the French were trying to break down forces threatening to implement drastic change. Yet unlike the French, the Junta of 1976 wasn’t just aiming to break down a military threat but to return Argentina economically and socially to a period in which the masses had no say over government, and Argentina was ruled by a Western-educated oligarchy that exported raw goods abroad.

In the mid-’60s, amidst the Cold War, French military officers practiced great brutality in the Algerian war; and trained Argentine troops in these same methods and philosophies. In the coup of 1976, these French-trained soldiers occupied high positions in the military hierarchy. One of these, Ramon J Camps, was a general who had a central position in the night state. Even in the 1990s, he looked back on his role in this as something to be proud of. Camps noted that it was important to clarify that “the French optic was more correct than the North American; the former had a global concept, while the latter was exclusively military. All that was fine until we “reached adulthood, and applied our own doctrine, which enabled us to triumph against subversion”\textsuperscript{22}. In reading this comment the language reflects that of international anti-subversive doctrine. The Argentine militaries used methods applied by the French in Indochina and Algeria.

\textsuperscript{21} Feitlowitz, Marguerite. \textit{A Lexicon of Terror}, (12)
\textsuperscript{22} Feitlowitz, Marguerite. Essay. \textit{A Lexicon of Terror}, 13
The “Proceso”

People killed by the Argentine Junta’s were killed covertly; as the regime used language to linguistically erase the people it killed; “disappeared.” The regime was intensely verbal as its language such as ‘El Proceso,’ the Process, “Guerra Sucia,’ “Desaparecer,’ Disappear, and “Trasladar,’ to move. This language sought to cover up state crimes through the language of the everyday. Everyday and night people were disappearing as 30,000 Argentines “Disappeared” between 1976 and 1983. The regime officially postured itself as having adopted “life-affirming Christian” values; but secretly coordinated crimes against humanity. The regime by publicly acting as a gentleman and the defenders of Argentina maintained this reputation in the face of the horrific reality of the Dirty War that necessitated complex verbal gymnastics. One example was the invocation of “National security” as “a supreme value . . . regarded as being above ethics. . . . In extreme cases (designated as such by the authorities) the rights of individuals could be violated by reason of an alleged general interest”. These Orwellian contortions of language in public were mimicked by the public, in fear of themselves being deemed a “Subversive”. Through television and journals, the regime broadcasted its political messages, terrorizing and or installing supporters of the regime to attain almost total control of the flow of news.

As actual confrontations were petering on television “Subversive” activity in media seemed to be at a fever pitch. This occurred as their armed enemies were weakening. The principal reason why most Argentines threw support behind the Junta

\[23\text{ Ibid, 5}\]
\[24\text{ Thomas C. Wright, State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights, 26.}\]
was that it was believed that they could restore order. Once they had achieved this then questions and concerns of Argentines would change, and military rule loses appeal. Consequently, through propaganda, the Junta froze the anarchic moment in which it took power. As its armed enemies were defeated there remained silent opposition which they sought to eradicate.

In 1977, Gen. Videla, writing in an official directive 504/77 wrote “kill all people which are necessary, but be tidy”.25 as the Junta’s head and “President” of the Republic, Videla was responsible for the public official Argentine state and the hidden repressive state apparatus. Hill’s cable was a key source of information regarding the scale of Argentina’s issues with guerilla groups such as the ERP and Montoneros. As the Junta rose to power, most of the left-wing groups were rendered prostate by the several years of armed conflict with the state. These comments where in the context of looming sanctions from the Carter administration and the World Cup. For Videla in this short window of time aspired to solidify the military’s hold on politics. The regime was extremely concerned about the aesthetics of its rule, and its image abroad. For the World preparations the commander of the Navy, Admiral Massera was assigned responsibility for planning the World Cup.

The naval commander-in-chief and one of the regime’s highest-ranking officers, Massera was responsible for running ESMA, the Naval Mechanics School, the largest concentration camp of the Dirty War. Speaking to the soldiers, he gave a speech that hid the horrors happening in the school. In this speech, Massera identified the Army and

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25 María Seoane and Vicente Muleiro, El dictador: la historia secreta y publica de Jorge Rafael Videla,291
the Argentine people as the heroes who were valiantly fighting against death. This speech created a clear dichotomy between the “good”, symbolized by the people and the military, with the “bad” of the guerillas. The speech was told in the style of a “history lesson in the form of a fairy tale.”

The speech upended the truth by making the concentration camp and death flight victims the culprits, while their killers were brave heroes of the patria. Massera inverted the actual with the fantastical. In this twisted narrative rather, Massera and the soldiers of the Naval Mechanic’s School were “not murdering human beings; their mission was to vanquish death.” This inversion relied on the careful obscuring of language to “make you doubt the truth of your own life.”

This quote, taken from the father of Daniel Bendersky, demonstrates the psychological torment this regime caused. Another term that the regime devilishly twisted was that of ‘Anonymous heroism’. As a mother from the Plaza De Mayo named Renee Epelbaum phrased it the regime “made you psychotic,”; she elaborated that ”We could barely ‘read,’ let alone ‘translate’ the world around us. And that was what they wanted.”

The Junta ruled as a coalition between the different armed forces. Integral to this mission was to abolish all political activity, which would be replaced by the intra-military conflicts between the Military, Navy, and Air Force. Upon assuming power, the military declared itself “the Supreme Organ of the Nation”. This new title of “Supreme Organ” was assigned the responsibility of “seeing to the operation of the State and the basic objectives to be attained,”. Furthermore, the Junta stated upon coming to power that

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26 Ibid, 28.
27 Ibid (30)
28 Ibid (33)
this military dictatorship was a process to “assure the later restoration of a republican, representative and federal democracy”. After taking power the Junta immediately disbanded the constitution and gave itself the ability to “approve, amend, and rescind laws of the legislature”. Additionally, the Junta proceeded to appoint Videla as “President”. The Junta ruled through decree through the “Presidency”. In essence, the Junta apportioned power between the branches of the Armed Forces. The president was selected by an internal vote by the Junta of commanders. This process for distributing power was a widely practiced method in Latin America during the 1970’s as most Latin American nations were governed by military regimes back then.

This Junta built on the earlier governing experiences of former Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes, the last one under Roberto Levingston (Provisional President, 1970-71). Yet the Junta of 1976 was different in its division between an “official state” and a “nocturnal state”. This “official state” posed for foreign media and stated emphatically that Argentina was friendly to foreign capital, a defender of human rights, and stoutly denied the existence of “desapericidos”, or that the latter were victims of state terrorism. In Videla’s first speech to the press, he stated, “For us respect for human rights does not originate simply from a legal responsibility from international agreements but instead the result of our Christian faith and profound conviction regarding the preeminent dignity of man as being fundamentally valuable”. The regime went to great lengths to obfuscate this terror in a language of human rights and

30 Ibid (247)
31 Ibid (247)
32 María Seoane and Vicente Muleiro, In El Dictador: La Historia Secreta Y Pública De Jorge Rafael Videla, 220
33 Ibid, 223
democracy. Yet the state primarily worked its terror in the shadows. Both the extensive
night and day state began forming before the coup. The Junta during the last months of
formerly democratic rule began the practice of disappearing people and building the
massive repressive apparatus used to terrorize the Argentine nation.

The coup was meticulously planned, from the method of planning legislation, the
order of the decrees, and which organizations were to be banned. This was reflected in
the statement by the American ambassador stationed in Argentina. He stated, “The
position of the USA: is that this must be the best planned and most civilized coup in
Argentine History”.34 On taking power this division between the public and the
clandestine state resulted in constant administrative disorder. This constant disorder
was worsened by the division of the duties of the head of state between three different
generals. In this triumvirate, three generals, Viola, Videla, and Massera divided the
duties of the head of state. In this coup, the military constantly emphasized that they
were restoring order and the orderly process in which the coup occurred. The order they
sought rested on eliminating their ideological enemies which constituted a myriad
collection of Argentine society.

General Viola maintained that the nation be divided into five different regions.
These five major regions were to be assigned to different armed forces commanders.
These regions were divided into subdivisions which sometimes spilled over provincial
borders. In total, there were five general areas, 19 subzones, and 117 smaller
subzones. Regional commanders ignored their higher-ups. In this bureaucratic chaos,

34 Ibid, 222
these regional commanders resembled medieval warlords. The overlapping of authority sowed anarchy, as each commander saw himself as immune from supervision. This was reflected in the torpedoing of Martinez de Hoz’s economic plan. Vast sectors of the military opposed Martinez de Hoz’s austerity plans, as they helped multinationals at the expense of local Argentine companies. The Argentine military had a more traditional vision on the state’s prerogative “at least that part of it that the military aspired to control for its personal or institutional benefit.”35. The officers of the Junta saw the state companies under their jurisdiction as if they were personal fiefdoms and when Oz threatened their cash cow’s they ended Oz’s “experiment”.

The country’s feudal division into distinct zones, and the overlapping military and governmental jurisdictions undermined military discipline. There couldn’t be an appeal to higher authority as there weren’t clear laws or hierarchies. Since the Junta ruled entirely by decree, the rule of law was weak. This was reflected in the Junta’s extreme corruption, along with the near war between Chile and Argentina over the Beagle Channel.

In 1978, while the World Cup was taking place, Massera with other high naval officers nearly provoked war with Chile over the Antarctic Beagle Channel Islands. The islands, which lie at the southern tip of South America, for decades had been a subject of territorial dispute between the austral neighbors. But now, the admiral mobilized ultra-nationalist feeling against Chile, alleging that the neighbor sought to violate Argentine sovereignty by seizing the islands. In 1978, the dispute finally ended with a

35 Romero, A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century, 120
Vatican arbitration that awarded most of the disputed territory to Chile. Massera multitasking between his warmongering and the World Cup, through these endeavors sought to mobilize hyper-nationalist feeling to build genuine grassroots support.

CHAPTER __: FOOTBALL, PACIFICATION AND NATIONAL UNITY: BUILDING SUPPORT FOR THE JUNTA’S PROJECT

By Ari Greenberg

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”). In 1978, Argentina’s Junta organized the world’s most popular sporting event in the world. Upon assuming power, a couple of years earlier, General Jorge Raphael Videla embarked on a process of national reorganization that crushed the constitutional democratic order and replaced it with a regime of state-imposed terror. Through the process, the Junta defeated the leftist revolutionary movements which had sought to create a ‘socialist fatherland’ in Argentina, killed an estimated 30,000 Argentines, and detained without trial around 570,000 more. By 1978, however, the junta was about to face a different challenge. 12 years earlier, under President Arturo Frondizi Argentina had won the competition to host the 1978 FIFA World Cup (WC), before the Junta overthrew the regime of Juan Peron. Shortly after assuming power, therefore, the Junta started preparing for the WC. The event was to bring their policies under scrutiny by international media, therefore potentially subjecting them to the criticism of the international community. But organizing the World Cup also presented an opportunity for reorganizing the country and building support for the Junta’s political projects.
This chapter explores the junta’s attempts to exploit this opportunity to attempt the shaping of a popular consensus supporting its policies, and burnishing its tarnished international image. I will show how, while the regime launched massive construction projects to build WC infrastructure such as stadia, highways, and enhanced communication systems, it launched public relations campaigns designed to wield patriotic support of the national team to build public acceptance of its authoritarian policies and neo-liberal, class-biased political economy. Moreover, I will show that the dictatorship utilized the construction campaign to serve as a cover for its long-sought desire to eradicate the huge shantytowns that inhabited most of Argentina’s largest cities, rendering their impoverished inhabitants homeless, and utilized the cleared spaces to benefit oligopolistic business elites. But the Junta’s strategy to build support for a new “Ser Nacional” (national self) failed. The campaign came under attack for its class biased character and failed to blunt international criticism and ostracism.

Throughout the study, I will ask the question: Why did the Junta’s strategy fail, despite the national team’s winning the WC, and despite the junta’s solid internal organization and record of competency, in completing the stadia and other infrastructure projects in record time? Only a year after the World Cup because of a promise to have a human rights inspection by the CIDH, amidst the euphoria of the World Cup the Junta nearly collapsed. I will argue that the junta was deceived by its own narrative, and that, being a military organization with no direct connection with the public, it ignored multiple signs that neither the domestic population nor world opinion had changed their views of the regime as an egregious violator of human rights and enemy of its poor. Moreover, I will show that in the area of economic policy, the junta’s radical neo-liberal policies led not
to growth, modernization, and First World status, but rather to de-industrialization, massive unemployment, inflation, and depression.

From Internal War to Peace: The Junta, the World Cup and the Public

The Junta sought to boost its domestic and international credibility by using the WC. As Maria Seone and Vicente Muleiro argue, the Junta aimed to transition gradually from direct authoritarian rule to a more subtle and indirect form of dictatorship through creating peace through the World Cup. In doing so the Junta aimed to recast itself domestically and internationally as the legitimate Argentine government.\textsuperscript{36} Having taken power through a coup and institutionalized state terror, the Junta aimed to cement its legitimacy by demonstrating governing competency. In effective management of a mega-event such as the WC, it believed that it could gain popular acceptance of its plan to re-structure the political system, economy, and class relations. No longer content at presiding over ”an occupied city,“\textsuperscript{37} meaning a conquered population, the regime believed that its effective management of this football ritual could elicit a change in Argentina’s national character.\textsuperscript{38} The Plan Claro utilized the rhetoric of democracy to build mass support for the PRN, a long-range plan to transition towards a less openly authoritarian, but still military-dominated political system. A key part of this scenario was the PNR’s assertion that dictatorship and draconian measures had been necessary to

\textsuperscript{36} María Seone and Vicente Muleiro, \textit{El dictador: La historia secreta y publica de Jorge Rafael Videla}, 291.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, 291.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 291
create the conditions for a return to democracy. As Videla commented, “We must incorporate the values of security to those of democracy.”

The Junta portrayed itself as the protector of the nation against malevolent forces seeking to destroy it. Within this Manichean dialectic, the authoritarian system was described as a necessary evil to protect the “Ser nacional,” or national self, a nebulous concept of authentic Argentine nationality, defined as a set of traditional values and social hierarchy. Through preparing and hosting the WC mega-event, which Junta spokesman Adm. Emilio Massera referred to as the “peoples party,” the regime sought to cement the popular belief that it alone could preserve the Ser Nacional. Thus, on March 24, 1976, the Proceso’s (dictatorship) first day, Videla declared that its second goal was the preservation of the nation’s “Christian moral values. . . [and our] traditions of the Argentine essence.”

From the beginning, the Junta proclaimed its sacred duty to save the nation from the forces of chaos (read, the left-Peronist and revolutionary movements). Football by virtue of being the national game was seen by the Junta as being a key part of maintaining and protecting this “Ser Nacional”. The Junta’s words and actions often were opposites.

i. The Junta’s Economic Revolution: The Ministry of Martinez de Hoz

Economic and social reform were central parts of the Junta’s plan to reconstitute state authority. It believed that Peronism’s excessive support to needy Argentines had been one of the main sources of the nation’s corruption. Thus, in the PNR’s point 2.5, the regime cited this issue as the main cause of the economic crisis which had gripped

39 Ibid, 270
the country after the return of Peron in 1973, and which worsened under Isabel until her overthrow in 1976. The PNR proclaimed that it would make possible “the full development of the Argentine person”\textsuperscript{40} through embracing a new economic model which would "cement a socio-economic situation in which Argentina has autonomy."\textsuperscript{41}

The regime appointed Jose Adolfo Martinez de Hoz to develop and execute its new economic vision. Following the dictates of neo-classical economists led by the University of Chicago’s Milton Friedman, Martinez de Hoz piloted a radical neo-liberal reform of the economy. He involved the scaling-back or elimination of protective tariffs, elimination of state subsidies for industries, a drastic reduction of the broad array of social services provided by Peronism, the freeing of foreign exchange markets and interest rates, the prohibition of worker strikes and elimination of most other union rights.

In theory, the subjection of Argentina’s economy to world market competition and discipline would eliminate inefficient industries, nurture new ones which possessed a comparative international advantage, eliminate budget deficits caused by wasteful social and economic subsidies, and bring an influx of foreign capital investment attracted by de-regulation and a non-union workplace. Argentina would return to its prior role as a regional economic powerhouse; the arrival of new technologies would provide economic development; workers would receive wage increases, and the nation would prosper.

The junta’s neo-liberal political economy was a complete reversal away from the “development toward the inside” Import substitution industrialization (“ISI”) policies which had founded the country’s industrialization under the first Peron governments

\textsuperscript{40} Vasquez, Enrique,\textit{La ultima: origen, apogeo, y caida de la dictadura militar}, 216.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 216.
(1946-55). In contradistinction to these policies, de Hoz’s model relied excessively on strengthening the financial sector and moving industry. This ensured that both domestically and internationally, the regime received the support of large, multinational financial giants like Citibank, Chase Bank, and the First National Bank of Chicago.

Instead of bringing prosperity to Argentines, these neoliberal reforms amounted to economic and social disaster. The Junta sought to use the WC to conceal these social and economic hardships and validate the Process. To prepare for the WC’s broadcast, it carried out several infrastructure projects. One of these was the development of color television. Thus, in the WC’s festive inaugural ceremony, the nation and world viewed the highly nationalistic opening ceremonies, portraying Argentine youth dressed in colorful, traditional garb, in full color. The fact that this was Argentina’s first color broadcast imparted symbolism of national strength, expressed in ritual discipline and pageantry. The Junta utilized the tournament as a vehicle which could display rising national living standards, the fruit of Martinez de Hoz’s integration of the economy into global markets. In his autobiography, entitled, 15 Years Later, the minister argued that “the economic opening, far from leading to a destruction of the productive apparatus, was a concrete stimulus for the modernization of industry through the introduction of new technologies.”

Despite this insistence that Argentina was now experiencing unparalleled prosperity, in reality, this “great economy” was one in which the regime and its allies did well but the average Argentine struggled to get enough to eat, this reality made it all the more important that the opening rituals create the impression that Argentina was in fact a prosperous free place.

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42 Martinez de Hoz, Quince anos después, 141.
ii. Football as Political Theater: The Junta and the World Cup

Large projects such as the World Cup may be wielded not only to display power, but also to consolidate it. Thus, the Junta’s pre-WC preparations included a massive construction boom, which would enable it to reify the inter-connected goals of displaying the capacity to forge economic modernization, centralization of power, and overall progress. From color television, highways, the renovated Ezeiza airport, telephone system, and hotels, the Junta sought to convey the image of a modernizing nation, with itself in the driver’s seat. Moreover, the regime sought to convince the public that its projects would pay for themselves, bring jobs, and result in a deluge of profits and signal a turning point in the history of the Argentine Junta.

The Junta used the WC as a theater to dramatize the idea that the country was making a transition from internal war to peace; the timing of this peace was planned and connected with the extreme violence that the Junta had subjected Argentines too from taking power. This reflected the fact that during the regime’s first period, from the coup d’état to the beginning of 1978, 90% of the disappearances and killings of the Dirty War had occurred. Thus, as the tournament’s inaugural approached, the Junta had achieved its original purpose of defeating the Left and exterminating its members. However, the international impact of that atrocity had been severe. In Europe, the Communist, Socialist and Green parties in countries such as the Netherlands, France, and Germany organized a boycott of the Argentine games, urging the public to stay home rather than show support for a dictatorship that had massacred its own people.
and destroyed its democratic, constitutional order. The Junta after the World Cup having adjusted it’s policies for the eyes of the World now didn’t need to rule as much through terror having purged and terrorized Argentines into accepting their authority. Having been so brutal in the prelude to the World Cup; this memory of this violence until the Malvina’s war was enough to keep external elements outside of the Junta from toppling it.

Thus, the Junta’s commanders—led by the army’s Videla, the navy’s Massera and the air force’s Gen. Orlando Ramon Agosti sought to divert public attention from, and erase, the memory of the Dirty War. In a few words, the Junta sought to portray the WC as a rite of passage from internal war to civil peace. That decision also sprang from a desire to frame an effective response to the new, pro-human rights policy of the USA, which under the Jimmy Carter presidency (1977-1981) cut military aid from $48.4 million to $15 million, and imposed an arms embargo on Argentina.43

Silencing Opposition

The Junta framed all criticisms of its human rights violations an “Anti-Argentine” campaign. Those criticisms included a well-organized boycott that took place in Western European countries with powerful Communist, Socialist, and Green parties, such as Holland, Germany, France, and Italy. Moreover, with the arrival of the Jimmy Carter administration in Washington (1977-81), the US shifted its foreign policy focus

from protecting US overseas investments (e.g., the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan administrations) to opposing human rights violations. Consequently, Argentina became the frequent target of US criticism. The president appointed Patricia Derian to a special ambassadorship addressing human rights concerns. Derian obtained an official audience with President Videla, and used the meeting to denounce the disappearances, murders of opposition members, and other flagrant human rights abuses. In response, the Junta hired a public relations firm to create a campaign to deny the charges and spur a patriotic response. During the World Cup Argentines became ever more entrapped in this ultra-nationalistic discourse amidst the great joy of winning at the highest level of Football.

In the first three years of the regime, between 1976 to 1978, 90% of all disappearances of the Dirty War occurred. And during early 1978, in a cruel twist of fate, the junta began the Dirty War’s stage 4, the execution of its remaining prisoners. Junta members Massera and Agosti decided to utilize the tournament’s pageantry to distract international attention from the atrocities and shift it to the tournament. Aiming to erase evidence of their crimes the Junta executed many prisoners before the World Cup and followed this up by immediately shifting attention to football.

In 1978 Buenos Aires had entered a sharp confrontation with its Chilean neighbor, over competing claims to the Strait of Magellan islands which lay at the continent’s southern tip. Washington’s arms embargo and cutting of military aide added

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44 Seoane, María, Muleiro, Vincente, El Dictador, 264
new urgency to the efforts to manage Argentina’s image. The World Cup provided a
perfect theater to burnish that image, and the Junta made strong efforts to do so. The
Argentine state only started using the term “Dirty War” in 1978 as part of its effort to
justify itself to the international community and Argentines. Through this term itself the
Junta aimed to create a memory of the recent past that aimed to create an alternative
narrative of the recent past. Through this narrative of the “Dirty War,” the Junta was
responding to increasing awareness globally about “Disappearances”. In this new
narrative that it presented to the World now it acknowledged that the State had
disappeared some people, but that these disappearances were necessary for defeating
their enemies and restoring order.

Centralizing State Power through Football

The Junta sought to utilize its staging of the WC tournament to further its goal of
centralizing state power through the staging of this mega-event. In fact, Buenos Aires’
emphasis on its preparations for the tournament was so great that during the first
months of 1978, the Junta’s typical excuse for not completing goals in a timely manner
changed from “it will be completed tomorrow,” to “it will be completed after the World
Cup”46. These goals related to the construction of infrastructure, roads, and the
‘cleaning’ of cities, buffering domestic oligarchical companies’ profits, and building
commercial relationships with large multinationals involved in the World Cup. Severely

45Feitlowitz, Marguerite. Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture, 20
46 Kuper, Football Against the Enemy, 174
behind schedule once it took power, the Junta attempted to use its hosting of the
tournament to showcase the globally ascendant Argentine nation and cover up it’s
crimes.

For the Junta, the moment of its greatest triumph was called the "Building of the
Peace."\textsuperscript{47}, that involved the illusion that they were transitioning slowly toward
democratic rule. This would occur during its next phase, which would include
refashioned political parties and a reformed economy. In the background, a military
party would dominate a superficially democratic, but actually bureaucratic authoritarian
political system.\textsuperscript{48}. As the Junta went about building stadiums for the World Cup, it also
was also laying the foundations for its own building of the refashioned political and civil
peace. WC Infrastructure building was seen as part of physically building this peace. As
Videla stated, "I’m not a fan, I haven’t followed football, I haven’t lived it. What interests
me about football is what motivates it; the podium, all that this sport means for the
renewal which the country is experiencing"\textsuperscript{49}. For the Junta, building stadia, upgrading
the television infrastructure, highways and other tourism infrastructure had the express
purpose of "building the peace." For the Junta this served the purpose of forging the
foundations for the institutions upon which the new era of "Peace" would be based. As
explained by Terence Turner, "the basic principle of the effectiveness of ritual action. . .
is its quality as a model or embodiment of the hierarchical relationship between a
conflicted or ambiguous set of relations and some higher-level principle that it serves. .

\textsuperscript{47} Seoane, María, Muleir, Vincente,\textit{El Dictador}, 285
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 285
.as its generative mechanism or transcendental ground”50. In 1978, the Junta aimed to convince the Argentine public of its narratives.

The military believed that, through its management of building for the futbol ritual, it could convince the public of its competency to govern and achieve its vision of a stronger, more modern and globalized Argentina. This message of order and restored internal peace was reflected in the carefully planned opening ceremonies of the World Cup.

Through the carefully orchestrated opening ritual, one can see the Junta’s vision for reorganizing the Argentine National Self. Juan Mentesana, the Process’s spokesman, had close communications with the regime commanders. Commenting on the opening ceremony of dances by Argentine youth he remarked “This explosion of Joy that’s filling this space is the truthful manifestation of a nation receiving the world. Quickly, with order, conscious discipline and action, a word is drawn on the playing field: Argentina ’78.”51 Mentesana’s heavily vetted announcement revealed the Junta’s priorities, in staging the football ritual and its conceptions of the relation between “order” and “peace.” Mentesana’s announcement contained an emphasis on order, and through the WC inaugural’s dance expressed this new order. In the view of Marguerite Feitlowitz, this spectacle presented an image of the Junta which “was the closest to fascism.”52 It expressed itself through a newfound focus on the masses and mass spectacle, a classic feature of 1930s European fascist movements; e.g., Nazi Germany and Mussolini’s Italy. Reading this ritual; both in its official enactment and in its

50 MacAloon, John, Rite, drama, spectacle, festival, 251
51 Bauso, Matías. 78 Historia Oral Del Mundial, 385
52 Feitlowitz, A lexicon of terror. 39
sponsor's narration, reveals the clearest vision of what the Junta hoped the World Cup would achieve for its political objectives: an ordered, anonymous, athletic contest in which the shouts of "Argentina! . . . Argentina! . . . Argentina!" would drown out remaining dissent.

Through this ritual, the Argentine Junta aimed to impose its militaristic values upon the youthful immaturity of the masses of football fans. Its hope was for a tournament, which like the performance, was boring, ordered, and peaceful. And, through that spectacle, the generals and admirals hoped to capture the hearts of the Argentine masses. Through this spectacle which Massera described as a "people's party," the Junta paradoxically sought to use popular ritual to discipline and model the "Ser Nacional." This ritual message and the Junta's goals for the spectacle were reflected in the demonstration by Argentine children at the start of the World Cup. As the Junta hoped to regain its authority over the nation's rebellious youth, it sought to triumph over the latter's progressive ideas. For those notions had rejected the Right's constellation of values: order, property, church, and social hierarchy. In the Junta's view, with the exception of themselves, most Argentines lacked maturity. Prior to the Dirty War, the youth, questioned traditional Argentine conceptions of being an extension of Europe in South America. These youthful leftwing ideas "entailed a practical and ideological questioning of the narratives of modernization, chiefly the portrayal of Argentina as undergoing a homogenizing, socially democratizing, and forward-looking process.
towards social improvement”\(^{53}\). In preparation for the World Cup the Junta aimed to reinforce onto the urban landscape a modern Western aesthetic onto the urban landscape which was reflected in the razing of the "Villas Miserias”.

iii. The World Cup and the Villas Miserias: At What Price Modernization?

In Buenos Aires, the city government took advantage of these special circumstances to raze and displace the inhabitants of its massive shantytowns, the villas miserias. Technological advancement was a key aspect of the changes which the Junta sought to implement. As already noted, the Junta believed that the WC construction projects could deliver tangible improvements, while also displaying its competency to lead once the political system returned to some sort of constitutional order. The mega-projects included highways serving the stadia, improved telecommunications systems, and rebuilding Ezeiza International airport, the arrival point for most foreign tourists.

This Junta’s urban transformation partly sprang from its desire to vanquish a political enemy. For in the pre-coup period, many of the villeros had supported Peronism or left-revolutionary movements such as the ERP, FAR, or the left-Peronist Montoneros. The WC urban renewal campaign enabled the Junta to transfer wealth from the marginalized urban poor to its domestic and foreign business allies. Through this alliance, the Junta felt that it had created “the best city for the best people.” \(^{54}\)

\(^{53}\) Valeria Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina*, 252

\(^{54}\) Bauso, Matias, *78 Historia Oral Del Mundial. Buenos Aires*, 373
While the military tried to convey the image of a politically neutral modernizing technocratic elite, its political and class biases were painfully evident.

At the same time, in what may be considered a major urban renewal project, the Junta sought the destruction of the villas and their replacement with WC and tourism infrastructure to re-order the nation’s urban spaces. Moreover, the zones surrounding the villas were centers of industry (which the Junta’s neo-liberal political economy would also slate for destruction) and political resistance. Workers on the lowest rungs lived in these areas. To its credit, the Junta completed the construction in record time, just two years. However, financial efficiency was sacrificed to the regime’s urgent timetable. The overall bill, which the Argentine taxpayer footed, was almost seven times the initial cost estimate.

In 1978, over 215,000 Argentines resided in the capital’s villas. The latter were densely populated agglomerations of makeshift dwellings constructed of scavenged materials and located on private property, which typically belonged to the state or state-owned entities like the railroads. The Junta targeted the villas for demolition. To place the social cost of this policy in context, in Buenos Aires alone, by 1981, the Junta had displaced more than 90% of villa residents.

During the 1920’s and 30s, Argentines from Interior provinces like Tucuman and Jujuy, along with poor immigrants from Paraguay and Bolivia, flocked to Argentina’s big

55 Bauso, Matías. 78 Historia Oral Del Mundial. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2018(374)
cities to escape the poverty, hunger, and homelessness of the Argentine interior\textsuperscript{56}. Lacking access to affordable housing, these newcomers constructed the first villas. While previously, compassionate Argentine governments had tended to tolerate the settlements, the Junta viewed them with scorn and slated their inhabitants for displacement and removal. The Junta claimed that its purpose was the modernization of the cities. But what was extraordinary about the project was the intensity with this campaign was affected, and the violent language the Junta employed to raze the neighborhoods and expel their occupants. This revealed evident disdain for the urban poor, who also constituted part of the pre-coup base for the Leftist revolutionary movements.

The Junta utilized the villas’ “liquidation” as a screen to transfer land from the marginalized poor to local and foreign big businesses and the wealthy. The first villa to be “liquidated” was \textit{Belgrano Bajo} (Lower Belgrano.) This was a major blow to the squatters: they not only lost their homes; the only accessible housing was located in Buenos Aires’s urban periphery, far from their places of work\textsuperscript{57}. This wasn’t the first attempt made to destroy the Villa’s, under the first Buearcratic Authoritarian regime of Ongania. Unlike this earlier attempt these efforts where buttressed through making the Villero's lives absolutely miserable. This plan carried out by the Municipal authorities

\textsuperscript{56} https://www.infobae.com/historia/2018/06/18/rene-houseman-y-el-mundial-78-como-la-dictadura-desalojo-a-su-familia-de-la-villa-del-bajo-belgrano-para-embellecer-la-ciudad/

steadily increased restrictions on the Villero’s economic activities, tightened up construction regulation to make building impossible, began digging up convictions from the resident’s past’s and imprisoning them, through step by step undermining of these communities ability to support themselves the Junta wrecked the capacity of these communities to function.

The first step was called the “Freezing”58, this involved measuring where the Junta extended and giving certificates of precarious settlement to those living in the Villas. The second was “discouragement”59 which involved the prohibition of economic activities necessary to sustain economic life in the Villa. This discouragement included random searches by police, and the digging up of old offenses to imprison people living in the Villa. The final step was total eradication that involved the destruction of the homes and the option to be transported back to their province or country of origin. 60

Through this process of harassment, the community of Bajo Belgrano was gradually made an unlivable place and torn down; paving the way for the new beautiful city the municipal authority and the state desired.

58 Bauso, Matías. 78 Historia Oral Del Mundial. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2018(372)
59 Ibid(372)
60 Bauso, Matías. 78 Historia Oral Del Mundial. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2018(372)
Pictures of the transformation of Bajo Belgrano

Houseman in Bajo Belgrano

Taken by Jorge Vallerga 1980 or 1981)

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Today in the same place stands the Russian Embassy

This resulted in a twist for Argentine national team member Renee Houseman. Houseman grew up in Belgrano Bajo and dreamed of playing for the national team in the famous tournament. But his family and many friends still lived in the shantytown.

As the Process sought to gain institutional legitimacy for its post-1978 planned transition away from direct military rule, its focus increasingly moved towards re-ordering the urban landscape. Established in the wake of the mass population movements of the Depression and first Peronist period (1930-55), the villas had originally been called “emergency Housing,” to refer to the lack of affordable housing in Argentina’s big cities. But by the late 1970s, these “temporary” improvised settlements had become permanent parts of the urban landscape. Moreover, they were centers of unregulated and untaxed economic activity and operated with autonomy from the state. Under the previous bureaucratic authoritarian regime under Ongania in 1966 the Junta proclaimed


63 Ibid (370)
that it would wipe the Villa’s away but failed to successfully entirely eradicate any
singular Villa, largely because of resistance from the community\textsuperscript{64}. In addition to its
evident class bias, the Junta’s motives for destroying the villas included gaining political
control over their population and generating additional tax revenue. These demolitions
and movements of extremely poor Argentines away from centers where tourists where
visiting were executed as a part of this “beautification” campaign enacted by the state
which wiped away visual reminders of political activism, posters, graffiti, etc and also
moved away populations which they viewed both as visually repulsive, and a sign that
Argentine cities weren’t the wealthy, prosperous, rivals of European metropolises. This
campaign to beautify Argentine cities hosting the World Cup; especially Buenos Aires,
depended on the mass movement of the urban poor away from stadiums and city
centers where foreigners were likely to frequent.

The high social cost of this beautification campaign pushed people already living
on the edge into an even more precarious position. Aiming to present Argentina to the
world as a modern nation the movement of the Urban poor away from the city centers
and their replacement by commercial buildings. Renee Houseman was a witness to this
community’s destruction. Even after he became a wealthy athlete, he would often return
to the neighborhood to pass the time with his former cronies. For even though the villa
was poor, it was his home; where he grew up and where his friends and family lived. As
Houseman noted, he viewed his hometown fondly and commented, “I hadn’t yet

\textsuperscript{64} Larraquy, Marcelo, "René Houseman y el Mundial 78: cómo la dictadura desalojó a su familia de la Villa del Bajo Belgrano para embellecer la ciudad." Infobae, June 18, 2018. \url{https://www.infobae.com/historia/2018/06/18/rene-houseman-y-el-mundial-78-como-la-dictadura-desalojo-a-su-familia-de-la-villa-del-bajo-belgrano-para-embellecer-la-ciudad/}
become Houseman, the famous football player. I went around without a penny to my name. If someone would see you with hunger in your face, they would invite you to eat with them. You would always get a little something, a locro (pork stew) or Mate. How do you forget that?“⁶⁵ As Houseman revealed, what the villas lacked in property titles, they made up for in strong ties of shared community.

After training with the national team in mid-1978, Houseman made a trip back home. He was shocked to find nothing but “rubble, piled metal sheets, and debris, thrown all over the place--It killed me.”⁶⁶ Houseman’s career as a pro athlete may have enriched him, but he still felt saddened by the misfortunes of his friends and family members. Housemann at the time “felt impotent because the Junta razed this Villa solely to keep Argentina’s image clean. How could people coming from abroad see a Villa at the heart of the capital? But at the same time, two blocks away from River’s stadium they were killing people like crazy.”⁶⁷ Even Housemann whom felt deeply distraught about this displacement aimed to move the poor from the heart of Argentine society back to the periphery. Despite his personal confusion and sadness at the loss of his childhood home he never mentioned it during the World Cup.

The urban transformation imposed a message of order upon the Argentine city and aimed through ”Beautification” to demolish communities which operated on the margins of the state. For the CMV, the government’s housing commission, this was the

⁶⁵ Bauso, Matías. 78 Historia Oral Del Mundial. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2018(399)
⁶⁶ Ibid,375
⁶⁷ Ibid,375)
“first grand experiment in eradication.” The Belgrano Bajo’s 7.2 acres, which had supported 2021 families, were now open for development.68 Thus, what had been a refuge and community for the most vulnerable Argentines was now repurposed for urban beautification and removal of an undesirable population, thus boosting real estate values enormously. The policy of beautification concealed the regime’s socially biased view of who belonged to the Argentine nation. By removing these “undesirables” and repurposing the land they lived on, the regime sought to impose its highly conservative values and aesthetics onto the heart of the Argentine nation. The Junta in Buenos Aires employed a deliberate strategy of removing the poor from urban centers where the World Cup was being hosted which aimed to transform Argentine cities. Then Junta did this the official announcement read “7.2 acres of extremely valuable land for a future ambitious plan which will bring about a social ordering of the buildings in the Federal Capital, that corresponds to a “Grand City” with a cosmopolitan scope”69.

The Junta employed the discourse of germ theory and jingoistic nationalism to justify its attitude of social exclusion, and to justify its enclosure of urban spaces. Moreover, the regime drew its authority from a claimed restoration of the natural order; a “cleansing” of the Argentine city; preparing for the football spectacle. In attempting to justify the villeros’ brutal expulsion, in 1976 Junta leader Massera stated: “These are difficult days, . . . Days of cleansing, preparation. . . This country has been ill for too long for a sudden recovery. That is why we must understand that we only have begun our period of convalescence. . . our recuperation of the nation’s health. And to do so, we

68 Ibid (375)
69 Bauso, Matías. 78 Historia Oral Del Mundial,375
must cleanse the country of subversion.” The Junta often used this germ theory discourse in its efforts to justify the razing of the villas. The process’s beneficiaries were the corporations that built the upscale hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls that occupied the former villa lands.

One of the regime’s official slogans for the event was “25 million Argentines will play in the World Cup.” As part of the “beautification” campaign for welcoming tourists and building the necessary infrastructure to welcome these tourists. Junta member Gen. Carlos Lacoste estimated that between 50,000 and 60,000 foreign tourists would arrive for the tournament. But actually, only 7,000 came. By exaggerating the number of tourists and the tournament’s economic benefits, Lacoste aimed to beef-up public support, while diverting attention from the horrific human rights violations which had gained the notice of European and US capitals and their mass media.

The World Cup was exploited by the Junta to diminish resistance to the Junta’s policies by herding the public into an obedient, anonymous mass. They sought to mold the tournament into a celebration of a new, post-Dirty War internal peace. As Junta hardliner and Interior minister Adm. Albano Harguindeguy stated, “Winning peace means nothing less and nothing more than getting Argentines [united] behind one idea of the country’s objectives, instead of thinking about totally alien ideas.” This idea of using the football ritual to politically unify the nation behind the politics of a rightwing,

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70 Marguerite, Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 38
71 Ibid, 368)
72 Ibid(402)
73 Ibid,37
terrorist dictatorship was an attempt to transform the tournament into a celebration of an armed peace, which would be enforced by the erasure of the individual. Obviously, such a “peace’ would be won only through creating a climate of fear, passivity, and conformity. In his Directive 504-77, Videla also referred to the same “peace”: The directive (intended as a military order for subordinates) was titled, “the continuation of the offensive against subversion in the years 1977-1978,” and was announced on April 20, 1977. Directive 504-77 shows how the Junta sought to wipe out subversive ideas and viewed the World Cup as a central part of winning this peace. Further, the document emphasizes that the “armed action against armed groups has been more intense and positive than that of the government. . . The prioritization of the military strategy in the Process’s first period, wherein military actions carried the weight of the fight, have produced inconveniences for the overall progression of the Process, complicating the meeting of medium-term objectives, which go beyond the simple defeat of Subversion”\textsuperscript{74}. What Videla meant was that rather than defeating the opposition, it was necessary to render the people transformed and converted to the Process.

The Junta’s political project aimed to educate Argentines, to have them internalize its conceptions of family and political economy. While they sought to destroy institutions and terrorize families which they deemed subversive; for the Junta this terror had the purpose of terrifying these families to internalize how they saw the World. In this education, the ritual of the World Cup played a critical role and related to the objective of rooting-out subversion in the “Industrial, educational, religious, territorial or neighborhood, giving priority to the urban ahead of the rural”\textsuperscript{38} The directive also

\textsuperscript{74} Seoane, María, Muleiro, Vincente, El Dictador, 291
emphasized that Buenos Aires should be prioritized, followed by the other main industrial cities, which also included most of the host cities for the World Cup. Regarding Argentina’s image as tournament host, Videla urged: “We mustn’t present ourselves as being “an occupied city”, which our enemies can exploit psychologically from abroad.” Incredibly, the Junta leader concluded with a shocking order to “Kill everyone necessary, but be tidy.”

Adopted at the beginning of 1977, Videla’s plan outlined the Process’s next phase, which aimed to conquer the hearts and minds of Argentine public and naturalize its authority through the beloved pastime of futbol. For Karl Marx, naturalization meant “an ideological and representational process, whereby bourgeois society could express and ultimately universalize its relations and structures.” In the context of the WC, this meant validation of the economic and political changes of the PNR, as returning Argentina to its natural state. The Junta constantly emphasized that it was following a plan to return Argentina to its former greatness.

Martinez de Hoz’s neoliberal offensive and the Process depended on sacrifices in the present for a better future; through the preparations for the World Cup these changes where made more bearable and understandable for Argentines. As Minister of the Economy, Martinez de Hoz instituted radical measures that had devastating impacts, including deindustrialization, the accumulation of national and corporate debt, and declining wages. For industrial workers, the plan wrought huge sacrifices. Mitchell writes: “The effect of the economy provided not just a new object of government policy, in the way that governments had also become concerned with, for example, public

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75 El Dictador, 291
76 Now Here, 254
health, or urban renewal, or social welfare. The economy provided a more pervasive effect, one that has since then escaped attention: a way to bring the future into government.\textsuperscript{77} In a television address to the nation in 1976, Martinez de Hoz stated; "We should look to the future to together build this nation’s greatness. To reverse the current situation with the least possible effort, without exception all Argentines should give their [best] efforts to make their contribution. No sector should be left at the margins of this duty. Without a doubt, there will be sacrifices to be realized, but when these sacrifices are divided evenly and with an awareness of the necessity to accomplish this goal, one accepted and desired by all, then these sacrifices can be borne." \textsuperscript{42} For Hoz the World Cup was a political part of cementing this long-term plan. Only a few years earlier during Lopez Rega’s defacto control of the Argentine state, an earlier experiment with neoliberal reform, under economic minister Celestino Rodrigo, the Rodrigazo occurred; this resulted in hyperinflation and contributed to the eventual fall of Lopez Rega.\textsuperscript{78} Football was a way of making these sacrifices more bearable, through softening these wage cuts with a boost to employment and a feeling of national pride attained in hosting the World Cup.

As Martinez de Hoz emphasized, sacrifices would be made for a better future. In the World Cup, he continued, evidence would build that this future was materializing; that these sacrifices would be rewarded, Thus, state-sponsored violence would decline, wages would rise, and economic and political rights restored. During the World Cup, in

\textsuperscript{77} Mitchell, Economentality: How the Future Entered Government, 484
\textsuperscript{78} Sanguinetti, Gabriela. "Rodrigazo: qué es, cuáles son las chances de que vuelva a ocurrir y qué similitudes hay con la actualidad." Cronista, accessed on April 30, 2023, \url{https://www.cronista.com/economia-politica/rodrigazo-que-es-cuales-son-las-chances-de-que-vuelva-a-ocurrir-y-que-similitudes-hay-con-la-actualidad/}.
the Junta’s system of rewards and punishments, it aimed to generate genuine goodwill. Therefore, the level of state repression began to fall. However, as the state slashed ISI (import substitution industrialization) protections, the urban proletariat, which under classic Peronism was one of the wealthiest in the world, now faced exponentially worsening conditions. This, the strongest part of Peronism’s coalition, was also the source of some of the regime’s greatest resistance.

For more affluent Argentine consumers, the lowering of tariffs lead to a massive flow of goods from abroad and made possible foreign shopping sprees for high-end electronics, furs and jewelry. In this period of high corporate profits, interest rates, and rising imports, the certainty of the “promised land that lay at the end of the desert crossing” never came, tragically belying Martinez de Hoz’s rosy predictions. The excessively high-interest rates and promises of the imaginary economy overshadowed the real economy, as the profits generated by the financial sector eroded investment in the real sector. The short-term focus on profits and growth, fueled by petrodollars invested in Latin American debt, overshadowed the importance of long-term stability in the economic development of Argentina. The Argentine consumer class, benefiting from lowered tariffs, had access to a wider array of goods in the form of cheap imports. Despite suppressed wages, this era of high corporate profits, interest rates, and rising imports seemed to promise a newfound strength and robustness to the Argentine economy.

Through the World Cup it was possible to funnel millions of dollars from the pockets of the Argentine state to Argentine and multinational companies. Amidst this festival
paid for by the massive indebting of the Argentine state was preceded by a massive
devaluation of 80% for the Argentine Peso in which taxes on agricultural exports fell by
half\textsuperscript{79}. Martinez de Oz the mastermind of this economic plan to restore Argentina’s
economic position on the international stage viewed this plan as weakening Argentine
laborers’ institutions and urbanization of the Argentine state. The World Cup for Oz was
an acceptable project necessary to build political support for this economic
transformation. As Bausalado notes “Every year from the second half of 1976 to 1982
Argentine industrial employment experienced 27 consecutive trimesters of industrial
decline despite in 10 of them industrial expansion occurred”\textsuperscript{80}. Amidst this climate of
rising economic dissatisfaction amidst this gambling and indebting of Argentine
companies was footed by the Argentine people. While unemployment and salaries fell
before and after the World Cup through debt binges insured by the Argentine state. This
indebtment by private companies amidst lower salaries and devaluations was held by
small Oligarchical businesses\textsuperscript{81}.

The Junta and Oligarchic corporations, often with familial and personal connections
aimed to create conditions that rigged the economic game for this selective club. The
ability to receive international debt connected with the predominance of an interest rate
environment in which borrowing was favorable and the state buoyed foreign capital at
any cost. These twin processes of the explosion of debt related to the access of
international capital depended on the ”creative destruction” of enterprises

\textsuperscript{79} Basualdo, Eduardo. "Studies on Argentine Economic History." ,120

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, 120

uncompetitive on the international stage and weakening what they perceived as abnormal internal demand. This *creative destruction* explicitly served the purpose of weakening the Argentine consumer’s buying power and transferring wealth from individuals and small firms to massive firms that could compete internationally. Aiming to turn Argentine companies and Argentina into a great place to do business debt, disappearances, and football worked in tandem to ensure the “survival of the fittest”. In this climate regular workers without training were the main ones paying the price for this explosion of debt while receiving few of the benefits.

During this period of preparation for the World Cup, cleavages within the Junta began to open, regarding major decisions concerning its future. Under Admiral Massera, the Navy saw the tournament as good for the Junta. Thus, he coined the term, “the People’s party” and “took great pains to find issues and causes that would win some degree of popular support for the government, such as the World Cup football championship, and later, the conflict with Chile.” This interbranch competition was a constant presence while the Junta was in power. Yet the World Cup, unlike other government projects, was handled efficiently. “Playing his own game,” Massera sought to use the contest to lessen and distract from growing public alarm toward the rampant social inequality which Martínez de Hoz’s neoliberal policies had produced. Aiming to personally empower himself and the Navy, Massera sought to use the football

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82 Pucciarelli, Alfredo “Businesspeople, Technocrats and Militaries”, 2018, 129
83 Vázquez, Enrique. *La última: Origen, Apogeo y Caida De La Dictadura Militar*, 223
84 Romero, Luis Alberto. *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 235
ritual to build political support for his future bid for the presidency. The World Cup and the admiral’s massive infrastructure spending served to bolster his influence but resulted in huge budget deficits.

Conclusion

The World Cup served to generate broad domestic support for the government’s policies. Only with unanimous support could the Junta formally take a step back from politics and have its institutional reforms entrenched. The plan to “open-up the Process” was intended to usher in a new phase in which the armed forces would return to the barracks, while, through a regime of bureaucratic authoritarianism continuing to exert their same, iron grip on the country. The ritual and the preparation for the World Cup created “a confrontation of the self with the other; of the me with the not me. It creates a mixing of categories, which provides the ground for the identity crises necessary for the eventual illumination of the subject, the integration for whose name has been undertaken.” The Junta was keenly aware of the social power of football, and thus sought to manipulate it. Yet, it was afraid of football’s potential to provoke a future uprising, as had occurred during May, 1969 Cordobazo, which had occurred during the Ongania dictatorship (1966-70). In preparing for the WC, the Junta sought to create unanimous support for its policies through the ritual. Aiming to wipe out the last

85 Seoane, María, Muleiro, Vincente, *El Dictador*, 269
traces of opposition, the Junta turned to the ritual of football, hoping that ordinary folk would identify themselves with the regime and its hegemony.

This World Cup was seen by the Junta as a celebration of their victory over subversion and a key step toward transitioning to a less overt power arrangement. From April of 1977 to 1978, the junta led an intensified effort to modernize and clean Argentine cities, in preparation for the tournament. But this was also a political cleansing, to complete the task of eliminating the last leftist resistance. The regime aimed to attain this goal by targeting places of culture, labor unions, and villas, refuges for the urban marginalized. Projecting their idealized conception of the new Argentine man onto the cityscape, they aimed to mobilize the Argentine masses to embrace this process of national transformation by framing these changes, and their “war against subversion” as indispensable for bringing about a national resurgence.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FORGING OF A FOOTBALL FAMILY

By Ari Greenberg

April 30, 2023

Introduction

“The most amazing combinations can result if you shuffle the pack enough.” Mikhail Bulgakov: Master and Margherita

After the Argentine military junta seized power in March, 1976, its members considered what to do about the country’s having been named host for the 1978 World
Cup (WC). While the Junta was initially divided, with Chairman Jorge Videla expressing opposition due to the contest’s likely high costs, he was won over by naval commander Admiral Emilio Massera. The latter argued that the tournament could improve the country’s badly tarnished international reputation, and thus was worth the cost. As will be seen in the following chapters, throughout the tournament, the Junta utilized the WC as a tool of propaganda; both to rehabilitate its image and unify the nation in support of its policies. That image had been damaged by international outrage at the regime’s “Dirty War,” a campaign of bloody repression that involved the detention, torture, and imprisonment of 30,000 Argentines, members of Peronist and Marxist groupings that sought through either democratic process or violence to move Argentina toward socialism, 30,000 died; some after having been dumped from airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean. Virtually all the disappeared had been subjected to hideous forms of torture, which included sexual penetration, electric shock, and regular beatings. For the Junta and FIFA this was a disaster. The World wondered how FIFA could of all things host a World Cup in Argentina, in a state run by a bloodthirsty dictatorship.

In Europe, leftists organized a boycott aimed at convincing spectators and their national teams not to attend the tournament. And international human rights defender, Amnesty International, organized a campaign with the slogan, “Football, yes! Torture, No!” as promoted by the West German branch of Amnesty International. This group along with other human rights groups across Europe aimed to put pressure on the

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88 Jiménez Botta, Felix A. 2017. “‘Yes to Football, No to Torture!’ The Politics of the 1978 Football World Cup in West Germany.”,abstract
Argentine state and FIFA through threats to boycott the World Cup. FIFA consistently prioritized issues of organizational capacity over human rights; when it was discovered that they hadn’t done their due diligence, the whole success of Havelange’s enterprise seemed at risk of failure. FIFA and the companies which sponsored the World Cup faced intense embarrassment as through the World Cup they became associated not with the “Beautifull Game” but with ”Dirty War”.

These challenges of the Argentine state as a state following Western values were reflected in the challenges to the Argentine Junta’s desire to be a leader in the West. The Boycotts of the World Cup threatened to tamper their efforts to propagate this message, even as the center of this campaign was Western Europe, specifically France. This campaign had such a strong impact that the archbishop of Notre Dame, Cardinal Marty, on the two hundredth anniversary of San Martin’s birthday, February 25th, he refused to commemorate the mass to San Martin, the liberator of Argentina and the nations of the Southern Cone 89. This condemnation by the Cardinal reflected the force that the boycott movement had in Western Europe, influencing a high-ranking cardinal of Notre Dame, a cultural ark of the French Nation. Even while the Junta desperately sought to join this West, the cultural and political guardians of it, such as Cardinal Marty, were increasingly condemning the Argentine state as a state that stood against these values. Buenos Aires architecture was itself modeled on Paris, Argentines have long held a high regard for French culture. Argentines constantly aimed to mimic certain aspects of French cultural achievements. This reflects in the architecture of

89 Bauso, 78 Oral History of the World Cup, 215
Buenos Aires, which even today is commonly referred to as the “Paris of South America”.

This chapter aims to study how the Junta and FIFA (the International Federation of Football Associations—the entity which regulates the sport and organizes the World Cup) worked in tandem to stage a successful tournament. We will show how FIFA, under its new, Brazilian president, Joao Havelange, undertook a campaign to expand tournament participation by Global South countries, including Argentina. That campaign included seeking corporate sponsorships to buttress its financial influence and political power. Corporate commercialization of world football was thus one of FIFA’s major goals. Argentina’s junta had many of the same goals, and thus a partnership developed. As both FIFA, the Sponsors and the Junta sought greater power and world influence, the tournament became the arena for that quest. Thus, an unlikely triumvirate was born.

In this chapter, we will also show how, under newly appointed national team coach, Cesar Menotti, the Selección (national team) was prepared to win the tournament. We will study how Menotti’s fluid, yet disciplined style of football was uniquely Argentine, and enabled the team to win the championship by defeating powerful competitors like Germany, Peru, and Holland. And Menotti, while a leftist, did not allow his politics to erupt into conflicts with the Junta, or intrude into his management of the team. Menotti never commented openly about the violence and terror which gripped the country and alienated world opinion. He retained his focus on football and demanded that his players do the same. Menotti echoed FIFA and the
regime’s understanding of football as apolitical and above “tricks”\textsuperscript{90}. Menotti’s philosophy of football exclusively limited itself to the conduct of on-the-field play. This philosophy viewed Football as” a performative field crossed by permanent values of decency”\textsuperscript{91}.

Moreover, Menotti’s success can be explained by the team’s complex style—fluid and intuitive, yet disciplined. Another factor that contributed to the gaucho (Argentine) victory was Menotti’s rule that Seleccion members could not play outside the country, from October of 1976 the selling of Argentine players to European clubs was banned\textsuperscript{92}. As the Junta had an extremely poor image abroad the team and coach where skilled and made this World Cup so memorable, and aided FIFA and it’s sponsor’s goal of visibility and of creating publicity to sell their products.

**FIFA’s Politics**

Having roots in the 1920’s FIFA as " 'Relatively obscure and certainty bankrupt FIFA might have been for most of it’s many early formative years, but it was building, and can be seen as without doubt a serious player in the remaking of the world order.”\textsuperscript{93} Not commercial but with immense cultural clout from it’s very beginnings the World Cup has served as a ritual which organized and modelled World Hierarchies. The World Cup was like the Olympics primarily about national pride and the peaceful contestation of global rivalries on the sports pitch. As television became an ever more important part of the World Cup and the nations of the Global South gained their independence FIFA

\textsuperscript{90} Tolinson,Alan, Young, Christopher, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, 141

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 140

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, 139

\textsuperscript{93} Tomlinson, Alan *FIFA, The Men, The Myths, The Money*, 23
became less Eurocentric and more global in focus. With television came ever more viewers and a seemingly exponential growth in viewership. This corresponded with the growth of the consumer economy. FIFA was ready for changes.

The Argentine Junta and FIFA both saw the 1978 World Cup as a transformative project. Under President Joao Havelange, FIFA aimed to expand to new areas of the world—and especially the Global South—and to do so regardless of the cost. What was, under Stanley Rous and other prior presidents, a true nonprofit league, was transformed into an international sport profit powerhouse, wielding power and influence which could change international narratives about countries and regions. Before Havelange’s deals with large multinationals such as Coca Cola and Adidas FIFA was truly a sleepy nonprofit.

In the political and commercial project of the 1978 World Cup, FIFA and its sponsors needed a stable partner which had the political clout to create a spectacle that would merit massive investment in the stadia, roads, telecommunications, and tourist infrastructure needed for a well-attended tournament. The Junta was willing to do almost anything to get the necessary funding for the World Cup, including get into debt; especially Massera and Lacoste of the Navy who were willing and able to do virtually anything for this World Cup to be a success. As earlier governments had failed to build the necessary infrastructure on schedule as Argentina faced political and economic collapse. Without political stability and the rule of law, the tourists, investments, and player’s life could potentially be put in jeopardy. For a businessman aiming to increase the scale and profit of the World Cup the Argentine navy’s personal reassurances that they had this ritual under control.
In 1974, Joao Havelange, FIFA’s new, Brazilian President, had led the Federation’s transformation from a sleepy nonprofit into a global organization with political and financial power to rival small states. Havelange, a former Sao Paulo-born Olympic athlete and transport and finance entrepreneur, had rapidly risen in the tough, paulista, Sao Paolo business world to become wealthy and powerful. As Brazil’s economy expanded during the “economic miracle” of the 1960s and ’70s, so did Havelange’s wealth. During the 1970s, Brazil, like Argentina, was ruled by a, bureaucratic authoritarian military regime with whom Havelange had close relations with the Brazilian Junta as shown by his effective lobbying as President of the Brazilian Confederation of Sports for extra funds for the Brazilian National Team further “Havelange was the only leader with power and capacity enough for managing sport in the most convenient way in order to generate political stability and support for Costa e Silva.”. One of his many businesses involved arms sales. Only a year before ascending to the presidency of FIFA, Havelange orchestrated a massive arms sale to Bolivian Dictator Hugo Banzer predominantly consisting of grenades, among many other kinds of weapons. These business dealings between Havelange and Banzer, as FIFA president he expanded on these relations and experience of doing business with authoritarian states.

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94 Alan Tomlinson, FIFA, the men the myths the money, 62


96 Alan Tomlinson, FIFA, the men the myths the money, 62
Amidst this speculative fervor, the Junta aided its large, corporate allies such as Argentine cement producer Loma Negra, vitally needed for the massive quantities of material necessary for the construction of stadia, roads, and hotels. The scale of the spending and changes to the nation’s urban space were stunning, as the Junta let contracts to clear huge villas miserias (shantytowns) to make way for stadia, hotels and new roads. This created positive feelings for match spectators, increasing FIFA’s reach and power, and enhancing the Argentine state’s reputation as a reliable development partner.

To build football in the developing nations of the Global South, Havelange faced especially difficult challenges. These newly formed countries in the global south faced dire financial conditions that stood in the way of financing a national team. Moreover, these nations were eager to display their sovereignty on the international stage. Building a World Cup-level football team was seen by many of these nations as an attempt to display their sovereignty on the global stage. Havelange was aggressive in offering the southern nations a “place at the table” of world football. To implement his plan, the Brazilian had to obtain much more power than any possessed by Rous. Thus, he negotiated with the new nations to obtain ironclad authority that would transform the nature of global football to make personal profits for himself and pay for the league’s expansion to the Global South. Sepp Blatter, future president of FIFA and Havelange’s right-hand man, claimed that “If we hadn’t had Adidas, and Coca Cola… we would have never entered the world of football with such a fantastic program of development.”

Here, Havelange explained his ambitious plans for world football’s expansion. Through

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97 Alan Tomlinson, *FIFA, the men the myths the money*, 73
partnerships with these multinationals, FIFA was able to fund its plans for growth and commercialize football, providing the funds necessary for poorer countries to field teams. This corporate money that made this possible from the host required visibility and a host willing to spend.

As football scholar Alan Tomlinson notes, "Brazil is both a midpoint and microcosm of the world: a leader of the nonaligned nations with first, second, and third world features. With this self-image, Havelange cleverly positioned himself as a representative of the advanced world, with empathy for the poorer, developing world."98 Selling himself and this vision of development for world football would be difficult. Before he could start to implement his plan, Havelange had to transform FIFA, which under Stanley Rous was better known for stodginess and tradition than innovation. There were two problems he had to face: FIFA was weak as an organization. And to pay for his promises of organizational expansion, he would need to strengthen its financial basis and transform it into a truly global organization.

While Havelange had business and personal connections across Latin America, most of his dealings were with dictatorships like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Bolivia. In 1973, a case in point was his massive sale of arms to Bolivian dictator Hugo Banzer. That same year, Havelange was charged with fraud in a deal made by Owerc, his insurance company.99. In 1974, FIFA named him its president. Yet, his ability to

98 Alan Tomlinson, FIFA, the men the myths the money, 63
99 Ibid, 62
bounce back from such setbacks was impressive. These personal connections prepared Havelange for his political dealings at FIFA.

Another key factor which may explain Havelange’s meteoric rise in the world of professional football was his promise to develop new programs in the Global South. This electoral promise In what would become a staple of his FIFA tenure, he had a powerful personal; almost regal touch. Travelling in his private jet during his campaign for this position Havelange took advantage of Rousse’s dismissive attitude toward these newly independent nations. In 1974, at the FIFA general assembly FIFA leaders believed his assurances that he would use his connections and corporate connections he aimed to help poor countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, East Asia, and Oceana develop competitive football programs. The promise based on his own personal word was that he would help them develop their football programs. Travelling a long ways and personally making a great The fact that he was from Brazil, which is the 1970s had begun to emerge as a major world football power thanks to Pele and Jarzinho, gave him additional clout over global football.

The Junta’s changing position on the World Cup

FIFA’s first World Cup which had corporate sponsorship was that of 1978. Two years previously, FIFA had completed a deal with the Coca-Cola Company to sponsor the tournament played in Argentina, a little after the coup of March 1976.100 After the

100 FIFA uncovered: 17:50
military seized power, the very first issue was whether Argentina would host the World Cup. At the first meeting of the new Junta, one of the first issues discussed between the heads of the army, air force and navy was what to do about the upcoming football tournament. An animated discussion occurred between General Videla of the army, who was opposed to hosting the Cup, due to its expected very high cost, and Admiral Massera of the navy, who felt that whatever the cost, it was worth it, as the tournament would provide Argentina to gain international power and respect.

As Tomlinson states, “To trace the growth of FIFA is to map seismic shifts in an increasingly global consumer economy, and within and across the constituencies of international sport, spanning the worldwide geopolitical landscape.”

The Junta sought to do ”everything needed to be perfect and orderly and grandiose for this spectacle to transform into the ambitious vision which Havelange had for the sport. Havelange’s “self-proclaimed perfection” has come at a price, exposing the world game to the pervasive intrusion of market forces, and handing power and influence to those who view football primarily as a source of profit and personal glory”.

Massera, after convincing Videla to support the hosting, asked that his service be given control of tournament management. For the Argentine Junta this provided them with the ability to sportwash it’s bad human rights and economic reputation. In August, several months before Argentina was officially reconfirmed as the host, General Omar Actis, then in charge of tournament financing, was assassinated. While the culprit was

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101 Alan Tomlinson, *FIFA the men the myth the money*, 52
102 Alan Tomlinson, *FIFA the men the myth the money*, 67
103 Bauso, *78 an Oral History of the World Cup*, 72
never found, rumors swirled that Massera and the navy were behind the murder. Actis was head of the Ente Autarcico del Mundial (EAM), an agency created by a Junta decree. The EAM was responsible for all tournament financing. It had the unique privilege, among all government agencies, that it did not have to keep annual budgets or report to any other government body. Thus, since the EAM had essentially limitless authority to finance infrastructure development, there was no limit on how much it could spend. After the assassination of Gen. Actis, Massera appointed naval Captain Lacoste to lead the agency. Now the World Cup was totally in the Navy’s hands.

Sportwashing

FIFA was initially suspicious of the coup, seeing it as a sign of instability. FIFA’s main concern was that the Argentine state lacked the technical capacity to host the World Cup. By May 30, 1976, when FIFA appointed Vice President Neuberger to inspect Argentina’s preparations, the agency again questioned Buenos Aires’ ability to follow through on its commitments. According to EAM director Lacoste, the purpose of the visit was to gather data critical of Argentina’s ability to build the necessary infrastructure. Neuberger traveled to Cordoba to inspect the stadium there and noted the country’s limited progress in meeting the Federation’s deadlines. Lacoste, however, succeeded in persuading the FIFA official to grant a three-month extension, before any action was taken to revoke Buenos Aires’ hosting of the tournament. Lacoste noted that “Argentina’s fundamental problems related to earlier governments’ poor record in completing preparations. At this point, Neuberger and Havelange intervened,

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104 Bauso, 78 an Oral History of the World Cup, 72
convincing the remaining FIFA directors to take a position that would maintain
Argentina’s hosting of the tournament, even though they were not certain that Buenos
Aires could make good on its promises.\textsuperscript{105} Having had personal discussions with
Lacoste now they were finally convinced that the Junta was serious and capable of
delivering the World Cup of FIFA and it’s sponsor’s dreams. Lacoste and the Argentine
state where willing to go the extra mile in spending and faced no legal restraints for this
project, this likely convinced them. Neuberger and Havelange told Lacoste that he had
only the three months to follow through on the previously made commitments to make
progress on the infrastructure construction, or else the federation would cancel the
hosting”. The key to Argentina’s success in meeting this deadline was the creation of
the EAM, as it overcame previous bottlenecks in obtaining financing for the mega-
projects. Finally, by November 29\textsuperscript{th}, nearly eight months after FIFA and the Junta first
met, Buenos Aires produced results that adequate progress had been made on the
construction plans. Argentina’s hosting of the tournament was finally approved, on
terms which the Junta knew it could meet.\textsuperscript{106}

FIFA prepared a careful inspection and again met with the Junta. Only after the
inspection were the new corporate partnerships and Argentina’s overall bid for the Cup
confirmed by the federation. These sponsorships where lead by Coca-Cola in it’s
sponsorship of youth development programs in exchange for publicity in the World Cup.
Now a sea of different companies followed by Adidas mimicked Coca-Cola, providing
equipment and paying FIFA for writes to advertise in this first World Cup televised in

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, 72
\textsuperscript{106} Bauso, \textit{78 an Oral History of the World Cup}, 81
color. What was at risk for FIFA in this World Cup was not following through on it’s contracts in this new favorable business environment. If the World Cup didn’t happen FIFA and Havelange wouldn’t give the publicity or earn the money from the sponsors for football development. In order to do this, the football agency needed firm assurances from Buenos Aires that the financing and construction would be completed on time for the tournament’s launch in June, 1978. Actis, wanted an austere World Cup in which no stadiums where to be built, aiming to announce this plan on the 16th of August 1976 Actis was gunned down; the killing was blamed on subversives, this was particularly surprising as the killing occurred in subsone F, a very secure area the Navy Mechanics School Before the FIFA inspection team left the country, FIFA’s board met with Videla once again to make a final decision. At the end of that meeting, Havelange stated “We’re leaving here with joy, as we have noted that you {Argentina} has completed all the steps necessary for this moment. The World Cup of 1978 will be an all-around success.” Only after the assassination of General Actis and his replacement by Captain Lacoste could Argentina provide the FIFA adequate evidence that it would be able to follow through on its promises to complete all work before the start of the tournament. Money would be no object, regardless of Argentina’s fragile economic situation in late 1976.

Expanding the Power Base

107 Bauso, 81
108 Bauso, 79
109 Ibid, 79
Having received the final go-ahead from FIFA, the navy could now use the EAM’s tournament financing as a tool for camouflaging massive borrowing from the Argentine public and press. Indeed, Argentina had borrowed so much (most of it added to the foreign debt, which was already too large to sustain repayment over the long term) that a huge, 80% devaluation of the Peso was necessary. There were only vague accounts of the expenditures Captain Lacoste was essentially granted carte blanche to do anything necessary to ensure that the World Cup went on schedule, which reflected in act 1.261. This act, and the race against the clock partially explain why Junta spent a staggering seven times the original amount budgeted for the tournament. Behind schedule the Junta was racing against time, not just to build the stadiums but the infrastructural upgrades before the World Cup. In this frenzy to build the stadiums and other infrastructure in record time were paired with a campaign of austerity. Upgrading the airport, highways, and urban areas the EAM was purposely aiming to spend big, even going to the extent of assassinating another member of the Junta. These initial calculations didn’t take into account the fact that Massera and Lacoste where purposely inflating the sums spent to build popularity at a time when Hoz was inflicting “creative destruction” on the Argentine economy.

Building allies

In the view of Martinez de Hoz and other, neo-classical economists who dominated the Economics Ministry, such an economy would provide the comparative advantage that would once again vault Argentina to world prominence in agricultural exports.

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110 Bausalado, Eduardo, *Studies on Argentine Economic History*, 120
111 Bauso, 82 an Oral History of the World Cup, 82
112 Bauso, 78 an Oral History of the World Cup, 808
Martinez de Hoz, the mastermind of this economic plan to restore Argentina’s competitiveness in the world economy, sought to employ it to weaken the role of urban labor and the country’s urbanization, creating more of an agrarian economy. Martinez de Hoz decreed a cut of 50% on the key export tax on agricultural exports.\textsuperscript{113} which aided agricultural profits and worsened the already worsening public debt brought under Martinez de Hoz, the World Cup was a project which would build the political support essential to complete this major economic transformation to a move away from industry and to agriculture and finance. The consequences of this described by the economist Basualdo notes, “Every year from the second half of 1976 to 1982, Argentine industrial employment experienced 27 consecutive trimesters of industrial decline, in spite of [some] industrial expansion occurring in ten of them.”\textsuperscript{114} In this climate of steadily increasing economic crisis, the Junta’s financing of World Cup infrastructure was founded on a huge gamble that the tournament would generate state profits large enough to defray the gargantuan overspending, resulting in the massive indebting of Argentine companies and the nation. The latter was shouldered by Argentina’s long-suffering population, which endured decades of high inflation, unemployment, and general economic instability. While unemployment and salaries fell before and after the World Cup through the Junta’s gorging itself on debt financing of tournament infrastructure spending, the debts were often taken up by Oligarchical businesses\textsuperscript{115}. By giving favorable loans and dishing out favorable contracts for building infrastructure for projects such as the new highways and urban renewal sparked by the World Cup

\textsuperscript{113} Studies on Argentine Economic History, Eduardo Bausalado 120]
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, 124
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, 120
bid. Through these carrots the Junta gained their support. However, the overall plundering of state moneys left a terrible economic legacy. Argentina, which in 1910 was one of the wealthiest countries in the world, by the 1980s had become an economic disaster area. And in 2002, it suffered the world’s largest sovereign debt default.

In the press different figures were being thrown around around the cost; but they consistently went up. These upward revisions went unopposed in a country in which drawing a political cartoon of the heads of the Junta was banned. Even these things didn’t go unnoticed by only slowly letting the Argentine people know how overbudget and inefficiently the Junta spent the money for the World Cup. The accounting and math for the World Cup to the public was made deliberately confusing to make any real accounting of the costs of the World Cup impossible for anyone to really pinpoint. Even as people were aware of the outrageous numbers spent on the World Cup they were to afraid to speak up, and often confused by the constantly shifting numbers and complex calculations which confounded the real costs by reclassifying costs related to infrastructure as unrelated to the World Cup.  

Personal profiting

In addition to business ties, the Junta and domestic and multinational companies operating in Argentina were linked together with a network of familial and personal connections. This binge of spending on construction for the World Cup helped these family-commercial alliances rig the economic game for themselves and their allies. As

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116 Bauso, 78 an Oral History of the World Cup, 811
Captain Lacoste At this time, a relatively low-interest rate on foreign borrowing made it easy for the Junta to wager the nation’s future on external indebtedness. These twin processes: the rapid growth of sovereign debt, and the economy’s severe contraction, rested in part on the “creative destruction” of enterprises the government considered uncompetitive on the international stage, and the weakening what they perceived as abnormal internal demand.\textsuperscript{117} The building of highways, airports and stadiums while providing Argentines with valuable infrastructure, worsened inflation and aided Hoz’s creative destruction of the Argentine economy. This creative destruction, another part of Martinez de Hoz’s neo-classical economic plan, explicitly served the purpose of weakening the Argentine consumer’s buying power and transferring wealth from individuals and small firms to massive firms which could compete internationally. Aiming to turn Argentine companies and Argentina into a great place to engage in the business of debt, that business practice worked in tandem with the phenomenon of the desaparecidos and the regime’s embrace of world football to ensure the “survival of the fittest.” In this bizarre political/economic climate, unskilled workers were the main victims of the Junta’s debt binge, while they received few of its benefits. The Junta’s creative destruction, which deregulated the economy, shared the same overall trajectory and economic vision as did Martinez de Hoz.

Havelange and the Junta both took advantage of consumers’ changing tastes by using the World Cup as a tool to promote products and the image of Argentina as a successful nation. FIFA and the Junta’s conception of the World Cup revolved around the promotion of consumerism and spectacle. The “Process” World Cup ads were

\textsuperscript{117} Buisnesspeople, Technocrats,and Millitaries, Alfredo Pucciarelli, 129
constantly emphasizing how Argentines could now buy color televisions and watch the
World Cup, “en colores” This World Cup was the first to be televised globally using
color television. However, due to the transmitters’ broadcasting primarily in black-and-
white, the benefit was only available to movie theaters equipped with special projectors,
and international viewers who could watch the entire tournament in color.

FIFA and Junta’s Politics’ In the Months Leading up to the World Cup

Havelange represented FIFA and corporate interests that sought a grand World
Cup linked with the Junta’s leadership’s use of debt, and with its aspirations to create an
economy based on world competition. For FIFA, the rules for the tourney’s hosting
depended on the home country’s ability to ensure the safety of travelers, provide that
the necessary infrastructure was built on time, and erect infrastructure needed for
broadcasting the tournament in color. After the 1976 coup’s occurrence, with
Havelange’s having consolidated a hold over FIFA and having reached an agreement
with these newly independent states, now he had to deliver results. For, as Alan
Tomlinson has noted, “Havelange’s time became like the court of [Louis XIV’s] Ancien
Regime, though Havelange dispensed with the collective royal “We,” and asserted the
individualistic, autocratic, and charismatic [I]”¹¹⁸ Havelange’s autocracy rested on the
1978 tournament’s being successful. With an iron grip over FIFA, he was able to make
bigger promises and take more risks necessary to commercialize and expand the game.
As long as he delivered the funding for football development to his allies he had a

¹¹⁸ Tomlinson, Alan, Fifa the Men the Myths the Money, 60
mandate for running FIFA, as he wished, for this to work the sponsors, and therefore Western audiences, and consumers had to be satisfied with the World Cup.

With time it became common knowledge that the World Cup was not “apolitical,” and that Havelange and the FIFA became almost one entity. The goodwill which was established before the match continued after it ended. Thus, FIFA waited until the very last minute to remove Carlos Lacoste from his position, even after the return of democracy and President Raul Alfonsin’s “trial of the juntas” established the culpability of him and his boss, Massera, in the Junta’s heinous crimes and also, in an orgy of corruption. FIFA was known for being a “family.” In that family, once you were a part of it, you had their back and they had yours. During the World Cup, the organizations of the Junta and FIFA essentially merged into one entity designated with the sole purpose of ensuring that the World Cup ran smoothly.

Havelange and FIFA behaved as if they were one and the same. When Havelange or Blatter met with corporate representatives; no others needed be consulted. Not having any ethics committees, Havelange’s rules were FIFAs, and he took advantage of this to push through the Argentine World Cup. When Havelange arrived in Argentina twelve and a half days before the inauguration of the tournament, Lacoste personally organized every detail to ensure that everything was perfect. Moreover, he even ordered the police purchase imported Coke, as it was known that Havelange was a fan of the drink, and Argentine Coke’s formula had more sugar.119

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119 Pablo Llonto, *La Veruenza de Todos*, 87
This anecdote reflects how the Junta viewed the FIFA leader’s power as linked to their own fortunes.

The Junta was aware that among FIFA’s priorities was providing tourists with secure accommodations, along with completing WC projects on time. Even twelve and a half days before “D-Day,” the day of the WC’s launch, the Junta was intent on showing Havelange and FIFA that they had things under control, and that no stone would be left unturned in the mission of having an orderly World Cup entirely free from political resistance.

Sabat’s cartoon originally printed in Clarin from page 208 Bauso, Havelange third from left

Havelange and the Junta personally met on several occasions, which allowed the Junta to establish personal rapport. That aspect was made possible by the hiring of Carlos Lacoste, Massera’s front man for his dealings with FIFA. The famously talented cartoonist, Hermenegildo Sabat, parodied the extremely close ties between the Junta and Havelange. In the cartoon above, three members of the Junta are shown sitting
next to Havelange, who sits second from right and to the left of Videla, the mustached, big nosed character. The Sabat cartoon was the first time during the Junta that an artist dared to parody a government official120. The cartoon, published on the day of the tournament championship game, caught the Junta by surprise. Apparently, the notoriously sensitive Videla was too preoccupied with his own success to react forcefully against the parody. Sabat risked his life to draw this cartoon, as one member of the Junta, general Suarez Manson, told an acquaintance “If this idiot keeps drawing these little pictures, we’re going to throw him in the river” 121. Yet he continued to parody the Junta despite these extremely credible threats on his life. This Cartoon was published without permission on the day of the final. As the Junta was too busy celebrating its World Cup triumph it lost some of its control over the Argentine media space. Argentina had changed, but all these changes weren’t necessarily positive for the Junta. Interestingly, Havelange is singled out as the most hideous person within this group.

Cesar Menotti and the Selección Nacional: Showing “La Nuestra”

The project to make Argentina World Cup champions at home was supported by all of the governments which followed Radical President Arturo Illia (1964-66), under whose presidency the country was named host for the 1978 tournament. Menotti’s “National Project”122 amidst this sea of instability of was an island of intellect and continuity.

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120 Bauso, 78 Oral History of the World Cup, 200
121 Ibid, 200
122 Tomlinson, Alan, Young, Christopher, National Identity and Global Sports Events, 139
As Videla himself stated, “The coach was considered left wing and was an inheritance of the time before. In this case, I valued continuity, and didn’t want a different person, a right winger, as were advocating many, including in the Junta.”

The style of play was seen by Videla as a style of play that reflected Argentine exceptionalism, and correctly accredited Menotti with capably leading the team in instituting new discipline and sprit du course in this National Team.

Menotti’s tenure as coach began in November 1974, playing on January 10th against Spain. Beginning his coaching under Peron, Hector Vega Onesime, editor of the sports magazine *El Grafico*, a central mouthpiece of the regime as “bearing the greatest resemblance to the idealized vision of the Argentine fan. This was bringing “our style” to the National team.”

This strategy of football; an “Argentine one”, was interpreted as bringing new discipline to the national team. Menotti’s style which he saw as being about individuals and not about the Argentine nation, in the media and in the campaign that “25 Million Argentines will play in the World Cup” had the exact opposite message and ends which Menotti had for the national team, and his vision of what he was doing.

Menotti, while sporting a progressive and youthful personal style, was an active member of the Communist party. Appointed originally in 1974, he was known for a style of play that was very Argentine, yet at the same time new. Menotti, an intellectual who wore his hair long and was well-versed in contemporary culture, presented an excellent image to the outside World. He viewed the team’s work as as a kind of art,

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123 (Bauso, 798)
124 Bauso, *78 an Oral History of the World Cup*, 102
125 Ibid 101
126 Ibid, 799)
who’s medium of expression was the National team, whose audience was the Argentine people.

Menotti’s political activities related to his coaching in the sense that both connected with his interest in philosophy and challenging orthodoxy. The Communist party’s official position, which while not an ally of the Junta disliked the left-wing guerilla groups more than the Junta. 127 His revolutionary impulses at a time of great political repression were channeled into the politically acceptable field of the football pitch and even embraced by Videla, who admitted to not understanding or caring about football. Even as football was for the people, and the regular Argentines for Menotti its sole possibility for bettering humanity is “through the individual: to make them understand the collective value of life, the necessity to respect the rights of others, the importance of hard work, the importance of disciplined work” 128 Oscar Ortiz, a squad member, was also a socialist. Years afterward Menotti reflecting on his period of coaching the national team noted “We were not the champions of the dictatorship, we just happened to be champions during it, and we played good football,” 129. The players claimed to have not known about the atrocities. Despite this claim, everyone was aware of the Madre’s concerns precisely because the regime’s media aimed to paint them as madwomen. The left-wing players and the coach in playing for the team were defending the Argentine people and the football style as supposed to the state.

During the World Cup, Menotti focused purely on the task of winning the championship. Even as he claimed to be aware of Argentina’s economic and political

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127 Tomlinson Alan, Young, Christopher, National Identity and Global Sports Events, 139
128 Bauso, An Oral History of the 1978 World Cup, 800
129 Young, Thompson, Alan, Young. National Identity and Global Sports Events,144
problems at the time, years after the fact referring to his tenure as head coach” How do I feel today, I wouldn’t do it again. Although now it's easy to talk about it. I had a good political foundation. While I did, no one could have imagined that in that time corpses were being thrown into the ocean. If it where common knowledge, workers, peasants, intellectuals, and football players would have gone out in the street and demanded this would stop”130. This fantasy which Menotti referenced shows a highly romanticized and unrealistic memory of the past, in which many Argentines associate with great fear. Menotti’s political consciousness seems to have withered with his rising celebrity and success within the Argentine Junta. Menotti in other words evolved into a “Communista de Whiskey”, a Whiskey Communist, common slang which refers to a common Argentine archetype of the wealthy communist, both benefiting and working within the very same system they supposedly where waiting to overthrow.

The team represented and united the Argentine nation, which was exactly what the Junta wanted from the World Cup. Even the Montoneros, who were strongly opposed to the Junta adopted the saying for the World Cup” Argentina campeon, Videla al Paredon” ’Argentina for World Champions, Videla to the firing squad,”131, reflected that rooting for and celebrating the National team’s victories where feelings shared by Argentines of all political persuasions. He applied playing tactics that differed from those of any previous Argentine coach, and successfully overturned conventions about what the Argentine national team was capable of. Menotti told the team that they weren’t playing for the people in the boxes, but for ordinary Argentines: the painters,
construction workers, the average person struggling to get by. Yet this was in line with the Junta’s plans for the World which through an imposing festival gained real popularity.

As a key part of his strategy, Menotti emphasized the importance of playing with an “Argentine style”. Yet whether this was an Argentine style of play, or Menotti’s it delivered results and was visually impressive to watch. He described his style as an “extension of dreams”; for Menotti “Argentine fans dreamed of glory, and the players offered their interpretation of that dream”. Even as Menotti was willing to be seen and embraced by members of the Junta, he viewed his role on the national team as above politics and a spectacle, for the “People” and not as Videla referred for the “Nation”. Connected to this nation by birth even as a member of the Communist party he was also an Argentine. From these statements, I gather his commitment to “give back to the people the spectacle of football. To give it back through victory if this was possible, but after all the pleasure of playing honest football” was above politics. His response was to ignore the Junta as much as possible and have Argentina play its best football. Even while he accepted an embrace by General Leopoldo Galtieri after the World Cup.

This coach aimed to coach a team that played beautifully, transcending politics. In an article in *El Grafico*, Menotti stated that “I’m aware of the problems were facing at this moment in this nation, I know what our political and economic situation is, but I also

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132 Tomlinson, Alan, Young, Christopher, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, 141
133 Gault, Matt, *Cesar Luis Menotti and the Style that Galvinised Argentina*
134 Tomlinson Alan, Young, Christopher, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, 141
135 Bauso, 78 an Oral History of the World Cup, 800)
know that those problems aren’t solved by playing football. Playing football, we do not defend our borders, the Motherland, the flag. With the national team nothing essentially patriotic dies or is saved,“¹³⁶ Menotti expressed a constant emphasis on sport as beyond the nation, as a performance shaped by eternal values of basic human decency, in other words, basic human decency, which wasn’t limited to the players as Argentines but instead as human beings which reflected obligations to humanity as a whole and affirming the value of human life.

Yet, in the political reality of Argentina in 1978, Menotti and his team could not avoid being used as propaganda tools by the regime. Even as Menotti and the players in the locker room amongst themselves expressed their disgust with the Junta, Menotti told his players that they weren’t playing for them, but instead for the people. The players accepted the regime’s embrace and unintentionally aided its use of this ritual to promote the Junta’s self-appointed role as the giver of a “new peace.” For example, Menotti personally didn’t support the dictatorship, but as a coach, he never publicly voiced his political views. Menotti was willing to not directly discuss politics in his capacity as National Coach. Menotti shielded by a celebrity may have not known or believed that people were being killed by the state because of his celebrity and personal connections with the Junta. Even as his project of winning the World Cup predated the Junta’s seizure of power still it came to be associated with and used by the Junta to mobilize ultra-nationalistic sentiment through this belief that there was a conspiracy to isolate Argentina economically and politically by malevolent forces. Menotti resisted this

¹³⁶ Alan, Thompson, Young, Alan, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, 139
only through his authority and expertise as a football coach. At a time in which “Silence was health” Menotti chose health.

The Junta was willing to work with the team despite many of them personally having deep disagreements over politics. The Junta immediately reconfirmed Menotti, a prominent Communist, as head of the National team, showing that it sought to win at all costs. They did so in spite of Menotti’s well-known membership and participation in the Communist Party. Argentina’s football stadiums had been known as places of youth, and in which political actions could be organized. The same officers who participated in the 1976 coup had been lower-ranking officers in the 1966 Ongania coup. They had an awareness of how potent an environment the football stadium could be for political organizing and rebellion.137 Politicizing this unpredictable environment of the football stadium was a risky proposition for the regime. Establishing order over football stadiums that were traditionally havens for youth and the left was an important part of the “pacification” of Argentine society.

Menotti focused on his plan of achieving a perfect beautiful Argentine style, entirely missing how by doing just that he was playing a roll in feeding into the Junta’s propaganda machine, which built off his victories and innovations of Argentine football to build support for a political system and politicians who had no respect for these basic universal moral principles which he believed he was safeguarding in coaching the Argentine national team to play “La nuestra”. In the aftermath of the World Cup victory admiral Lacoste described the victory as a “Historic event in which we’ve turned from

137 MacAloon, John ,Rite, ritual and passage, 99
losers into winners. Not just in football but in everything. The entire time in which the World Cup was ongoing this was the plan, and Menotti unwittingly played a central role in giving a sugar rush to the PNR. James Neilson an Argentine journalist at the time even noted that “Now that Videla has found out he’s immensely popular, the idea of holding a referendum is floating through his head. Maybe the government will elaborate a political plan which will then be held to a vote.”. This high point of the Proceso, Menotti was indispensable for creating. Yet like most political opportunities this won was also squandered by the same reasons as these previous opportunities where lost, as they became intoxicated by their own success, amidst this even recklessly approving an inspection by the CIDH which uncovered what the Junta was up to. Even as the Junta experienced a short-term political boost, people still new that just because Argentine won the World Cup, Argentina hadn’t suddenly become a winning nation. As this joy of winning wore away so ebbed the Proceso’s high tide, a lost opportunity for the Junta to build of this moderate success.

The Public Dialogue over the National Team

For Argentines, the seleccion was a source of rare stability in a period of great national upheaval. Amidst deep censorship, the subject of “safe” subjects narrowed over time. In response, newspapers, radio stations, and television channels moved from political to sports commentary. These debates over football style and play were adopted through discussing “just football.” Press articles concerning the nation’s football strategy had the intensity of political debates, where Argentines had the freedom to

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138 Bauso, 1978 an Oral History of the World Cup, 204
139 Ibid, 205
140 Ibid, 206
Menotti described the philosophy of his style as unleashing “the inner nature of the Argentine football player, his creativity.”¹⁴¹ Menotti’s style was beloved partially because of how it seemed to encapsulate the very best traits of Argentines. Political discourse, especially concerning questions of national identity, reflected the inability of Argentines to openly debate these questions of national identity through these debates over this spectacle. Even as the Junta proclaimed that sport was apolitical, it’s clear that the increasing media and public obsession with the national team and the fervor in which these debates were held was a reaction to the realities of state censorship.

These disagreements over strategy reflected questions concerning how much European football strategies should influence Argentine play style. This struggle over tactics; whether to mimic Europe or play like other Latin American nations, connected with Argentina’s self-image as being part of the “West” or the “Global South”. These disagreements between these different strategies reflected divisions over the true “Ser Nacional.”. More freedom was tolerated in discussing and debating the national self through football. Articles in the football commentary pages, which may have been considered subversive in another section, were encouraged in discussions of football. The uniquely Argentine compulsion to argue over issues of national identity is connected with a capacity to discuss the latter in a way that is only loosely connected with politics. Football commentary defanged political discourse in moving it into the political arena.

¹⁴¹ Young, Christopher, Tomlinson, Alan National Identity and Sports events, 140
The regime press deliberately intensely covered these pseudo-political debates concerning the team’s strategy, directing former political energy and space into football commentary. This thinking was well understood by Havelange as he noted in June 1968 that "It is only possible to gather an amount of 200,000 people in a protest rally or a stadium where it is played a football match. It is preferable to gather them in a stadium [for a football game]. This is why I think that governments from all over the world should give greater support to football."142. Even as Argentine sports journalists and regular Argentines through discussions of football strategy could loosely comment on their political reality these debates didn’t result in concrete challenges to the dictatorship. In discussing the national team as Menotti did with Videla who described the final as obtained with the heroic virtues of “capacity, courage and discipline”, days before Menotti had described the victory as achieved through “technical ability”143. Menotti and Argentines in football were allowed the freedom to think and reflect, because the Junta saw football as naturally echoing its own narratives about “the importance of staying together, like the national team, against all kinds of enemy”144. Providing an outlet for some debate, the constant debates over the national team, served both as a welcome distraction from the miserable state of Argentine politics and as a way for redirecting energy as an outlet from the political sphere into sport.

In 1966, when FIFA chose Argentina as host for the 1978 World Cup, Menotti and the Seleccion, after training for four, long years, Argentina won the World Cup.

142 Chaim, Aníbal Renan Martinot. “Playing for Power: João Havelange’s Path to FIFA 1958-1974, 4

143 Bauso, An Oral History of the World Cup, 141

144 Ibid, 141
Without the players' sincere belief in the beauty of the game and their total sacrifice in search of this championship, few would have watched the tournament. Precisely because of the beauty of this sport, it is both an effective mechanism for selling products and authoritarian states to a global audience.


The World Cup is in part a battlefield, and a moment of suspension of order and new possibility, In 1978 this football battlefield arrived in Argentina. The South American country's situation was not auspicious for a first-time hosting of the tournament which featured the world’s best collections of football talent. The Junta through this ritual wanted to attract foreign investment, it aimed to do this by showing the World their fantasy of the Argentine reality in which Argentina was a free, safe, and ideal place to invest. The Junta through the ceremony sought to have "25 Million Argentines Playing the World Cup", to strengthen Argentina’s reputation abroad whilst strengthening its economic image abroad. These same conditions made it such an effective mechanism for propagating these messages abroad, being a moment of suspension of order and possibility leading dissidents at home and abroad to use the World Cup as a tool for challenging the regime by groups such as the Madre’s and human rights groups leading boycotts of the event in Europe. The regime ultimately triumphed at home, through it’s control of the media generating an intense backlash to this “Anti-Argentine” campaign, but lost the battle abroad as the regime was subjected
to much greater human rights suspicion abroad and economic crises brought on by investment on short sighted economic projects such as the World Cup.

Beginning in 1974 Argentina was plagued by civil war between the right and left wings of Peronism. By 1975 political terrorism for Argentines had become a fact of life, regular Argentines’ wallets and lives everyday were increasingly endangered. In this time of trouble, the military seized power from the Isabel Peron’s tottering democratically elected but increasingly authoritarian government on March 1976. It then proceeded to carry out a reign of terror. In a campaign to root-out “subversion,” It killed more than 30,000 Argentines, or sympathizers of left-wing parties, organizations such as the Montoneros and FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces), or the Trotskyist guerrillas of the ERP (Revolutionary Army of the People). By 1978, the Junta had liquidated most of the left-wing and revolutionary movements. However, Argentina remained under a harsh, authoritarian regime which continued to “disappear”, kill, suspected opponents, banned all political parties, censored the media, and tightly restricted the activity of civil society groupings other than the Catholic Church. Internationally, Argentina was the target of boycotts and diplomatic ostracism led by the USA and Western European democracies. It seemed a most inauspicious time for such a country to host the tournament.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the Argentine military junta used the World Cup for propaganda. Under the neoliberal policies of Economy Minister, Jose Alfredo Martinez de Hoz, the country faced depression, rather than the stated goal of prosperity and world competitiveness, even as the Junta’s bloody and repressive policies made it an international pariah. Thus, the regime sought to utilize the
tournament to turn around its image, both internationally and within the country. It hired public relations firms and paid local journalists to run campaigns praising the government and castigating critics as “anti-Argentine.” During the games in which the national team was competing, it sent top generals and admirals to appear amid the public and lead cheers for the team. It extracted neo-fascist concepts like the “national self” from its Project of National Reorganization and applied them to the collective psychological effect of football victories. When the national team unexpectedly won the Cup, it presented the regime with more opportunities to unify the nation behind its leadership. We will examine how this occurred and ask if the effort was a success or failure. And we will evaluate how such a regime may employ sport to mobilize a people, despite a record of political, I will also show how, under newly appointed national team coach, Cesar Menotti, the Seleccion (national team) was prepared to win the tournament.

**The World Cup and the Uses of Football as a Collective Ritual**

During the World Cup’s inaugural spectacle, Argentine children clad in the nation’s colors of light blue and white paraded in a highly choreographed procession. As the massive crowd in Buenos Aires’ huge Monumental Stadium thundered, “Argentina, Argentina, Argentina!,” that message and the heavily planned and choreographed ritual showed the clearest vision of what the Junta hoped the World Cup would achieve, which unified the nation and drowned out dissent, whether local or foreign. Under a harsh military dictatorship, there were not many opportunities to express opposition. But “untouchable” groupings like the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo,
mothers, and grandmothers of dead or disappeared Argentines, paraded each Thursday in the capital’s main plaza, carrying large photos of their dead or missing children and grandchildren. Overseas, critics like the USA’s President Jimmy Carter had cut off economic and military aid, and the president’s new Human Rights Ambassador, Patricia Derian, confronted Junta chairman Jorge Videla with documentation of his government’s violations of human and democratic rights and demanded that he end the abuses.

The World Cup aimed to silence the opposition through It also provided a “model for silence,” paradoxically, through creating great noise. Most Argentines associate this period with the saying “Silence is health” 145 coined under Labor and Social Welfare Minister Jose Lopez Rega during the second Peron presidency (1973-76), over silencing auto noise. Eventually, during the World Cup the Junta viewed the spectacle very differently from other regular Argentines and the Junta viewed the spectacle very differently from other Argentine. The generals saw the tournament as a harbinger of the victory of their political project, known as the PNR (Project of National Reorganization). Ordinary Argentines, contrariwise, viewed the contest as separate from politics, and a rare moment of joy amid a particularly troubling period in national life.

In this context of football as fiesta, normal rules and hierarchies gave way, and temporarily provided freedom. The joy that this loosening inspired coincidentally solidified the Junta’s rule, through the media of the spectacle/ritual that is football. The junta deftly employed a strategy of “carrots and sticks,” easing repression during the

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145 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 39
tournament and even using viewing privileges to soften the resolve of its most hardened political prisoners. The Junta used this foreign political ostracism and pressure to foment a backlash from patriotic Argentines, which it sought to convert to support for its policies. In this football carnival, “Our metaphor of power is thus made through the joining of the high with the low, as if, in a social context, the use of an object from above could provoke a union of all, and consequently end differences among the diverse domains that constitute our social experience” 146. This recipe for hegemony went as the “State = political society + civil society”147. During the World Cup, this was reflected in the saturation of media with propaganda against those writing against the regime. This formula was practiced by the Argentine state which aimed to saturate Argentine newspapers with information pertaining to the Junta, this project of the World Cup, building legitimate consent through football.

This success of the carrot aspect of the Junta’s strategy to consolidate political control connected with the now almost unanimous support for the tournament among Argentines. Whether this political success would have occurred had the national team not been victorious is a question worth exploring elsewhere. But the regime’s success in consolidating political support through the World Cup was reflected in its ability to politically isolate the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, one of the regime’s most visible and respected critics. Through its employment of the World Cup as a tool of propaganda,

146 Tomlinson, Allen, Young Christopher, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, 215

the Junta discovered the power of more subtle mechanisms for state control. Applying Gramsci’s formula to this later situation allows one to understand the Media and Junta’s effective use of the World Cup to foment popular anger against the Madres. Even as the outrage against the mothers peaked as the World Cup concluded yet still the Argentine Junta and its allies for the World Cup’s duration effectively used the World Cup to temporarily pressure the Madres. While the spectacle featured heightened Argentine nationalism, it also enabled groupings like the Madres to emerge and gain international support, even having a live gathering of the Madre’s broadcast on live Dutch television, transmitted amidst at the same time in which the World Cup was being inaugurated on July first.\footnote{Ibid, 623} Emphasized in official regime press this message of how these protests hurt the Argentine people’s efforts to have a great World Cup. A piece from Para Ti on June 24th 1978, For You, a women’s magazine which was closely tied with the regime echoed these messages. It told foreign journalists among many different messages that “Because of this for us, Argentine Women these things hurt us. Because it would be important that in addition to the "Madwomen" these foreign journalists would report on a growing, orderly peaceful nation, that they see as being orderly, and peaceful, which they see as full of joy and enthusiasm in a nation shout of “Argentina, Argentina” predominate.”\footnote{Bauso, 325} Variations of this message saturated the Argentine media space. The “carrot” for Argentines of the ritual was both the national boost in the status of Argentina being a great nation, and the supposed economic benefits gained from the World Cup
and the immense feelings of personal pride at being part of a great rising Argentine nation.

By 1978, the Junta had reestablished the Argentine state’s monopoly on the use of armed force. Before the Junta’s seizure of power, Argentina essentially experienced a civil war between the forces of the Peronist Right and Left; political terrorism became a fact of life. In power, the Junta violently repressed the left even after most of its armed members had been decommissioned. Now the generals in hosting the World Cup were "obviating the need for the direct coercive of use of force and transforming simple power into legitimate authority."¹⁵⁰ In this process, the officers structured part of their strategy upon employing their concept of the armed forces as a societal model. In this conception, Argentines were a people which needed to be educated and conquered. The World Cup’s ("WC") inaugural procession, a ritual that recalled a military parade, was helpful in enabling the coerced population to identify the military as the national saviors of the Argentine nation.

As the Junta was aware of how violence was key for eliminating the opposition, for establishing hegemonic control this elimination of the opposition had to be combined with broad support from regular Argentines and in embedding civil society with backers of the regime. By this point, it was common knowledge if not openly voiced that if you performed acts of resistance against the regime, you risked your life. As this period of civil strife came to an end the World Cup was viewed as a way for proclaiming and showing the World the fruits of this peace; and the state’s actions were supported

¹⁵⁰ Lincoln, Discourse and the Construction of Society, 2
unanimously. For Argentines it represented a rare period of freedom and happiness, surrounded by the bleak landscape of state terror, repression, and economic deprivation that life under the Junta had wrought. Argentines hearts were divided between love of football, and pride in hosting the World Cup versus their fear of the state and anger in which even families of the disappeared, those most likely to have feelings of anger towards the regime participated. As one Mother of the Plaza de Mayo put it, who had a family member disappeared noted "I have another child, I have grandchildren. They had their brother and cousin disappeared. They suffered. Even as they yelled and celebrated the goals, partied in the streets. Football is extremely ingrained in Argentines."\textsuperscript{151} Argentines celebrated the World Cup and through it themselves and the Argentine nation. Many Argentines were convinced by the regime’s conception of the World Cup as a medium to display this national greatness. Even as Argentines opposed to the regime and those who bought the regimes narratives celebrated together. Even as these celebrations crossed political barriers, amidst this universal joy dissidents challenging this narrative of Argentine exceptionalism, such as the Madres, where seen as "Anti-Argentine" for not participating in this jubilant celebratory atmosphere of the World Cup. This aided the regimes efforts to classify the Madres as "Madwomen".

Employing medical discourse, the Junta qualified those who opposed it as insane. As noted by the important French daily \textit{Le Monde}, “the Argentine press calls them [the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo] the mad women of Plaza de Mayo”\textsuperscript{152}. The Madres’ decision to continue their protests during the tournament generated great

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bauso, \textit{78 Oral History of the World Cup}, 621
\item Bauso, \textit{78 Oral History of the World Cup}, 620
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international attention and heightened awareness of strong public opposition to the Junta’s repressive policies.

The Tournament Inaugural as Spectacle/Ritual

As noted in the previous chapter, Marshall McLuhan’s famous manifesto, 'The Medium is the Message'\textsuperscript{153} the aesthetic and form of ceremony centrally shape it’s meaning. Through football, the regime aimed to teach the masses discipline; thus, shaping the formation of their vaunted “ser nacional” (national self). The WC’s ritual, message, and goals were reflected in the inaugural procession’s demonstration by Argentine children. Leach described ritual as "A medium for cultural expression for the expression of cultural ideals and models that in turn serves to orient, though not prescribe, other forms of social behavior. As a medium for cultural messages ritual enables people to modify their social order at the same time it reinforces basic categories of it”\textsuperscript{154} Through the WC, the Junta aimed to impart its military values by imposing its notion of discipline and replace what it saw as the nation’s youthful immaturity. Even as the Junta was keenly aware of the great risks of the opposition using the World Cup as a way to usurp these messages related with the state and Argentine’s conception of themselves as being themselves great by virtue of being part of a great nation, in giving Argentines the responsibility to safeguard the nations reputation and economic future.

\textsuperscript{153} Roche, Mega Events and Modernity, 45

\textsuperscript{154} Bell, Catherine. 2009. Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, 65
These officers hoped for a World Cup opening ceremony which would win over and discipline the hearts and minds of the Argentine masses. As Admiral Massera put it this was the “people’s party,” the Junta viewed the World Cup as a key part of showing the new disciplined Argentine national character. This ritual message of discipline and order were emphasized so much and had popular appeal because of this recent memory of total economic and political chaos. This ritual message and goals for the spectacle were reflected in the demonstration by Argentine children at the start of the World Cup. Through the medium of this parade of youth, dressed in the national colors of light blue and white, the Junta hoped that the people would yearn for their institutional ideals of a restored traditional family, social, and political order. As Junta chairman and de facto president Jorge Videla aspired to reconstitute authority over rebellious youth, he sought to triumph over their progressive political ideas, which championed revolution, and questioned hoary Argentine traditions. From the Junta’s perspective, the entire nation, with the exception of themselves, lacked maturity. As mega-events aid “the exchange, transfer, and diffusion of information, values, and technologies,” the WC inaugural uniquely captured that concept and was brought to the masses for Argentina the first tastes of for Argentines the novel technology of color television.

The Junta’s elaborate planning of the inaugural spectacle reflected its belief that it could employ ritual/spectacle (the medium) to recruit the public to its message, the “Project for National Reconstruction” (PNR). Juan Mentesana, the Junta’s public voice, had close communications with the top military brass. As we have seen in the previous

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155 Roche, Mega Events and Modernity, 7
chapter, the inaugural ceremony evoked themes of discipline and order. Showing serious facial expressions, the youth marched to form complex shapes, and then broke apart to form new ones. As Mentesana noted, “The explosion of Joy that is filling this space is the truthful manifestation of a nation receiving the world. Quickly, with order, conscious discipline, and action, they draw a word: Argentina 78!” With this heavily vetted and choreographed spectacle, the Junta conveyed its notion of order as creating peace. The procession’s dance, which recalled soldiers marching in formation, conveyed the notions of order and discipline. With analytic acuity, Feitlowitz notes that during this period "the Argentine Junta was the closest to fascism.” The march emphasized national greatness and expressed the Nietzchian notion that only through the nation and state, did the individual gain meeting. This message and heavily scripted ritual show the clearest vision of how the Junta hoped to employ he WC to shape its corporatist ideals among the population. Thus, young people in an ordered, anonymous march would cry, “Argentina!,” and drown-out the powerful dissent expressed in Argentine society against the regime’s repressive policies.

156 Bauso, 78 Oral History of the World Cup, 385
157 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 39
Joao Havelange, left, Jorge Videla, Right

I-South America- Video of 1978 World Cup
World Opinion Challenges the Argentine Junta’s World Cup Record

Many foreign journalists who were in Argentina to cover the WC tended to report on the surrounding environment of militant protest the dictatorship. Despite the Junta’s best efforts, it was unable to stop all demonstrations and instead aimed to have Argentines see these protestors as “Anti-Argentine” 158. These different rites, staged before millions of viewers, emphasized the message that Argentina was a peaceful and prosperous place. The mostly critical European sports journalists had arrived with an awareness of the political issues about Argentina’s hosting the tournament. This was reflected in an interview with Videla interview on June 2, 1978 issue of Market magazine. Regarding the world press’s negative appraisal of Argentina’s human rights record, Videla stated: “Activities from abroad are carried out to denigrate the Argentine nation. They are attempting to create an image of disorder and insecurity which will lead to our isolation and a withdrawal of foreign investment” 159. Amidst a period of great

158 Bauso, 78 an Oral history of the World Cup, 241
159 Seoane Maria, and Vicente Muleiro, El Dictador, 306
instability the Junta emphasized that these investigations into Argentina were carried out with the sole intention of destabilizing Argentina.

As the WC began, the Junta’s fears regarding the economic impacts of international activists’ human rights campaign to isolate Argentina economically and diplomatically rapidly escalated. Arriving in Argentina at the tournament’s launch, foreigners were in constant contact with Argentine colleagues who had been subject to censorship or wrote propaganda for the regime. When writers from the French dailies, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* worked alongside regime-accredited colleagues, they naturally clashed.

Taking advantage of the public’s enthusiasm for the national team’s performance, the Junta hoped to employ its propaganda machine to rally public opinion against the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. This strategy was partly successful, but also unwittingly helped them to become an internationally recognized human rights protest group, which had highlighted the issue of the disappeared. The Madres were one of few groups which expressed strong criticism of the regime and yet remained immune from the regime’s harsh and violent repression. However, the Junta employed supporters to apply pressure against the female protesters, including the use of foul and aggressive insults. As reported by French journalist Jean-Pierre Bousquet, the regime’s supporters shouted at the women, “What are you doing here?” “Do you all realize the damage you’re doing to the nation’s image?” “Don’t you see that foreign journalists are going to take advantage [of your protests] to attack us?,” “Aren’t you all Argentines?”

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160 Bauso, *78 Oral History of the World Cup*, 626

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Argentines had completely bought the Junta’s explanations and beliefs about the World Cup. These popular attitudes held by many, propagated by the regime’s press and how it was a “medium through which hegemony was exercised.”161 The Junta didn’t aim to rule by force alone, by 1978 the Argentine state was leaning away from coercion and building consent across Argentine society through this ritual aiming to normalize the Junta’s governing logic.

In the short time that the WC was played, the Junta had created such a significant propaganda effect, that in this football fervor, many locals began to embrace the Junta’s position. Thus, many members of the public began to attack regime critics as “enemies of the state.” Never had the Junta had such a hold over the Argentine mind. The gamble paid off, as the national team won game after game. At the time, all that many Argentines could think about was football. Yet, this consolidation of support at home came at the cost of increased pressure abroad.

Using the language of sport victory, the Junta portrayed its building of football infrastructure as proof that the nation had won. This was reflected in a propaganda piece written after the tournament had ended. The advertisement, placed in a prominent Buenos Aires newspaper by the Junta’s press office, featured large font in bright, bold letters that proclaimed, “Despite everything and Against Everything, We Argentines successfully hosted the World Cup.” The ad emphasized how the nation’s accomplishment demonstrated greatness. By suggesting that the country had attained

its objectives despite overwhelming odds, it sought to create the notion that Argentina was the victim of an international conspiracy. The Junta portrayed itself as the nation’s benevolent guardian. Among its achievements, it cited the regime’s massive construction of football infrastructure, leading to the transformation and modernization of cities. Members of the local and foreign press who had criticized the Junta’s human rights record were characterized as disloyal (in the first case) and “anti-Argentine,” in the second.

The World Cup in the Prisons

In its prisons and concentration camps, where thousands of disappeared endured torture and 30,000 died, during the WC the Junta employed the “carrot” of giving permission to watch matches on television. This was a unique and complex form of psychological torture, aimed at breaking dissidents’ will, by making them think they were forgotten. Commented Mario Villani, one of the prisoners who enjoyed the privilege: “This constituted torture in that when the television was turned off, the little view of the outside world went away, and we had no idea if we were ever going to see it again. This made me feel impotent and extremely frustrated. It destroyed one’s personality. They made the kidnapped think that they weren’t the owner of their own life and death, and the prisoner could not even make the decision as to whether or not to watch a game.”

Sometimes, during contests in which the national team competed, the jailers offered both television and special food. As Maria Patricia Arcondo, another prisoner, observed: “We were Argentines, and we received morcilla, (Blood Sausage) and half a

\[162\] Ibid, 633

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piece of bread”\textsuperscript{163}. Yet, still they were still forced to kneel as a form of humiliation and to inflict physical pain.

This memory of the games wasn’t unanimously shared. Rather, Eduardo Anguita, another prisoner, stated: "You had to avoid punishing yourself, and anything which gave you a little bit of joy, as long as it didn’t go against your principles, you knew did you good. In truth, it was something which many greatly enjoyed. As if to say: "Let’s not mess around. If on top of everything else, we’re going to beat ourselves up for celebrating an Argentine triumph, then we’re just a bunch of fools.”\textsuperscript{164}

In some cases, the jailers went a step further. Under guard, they sometimes took prisoners outside the detention centers, and permitted them to view the wild street celebrations which always followed Argentine victories. They did this to show that the Junta had won. In the prison housed in the navy’s Higher School for Naval Mechanics (‘ESMA”), after the national team’s triumph over Holland in the championship game, jailers dressed several female detainees in civilian clothes and escorted them outside to see and feel the wild celebrations. As former prisoner Lila Pastoriza recounted: "You had dedicated yourself to fighting the country’s institutions, [but now,] look at how they celebrate, look at how all that joy has left you out.”\textsuperscript{165} Sometimes, jailers and prisoners celebrated together. We do not know what the regime’s motive for this practice was. Perhaps, it was a spur-of-the-moment mercy. The Junta’s use of viewing privileges as a form of psychological torment seems to have had mixed results. Yet, the regime’s goal may have sprung from their desire to restore what they believed were detainees’

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, 632
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid. 640
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid, 634
lack of “normal values.”  Thus, some prisoners were given a chance for “reform,” which meant adopting the Junta’s values. Through football, the state sought total victory, winning the hearts and minds of citizens, their allies, and enemies alike.

Astellera and Contemponi, two survivors of La Perla (“The Pearl”), recounted the values they believed the Junta wanted to impart as “work, studying hard to succeed, staying out of politics, and material well-being.” Since, after the military had liquidated most of their opposition, the Dirty War’s most violent phase had ended. Moreover, the permitting of detainees to view WC games and post-game celebrations was part of their strategy of using “carrots and sticks” to manipulate detainee behavior.

Public reaction to the tournament appeared to be surprisingly normal, considering the environment of political violence and state-imposed terror. The content of statements made by the presidents of the three football federations; FIFA (the world body), AFA (the Argentine federation), and UEFA (the European association) focused on themes of sport and peace. Joao Havelange, the Brazilian president of FIFA, “reading in difficult-to-understand Spanish, recognized the efforts made to organize the World Cup and thanked the government, sports leaders, and the Argentine nation for their sacrifices.”

The Resistance and the Tournament: The Failure of Disruption

Montoneros, the grouping of orthodox Peronist youth which formed part of the militant resistance to the regime, had planned to disrupt the inaugural speech of Junta

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166 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 75
16 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 75.
168 Bauso, 78 Oral History of the World Cup, 389
chairman Videla. Montoneros, which had announced that it was suspending bombings, kidnappings, and other violent tactics for the duration of the tournament, framed a plan to purchase tickets for militants, and then scream “Videla al Paredon” (“Videla to the firing squad!”) while Videla was making his remarks. The plan failed, due to militants’ observing that Federal Police were stationed throughout the stadium, and fearing arrest if they followed the plan. The failure revealed the Junta’s hold on Argentine society. Historian Beatriz Sarlo noted that even whistling during the speech might get one arrested. In order to obtain the crowd’s support in the form of applause for Videla’s speech, the Junta had ordered the police to stand in surveillance. This clumsy attempt to control the public’s response was typical of authoritarian regimes’ strategy of simulating public support by using the threat of arrest to prevent disruption. Even as Argentines sympathized with the Mother’s plight, during the World Cup, Argentines exhausted by years of political and economic instability, embraced this opportunity to celebrate Argentina, and in doing so themselves. A minority of Argentines actively harassed the Mothers, but the absolute terror and exhaustion caused by the regime’s state terrorism succeeded in confusing, terrifying and entertaining this traumatized public.

The WC was a key part of the “Proceso’s” (popular slang for the regime) effort to recast itself as a peacemaker during this period of transition from the Dirty War’s most violent phase (1976-78), to one of less violence and repression (1978-83). Videla’s presence at the inaugural reflected the regime’s effort to project a more civil and

169 Ibid, 650
170 Ibid, 391
171 Ibid, 651
benevolent face. The same was true of the general’s decision to appear in civilian clothes, one of the few times he had done so during the dictatorship. The popular, glossy magazine Somos (“We Are”) seemed to validate the strategy by placing the beaming, mufti-clad Videla on its cover, under the banner headline “Los Argentinos y el Mundial” (“Argentines and the World Cup,”). Below, a subtitle proclaimed, “A Nation which Changed.”¹⁷² For the regime’s supporters, it seemed as if the tournament had softened and civilized the Proceso. But, the regime still employed the threat of violence and imprisonment to ensure the public’s seemingly spontaneous support.¹⁷³ Still, the public’s applause for the smiling Videla was a political victory, as it showed the regime’s continuing hold over the masses. The ovation also seemed to validate the Proceso’s new strategy of appearing as peacemaker during the dictatorship’s new, less violent phase.

Videla celebrating the World Cup, Somos magazine

¹⁷²Eduardo Blaustein Martin Zubieta, Deciamos Ayer, 258
¹⁷³Bauso, 390
For the regime, one great political success was spectators’ applauding speeches by Videla and football officials during the inaugural ceremony and opening match. This occurred despite common knowledge of the planned disruption by Montoneros. Held in the enclosed space of the massive Estadio Monumental, under police surveillance and with many plain clothes government agents known to be in attendance, by applauding, the public still seemed to have internalized the state’s propaganda. In Foucault’s analysis of the Panocopitan, that theorist explains how prisoners never know for certain if they are under surveillance but assume that they are. In this system, the prisoner “inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”\(^{174}\). Even though Federal Police were an obvious presence among the spectators, and despite the size of the sold-out crowd, most believed that during the officials’ speeches, even a ridiculing whistle would lead in arrest\(^{175}\). At football stadiums, the crowd enjoys a certain anonymity. Yet, spectators understood what the limited opportunities for resistance were among this environment of enforced acquiescence.

The Junta and World Opinion:

The Challenge of International Opposition

Aiming to dissuade the world’s view of Argentina as a violent, unstable place, the Junta tried to reshape the nation’s image. The Proceso saw such a change in the image of Argentina as key to their being able to maintain domestic control. For the Junta, the actions of Argentines abroad represented a significant threat to their

\(^{174}\) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish Foucault*, 202-203
\(^{175}\) Bauso, *78 Oral History of World Cup*, 391
authority. Moreover, as the tournament’s June, 1978 opening approached, a challenge appeared in the form of an announced visit by a team of Organization of American States (OAS) inspectors. Concerned by reports of violations of democratic and human rights in the Junta’s Argentina, the OAS requested an inspection by a team of diplomats which represented its concerned members. The visit presented the regime with an obvious challenge: how to present an image of democracy and public support, while maintaining the repressive policies adopted since the coup of 1976?

During the WC, the Junta sought to overwhelm visitors, journalists, and tourists with the image of a modernized, rebuilt country. The regime went to great lengths to show that the country was seen as a winner. This propaganda strategy was reflected in the Proceso’s failed effort to convince El Grafico, the leading sports publication, that the Dutch team was delighted with their participation in the tournament in the country. The context to this fiasco was the well-organized effort by Holland’s leftist political movements to organize a fan boycott of the tournament. The European boycott movement was well-organized in a trans-national European organization, COBA (Comité de Boicot contra el Mundial de Fútbol en Argentina). Its efforts included attempts to convince the Dutch team to sit-out the tournament. The important international human rights organization, Amnesty International, also led a boycott effort. Its slogan was “Fútbol sí, torturas no” (“Football, yes; torture, no.”) 176

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In a forged letter purportedly written by Dutch footballer Krull to his daughter, Krull gushed\textsuperscript{177} about how safe, free, and pleasant Argentina was. He expressed admiration at the sacrifices and trust that Argentines had placed in their government. As the fictional Krull wrote: "Don’t get scared if you see some pictures from the team with real soldiers next to us. Those are our friends; they take care of and protect us. They love us as if we were Argentines. From the first moment of our arrival, they showed us affection. . . at the airport, they awaited us with our nation’s flag and blew kisses. Everyone wanted to embrace us."

The scheme blew-up in the Junta’s face when \textit{El Grafico}, which many believed was a loyal regime sycophant, laughingly featured the hoax as its cover article. Circulation spiked, as the public scooped-up copies at newsstands. Members of the Dutch national team were known to be particularly concerned about the Junta’s poor human rights record, and a few players had even attended organized protests. Amazingly, the letter was written in English. The forged Krul letter had been written by regime backer Enrique Romero.\textsuperscript{179} Romero was well known as a shady journalist whose pieces included fabricated material.

But other media personalities were faithful followers of the Junta’s strategy of showing the world a pleasant human face. As Pepe Peña an Argentine radio personality stated: "Now, we were aware of our capability to do many different things. . . of organizing and keeping ourselves organized. To be friendly and polite. "\textsuperscript{180} Hosting the World Cup had been something that Argentines had aimed to do for some time. This

\textsuperscript{177} Bauso, \textit{78 Historia Oral del Mundial}, 441
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, 442
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, 443
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, 403
sincere longstanding desire to host the World Cup and a desire to have a prosperous economy was mobilized by the Junta to turn popular opinion against dissidents. A considerable percentage of Argentines became convinced that the nation’s reputation and economic well-being were under attack and their own reputations were on the line, the success or failure of the World Cup project was a reflection on individual Argentines.

As noted, the revelation of the Krul letter as a hoax produced considerable embarrassment for the regime and the letter’s author. But it should be seen as part of the Proceso’s strategy to impress the world with strong national support for the tournament and national team, encapsulated in the slogan, “25 million Argentines playing the World Cup” While the Krul letter was reported in the Argentine media as a fake,\textsuperscript{181} in dissecting this unusually clumsy piece of propaganda, it can be used to understand how the regime used propaganda to show the world a sunny vision for Argentina; a view that erased the problem of state terror and the disappeared, and emphasized instead how the tournament had stimulated a great show of national pride.

Moreover, during this football carnival, the regime adapted its propaganda to meet the moment. This was reflected in its campaign to depict foreign critics as “Anti-Argentine.” The campaign met with success, as by 1978, most of the local media had been taken over by Junta allies.

The Proceso’s campaign to utilize the WC as a tool to burnish its image included its hiring of Burson Masteller, a public relations expert. Masteller’s campaign sought to create positive publicity for the country’s hosting of the tournament, and to

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid, 456
neutralize the criticism of foreign journalists and pro-boycott activists. Masteller’s campaign depicted foreign critics and boycotters as motivated by a desire to attack the country. Thus, he termed them “Anti-Argentine.” An important part aspect of this campaign involved challenging the motives of those who were critical of the regime. The propaganda campaign focused on making personal insults against the people and organizations which offered negative accounts of the country and its leaders. Moreover, within Argentina the World Cup was genuinely popular. By utilizing football as a political weapon, the Junta portrayed itself as defending an unassailable national good. But at the same time, the Junta faced demands by the OAS that its representatives be allowed a free hand to investigate human rights abuses. The OAS visit worried the Junta, as it held out the possibility that a report critical of the government’s repressive policies would hurt coverage and attendance at the games.

The OAS team’s investigation overlapped with the staging of the tournament, which began on June 24, 1978. \(^{182}\) Argentine newspapers reported on these international developments and the foreign press’s rising suspicion of the Junta’s repression. Along with the OAS visit, a rising tide of foreign press criticism offered the regime an important, new challenge. The Junta grounded its opposition to this “Anti-Argentine” campaign with an effort to galvanize public opposition to foreign journalists who it said sought to politicize the tournament and vilify the nation. This campaign formed a central part of the regime’s efforts to deflect attention from its human rights record, and re-direct it to the football carnival of the World Cup.

\(^{182}\) Eduardo Blaustein Martin Zubieta, Decíamos Ayer, 256,
The regime’s propaganda discourse was reflected across the Argentine mediascape. An example was an article that appeared in the Buenos Aires daily, *La Prensa*, and commented on the joyous pandemonium which ensured after the national team defeated Holland for the championship. In the *La Prensa* piece, author Manfred Schönfeld began by stating: "Our government rose to power amidst a state of natural disaster… It was and remains a necessary response to the crisis." Schönfeld’s objection to critics’ supposed politicization of an “apolitical” World Cup began with an affirmation of the government’s claimed justification for its repressive actions, as filling a need during an emergency. In fact, the article rarely spoke of the tournament, and instead focused on Argentina’s critics’ supposed hostility to the country:

“Let’s extract all the political juice from this subject! To bombard the government of the Hague [Holland] and to make their life impossible, up to the point that their ambassador can’t say anything good about their country even if they have the right to! Who politicizes, then, sports, football, and the World Cup? Them or us?”

In the *La Prensa* piece, Schonfeld wrote in an indignant tone, and accused the nation’s critics of anti-Argentine bias. Aiming to make an appeal to “common sense,” the Junta sought to put its PNR on a pedestal above politics. The prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist philosopher, oddly fits this later historical moment of the “Anti-Argentine” campaign. Gramsci, who wrote about the weaponization of “common sense” in Fascist Italy, noted that "Good sense is the common sense of a

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183 Blaustein, Eduardo, and Zubieta Martin, *Decíamos Ayer*, 260
given historical epoch, and common sense is the nationalization of the intellect”\(^\text{185}\). Like Fascist Italy in the 1930s, the subject of Gramsci’s commentary, the regime’s defense of the World Cup as “apolitical” attempted to utilize the military’s concept of the *Ser nacional* ("national self") to justify its assumption of extraordinary powers during the period of revolutionary insurgency. However, despite its celebration of the national team’s championship, the Junta claimed that the country remained in crisis and needed a strong hand to rule and protect it.

As more than two years had elapsed since the 1976 coup, the *Proceso* now changed its political narrative to assuming the role of shepherding a new period of peace, which was to be built by and protected by the Junta. The Junta, stated Videla, would protect the new “*peace and prosperity*” by hosting the tournament. The triumph of the national team brought tremendous joy and celebration, which at times virtually paralyzed the country from resuming normal activity. With the arrival of the World Cup, the regime promoted its role in transitioning to a more peaceful and less repressive phase and characterized its role as “protecting the peace.” The latter meant maintaining the same authoritarian state whilst creating the illusion that in fact civilians were in control.

From 1974 onwards, following Menotti’s rules, the AFA (Argentina’s National Football Federation) barred national team members from playing abroad.\(^\text{186}\) In 1978,


\(^{186}\) Young, Christopher, Tomlinson, Alan, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*,138
due to this factor, Argentina had a significant edge over its competitors, whose players didn’t have the same opportunities to build team chemistry and practice together. By this coaching that permitted Argentines to play together as a team, the team’s natural talent was set free. Thus, Argentina was prepared like never before. In this fashion, Argentina created this unique style of play which enabled it to win its first championship.

Meanwhile, the tournament saw the national team play “la Nuestra” a wonderful and unique style of football, led by coach Cesar Menotti. The seleccion (national team) repeatedly demonstrated its skill, grit and determination. By defeating teams representing Germany, Peru, and Holland, Argentina overcame the best of world football.Seleccion members Mario Kempes, Renee Hausman and others scored masterful goals; the Argentine team played with its signature style and managed to score six goals against a great Peruvian team to qualify for the final match. Argentina went on to beat Holland 3-1 in the tournament final. The wild celebrations that occurred after wins represented massive changes in Argentine society. During the tournament, through the anonymity of the crowd, for the first time in many years, people had a taste of freedom and joy. As viewed by the world, that joy influenced and changed perceptions about the country. This short-term boost, as Argentina became the world champion, gave the Junta great confidence. That confidence led to the decision to re-shuffle the Junta cabinet and a shift away from the violence and terror of the 1976-78 period. The following period, 1978-83, saw the country gradually transition from violent military authoritarianism to civilian democracy, largely because of the Junta’s economic and political blunders causing it to lose support.

Epilogue: The World Cup’s Legacies, 1978-83
Eventually, the national euphoria which followed Argentina’s WC victory abated, but only five days after the tournament ended, the Junta re-shuffled its leadership. Thus, General Roberto Viola was added to the Junta’s top leadership. Somewhat later, navy chief Emilio Massera was ousted. Massera, who had sought to replace Videla for the presidency, faced charges of insubordination over his desire to confront Chile over ownership of the Strait of Magellan’s disputed islands. Consequently, on August 18th, Massera was sacked. The focus then inevitably returned to the economic and political reality and the upcoming human rights inspection. As the Junta faced ever more pressure, it sought to replicate the WC effect, by investing heavily in the country’s hosting different regional athletic tournaments. After the euphoria of winning the WC championship, the military’s enthusiasm somewhat had subsided, but it nonetheless sought to replicate the short if powerful effect of that football carnival.

After this, the Junta began hosting more international sports tournaments. The latter included boxing, racing, and of course, football. In 1979, the nation again lived football success by winning the championship of the Youth World Cup. Led by a rising Diego Armando Maradona, the 1979 Youth World Cup saw Maradona’s first showing with the national team. Young Maradona’s popularity and that of the national team were once again visible, as Argentina triumphed. The Junta even sought to recreate the atmosphere of football carnival. Responding to press accolades for his superb tournament performance, during a congratulatory call with Videla, Maradona seemed unaware of how the Junta, once again, was attempting to politicize the tournament.

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187 Blaustein, Eduardo, and Zubia Martín, Deciamos Ayer, 267
188 Ibid, 272
189 Ibid, 304
Responding to Videla’s praise, he stated: “It’s something to be proud of to receive congratulations from our President… But this triumph is for you and all Argentines. We fought because we knew that they were depending on what we did inside and outside the pitch. That’s why we gave it everything.”

By stating, “this triumph is for you and all Argentines,” Maradona seemed to be spurning Videla’s attempt to again gain political advantage from the national team’s efforts.

In 1979, after Argentina’s triumph in the Youth World Cup, the regime again employed its “Anti-Argentine” argument to neutralize domestic and foreign critics. This was reflected in the regime’s slogan adopted during the contest: ‘’Nosotros somos derechos y humanos” (“We Argentine are human we Argentines are right”). This punning slogan’s effectiveness was shown in the ubiquitousness of eponymous bumper stickers across Argentina. This successful propaganda campaign, by framing Argentina’s critics like members of the OAS and foreign press which attacked the Junta’s human rights record as an act of aggression and an attack on Argentine football, was quite effective in mobilizing public support. During the games, the crowd chanted the slogan lustily. The Junta’s successful use of the slogan showed that it had learned lessons from the 1978 World Cup, and now had enhanced capacity to use football to build political support.

During the youth World Cup, there were again wild street celebrations, but they did not compete with the intensity or mass participation of the 1978 tournament. After creating so great a spectacle as the 1978 tournament, the regime’s efforts to replicate it

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190 Ibid, 305
191 Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, 41
seemed awkward and forced. This was true, since a main reason why the regime’s football propaganda strategy had “worked” during the 1978 affair was because the discourse was not merely about politics; for most Argentines, *futbol* was something more. Football was a sacred ritual, which *los argentinos* had the good fortune to win at home. Yet, the 1978 triumph led the Junta to gain more confidence in its dealings with the political opposition. Now, while the repressive, Dirty War’s “Night State” had continued to disappear people, that threat had significantly declined. The *Proceso* had convinced itself of its narrative; this was a testament to the eventual, partial success of its political project. Yet in 1983, after committing the colossal error of attempting to recuperate the lost territory of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands through invasion, and after the disaster of its economic policies, the Junta collapsed. Thus, later that year, the military began the process that returned the country to democratic rule by 1983.

**Conclusion**

The World Cup of 1978 was a transformative event in the history of the World Cup, and the companies who today have grown alongside it. The Junta since 1983 thrown into the dustbin of history still haunts over the Argentine landscape, and Argentine’s memories; unfortunately, the scars are slow to heal. The World Cup is remembered as a paradox a period of joy amidst death. Yet even from this taste of freedom Argentines participated in a festival celebrating and strengthening the very same people who made Argentines have this need in the first place. In this football Carnival the Junta popularity temporarily soared, convinced by it’s own narratives of superiority, like Icarus at the peak of it’s power it began it’s long fall. In football the stories of nations and people are told, in other words, history.
Even as I hoped to include more primary research and firsthand documents, I was limited by FIFA’s extremely poor online archives along with the limited material on my topic. However, using many different sources, both family members and books in Spanish and English, I’ve been able to I think tell an interesting story, that of the 1978 World Cup, how Authoritarian states see sport, and how popular culture and the cultural and psychological harm authoritarian states inflict on their subjects and victims alike. Even as I would have liked to have more direct access to primary sources I feel I’ve done my best. At some point it’s time to move forward to better things, to not constantly dwell on your mistakes, but instead to see the possibilities ahead you, as General San Martin so wisely put it ’Al hecho, pecho’.

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