



**ARGENTINE UNIONS SINCE 1955: POWER AND  
POLITICIZATION IN A WEAK PARTY SYSTEM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper argues that a strong causal relationship exists between factional struggles in the Peronist union leadership, the absence of a strong Peronist party, and Argentina's post-1955 problems in consolidating democracy. During Argentina's three most recent civilian governments—those of Illia, Juan and Isabel Perón, and Alfonsín—conflict among Peronist union leaders played a major role in subverting incipient efforts at Peronist party institutionalization. Deprived in part by their own factional struggles of an effective Peronist party organization, the powerful Peronist union leaders have expressed their broad political demands primarily through large-scale strikes and demonstrations. This mode of political expression has created a climate of instability poorly suited for economic development and propitious for military coups. Lacking a strong stake in the party system, moreover, many Peronist union leaders have supported (1966) or resigned themselves to (1976) military intervention.

## **RESUMEN**

Este trabajo arguye que existe una fuerte relación causal entre las luchas facciosas de los jefes sindicales peronistas, la ausencia de un partido peronista fuerte, y los problemas que ha tenido la Argentina después de 1955 en consolidar la democracia. Durante los tres gobiernos civiles más recientes en la Argentina—los de Illia, de Juan e Isabel Perón, y de Alfonsín—los conflictos entre los líderes sindicales peronistas subvertieron los esfuerzos incipientes de institucionalizar el partido peronista. Privados en parte por sus propias luchas facciosas de un partido peronista bien organizado, los poderosos líderes de los sindicatos peronistas han expresado sus demandas políticas principalmente a través de huelgas y grandes manifestaciones. Este modo de hacer política ha creado una inestabilidad poco adecuada para el desarrollo económico y propicio para golpes militares. Más aún, ya que su interés en el sistema del partido es mínimo, muchos líderes sindicales peronistas han apoyado (1966) o se han resignado (1976) a la intervención militar.

## 1. Introduction

Contributing to Argentina's problems in consolidating democracy is the inability of its party system to organize and channel conflict among its most powerful and politicized socioeconomic actors. This paper asks why the trade union movement, the organized representative of Argentina's powerful and politicized working class, has expressed its broad political demands only weakly and fitfully through the party system. It then argues that the weakness of union-party ties, and the consequent tendency of unions to circumvent the party system, has worked (along with other factors) against the consolidation of a democratic political regime.<sup>i</sup>

Union-party ties were weak in Argentina during the first decades of the 20th century and remained so from 1943 to 1955, when Juan Perón transformed the labor movement into a major political actor. Perón created a party to support his rule, but both this party and the newly "Peronized" unions were tied vertically to the state, not horizontally to one another. Since Perón's 1955 overthrow, most Argentine unionists have continued to consider themselves Peronists, but few, except on brief and fleeting occasions, have come to view any of the parties or proto-parties claiming continuity with Peronism as useful vehicles for expressing their broad political demands. In short, Peronism has persisted since 1955 as a strongly-held collective *identity*, but has been institutionalized only minimally and ephemerally as a political *party*.

Because most unionists after Perón's 1955 overthrow continued to identify as Peronists, any strengthening of union-party ties in post-1955 Argentina would have required the building of a viable Peronist party. By "viable" is meant a Peronist party viewed by unionists as an effective vehicle for influencing state policies. At least three efforts were made to construct such a party: the first during the government of Arturo Illia (1963-66), the second during the government of Juan and then Isabel Perón (1973-76), and the third during the government of Raúl Alfonsín (1983- ). The first two efforts failed; the third appears to be stalemated. The absence of a viable Peronist party has left politically-aimed strikes and demonstrations, by default, as the channels of political influence most readily accessible to unionists. Moreover, the absence of such a party has perpetuated among unionists a generalized skepticism toward the party system as a whole. The intensive use by the trade union movement of politically-aimed strikes and demonstrations, coupled with union leaders' generalized disaffection from party politics, has been a key factor working against a transition from newly implanted civilian rule to stable political democracy.

Argentina, to reiterate, has had a long history of weak union-party ties, one that long antedates the 1955 coup that overthrew Perón. This paper will suggest some reasons behind the original weakness of union-party ties in Argentina, but its primary purpose is to specify factors that have *perpetuated* this legacy of weak union-party ties through the post-1955 period. The

decision to focus on sustaining rather than generative causes of weak union-party ties in Argentina reflects a conviction that social science research is most useful when it identifies currently accessible points at which social actors can intervene to redirect the course of events from channels to which historical legacies might otherwise confine them.

Two sets of factors—“systemic” and “internal”—contributed to the collapse of post-1955 efforts to construct a viable Peronist party, and thereby to perpetuating into the post-1955 period Argentina’s long-standing heritage of weak union-party ties. Systemic factors involve post-1955 relationships between Peronism and other political actors; internal factors involve post-1955 relationships among the different groups that make up the Peronist movement. Analyses that touch on the question of why no viable Peronist party has emerged in post-1955 Argentina have tended to emphasize systemic factors, and in particular, the 1955-1966 military-enforced restrictions on Peronism’s right to contest major elections. This paper, by contrast, will argue that the partial ban on Peronist electoral participation left a constricted but definite space for the emergence of a viable Peronist party. The reason that no viable Peronist party appeared to fill that space was that internal factors—particularly conflict in the Peronist trade union leadership—repeatedly undermined or stalemated efforts to create such a party.

To establish initial plausibility for the argument that internal as much as systemic factors have contributed to the continued absence of a viable Peronist party, power struggles in the Peronist union leadership are shown to have undermined Peronist party-building projects during three periods (1963-66, 1973-76, and 1983 to present) in which legal restrictions on political party competition were absent or, in the case of the 1963-66 period, quite limited in scope. The relatively free functioning of the party system during these intervals, something that did not characterize the preceding and intervening periods,<sup>ii</sup> constituted an auspicious condition for building the disjointed political apparatus of Peronism into a viable labor-based party. However, no such party emerged during either the 1963-66 or 1973-76 periods, and efforts to forge a unified Peronist party in the post-1983 period have met with only limited success. Because favorable systemic conditions were insufficient to produce a viable Peronist party, it seems reasonable to explore the possibility that conflict in the Peronist union leadership helped prevent one from emerging. Table 1 places each of the three above-mentioned periods in a chronology of Argentine presidents and regimes from 1943 to 1988, highlighting the major themes to be studied in each one.

The broader interest and importance of this paper is threefold. First, it contributes to the existing literature on the role of unions and political parties in the consolidation of democratic political regimes. Second, it provides new insights into the processes by which amorphous political “movements” (like Peronism) do or do not become institutionalized as political parties. Third, it fills a gap in the existing literature on Peronism by focusing on the movement’s post-1955

internal dynamics, by exploring the causes and consequences of conflict among Peronist union leaders, and by highlighting the interaction of Peronism's trade union sector (which Perón referred to as the "backbone of the movement") with Perón and with Peronism's amorphous (and rarely studied) political wing.

## **2. The Peronist Unions: Power and Politicization in a Weak Party System**

### **2.1. Factors Initially Debilitating Argentina's Party System**

Argentina started the twentieth century with a weak party system that had little to recommend itself to union leaders looking for a forum in which to express the labor movement's broad political demands. The weakness of Argentina's party system dates from the late 1800s. Prior to the turn of the century, party competition was much less deeply rooted in Argentina than in Colombia, Uruguay, or Chile—three South American countries that sustained unusually long periods of democratic rule during the 20th century. It is beyond the scope of this research to explain fully why party competition in the 19th century was implanted more shallowly in Argentina than in these other countries, but it is worth noting that only in late 19th century Argentina did "out" political groups defeated on the battlefield or in restricted franchise elections allow themselves to be *absorbed* by the forces which defeated them. In Colombia, Uruguay, and Chile, the "out" political groups, which later developed into full-fledged political parties, responded to defeat by *maintaining* their partisan identities and incipient party organizations, and by renewing their quest for power at a later date.

By 1880, with the accession of Roca and his National Autonomist Party (PAN) to the presidency, whoever controlled the executive branch of the national state controlled military and political power throughout Argentina. Such was not the case in Uruguay and Colombia, where the party in control of the national executive, unable to inflict a decisive military defeat on its adversary, engaged in ongoing bargaining with the opposition party. In Uruguay, for example, the Colorado Party relinquished control of *jefaturas* (governorships) in some interior provinces in exchange for a Blanco Party promise not to rebel. Such bargains allowed the "out" party to survive despite its lack of direct control over the national executive, and contributed in both Uruguay and Colombia to the emergence of complex "co-participation" arrangements that helped sustain party competition into the 20th century. The threat of armed insurrection was lower in Chile (at least after 1859) than in Uruguay or Colombia, but by the late 1800s Chile was moving toward a parliamentary form of government that contrasted with Argentina's highly centralized presidential system. Parliamentary power, by making political power more "divisible," reinforced Chile's incipient multi-party system, whereas the overwhelming predominance of the national executive in Argentina reinforced that country's long-standing tradition of hegemony by a single political force.

In addition to inhibiting the emergence of opposition parties, the Argentine tradition of hegemony by a single political force affected the country's political culture. The PAN, for example, in the absence of effective opposition, began to see itself as a national "movement" (Cavarozzi 1984:3-4) embodying all that was good about Argentina, rather than as a "part" of a polity in which opposition political forces also had a right to operate. In the other three countries, by contrast, the inability of the "in" political force to destroy or absorb the opposition formed a crucial precondition for the development of a political culture in which a higher value was placed on the right to political opposition. Widespread use of electoral fraud by the PAN also fostered public skepticism that access to state resources could be gained by engaging in party activity, leading to more generalized public devaluation of parties and politicians.

The tendency of Argentine political forces to form "would-be majoritarian movements"—which, as the embodiment of "national unity," would obviate the need for opposition political parties—has continued to pervade the practices, and frequently the discourse, of most of the country's twentieth-century governments, civilian and military alike (Cavarozzi 1984:2-3; Rock 1987). Yrigoyen's repeated interventions in provincial governments controlled by dissidents may be seen in this light, as may Perón's rewriting of the Constitution and jailing of political opponents. Onganía's quest for the "organized community" left no place for political parties of any kind, while the "integralist" cast of Frondizi's *desarrollismo*, together with his huge parliamentary majorities, left a rather ambiguous one for opposition parties. Even Alfonsín's Radical party, which based its 1983 electoral campaign on its claim that it was the party best suited to strengthening the institutions of "formal" democracy, has not been entirely free of "movementist" tendencies.<sup>iii</sup>

In addition to historical continuities, a structural cause of the initial weakness of Argentina's party system bears mention. In contrast to most other Latin American countries, Argentina's main agricultural products, grain and livestock, are land rather than labor intensive. Consequently, the country lacks a large sedentary peasantry (O'Donnell 1978:4-5). This characteristic of the social structure, together with the country's high level of urbanization (Argentina ranks above the United States in the proportion of its population living in cities of 50,000 or more), has deprived the export-oriented rural elite, immensely powerful due to its control over the resource that generates most of the country's food and foreign exchange, of an electoral base for a party representing its interests (Smith 1978:21). In Chile, by contrast, where a multi-party democracy existed for more than forty years before being suppressed by the Pinochet dictatorship, "control over the votes of rural labor assured the Conservative and Liberal parties [representing large landowners and other traditional elites], along with some Radicals, of enough congressional seats to retain important veto power over presidential programs" (Loveman 1979:257). The electoral bankruptcy of the rural elite in Argentina suggests that the workers are

not the only economic sector in the country under pressure to look outside the party system for ways to express their political interests. Peter Smith (1978) argues that a central cause of the 1930 coup against Yrigoyen was in fact the inability of the agro-export elite to win free and fair elections.

## **2.2. The Long-Standing Weakness of Union-Party Ties in Argentina**

One reason why most of Argentina's early trade union leaders avoided the party system was that party competition, for the reasons just discussed, was shallowly implanted in Argentina's cultural and institutional matrix. But factors specific to the labor movement also weakened union-party ties and thus induced its leaders to search for alternative modes of political expression. In the first place, few workers voted in the early part of the 20th century. About half the male urban workers in Argentina lacked even the right to vote, having been born outside the country (mainly in Italy or Spain). Native male workers were technically enfranchised, but most belonged to the ninety percent of the potential electorate who did not vote prior to the 1912 electoral reforms, in part because of rampant fraud and intimidation. Another reason why union-party ties were weak at this early stage was that anarchism and syndicalism, the main ideologies of the labor movement in the early 1900s, exuded disdain for parties and politicians. Some workers sympathized with the Socialist Party, but many regarded the Socialists as a club of middle-class intellectuals. Even as the urban working class came to include a higher proportion of native Argentines, most workers remained convinced that party activity would not bring significant social reform.

The Radical Party that governed from 1916 to 1930 courted urban workers during its initial years in power, but the police, the army, and private vigilante squads brought these overtures to an abrupt halt in 1919. At the time of the 1930 military coup, when unions were becoming better organized (the CGT labor confederation was founded in 1930), neither the Socialists nor the Radicals could claim the allegiance of any large segment of the urban working class. During the 1930s, the Communist Party gained strong support from some leaders of emerging industrial unions, but many workers remained aloof from party politics. This aloofness was reinforced by the electoral restrictions and abuses that characterized the 1930-1943 period, which many saw as a restoration of the "oligarchic" style of politics that had characterized Argentina before 1912. The million rural and small-town migrants who moved to Buenos Aires between 1935 and 1945 were even less likely than already urbanized workers to have partisan sympathies, and constituted, along with disaffected (or weakly partisan) long-term urban dwellers, a large body of politically uncommitted people who were "available" (Germani 1965:241) for incorporation into a mass political movement.

Such a movement was founded by Juan Perón, an army colonel in the 1943-46 military government. Perón accomplished more social and labor reform in a few months as labor secretary

than “politicians” had achieved in the previous fifty years. During the 1943-46 period that saw Perón’s rise to the presidency, workers made unprecedented gains in wages, organization, and social security. Equally important, Perón encouraged workers to regard themselves with dignity as full-fledged members of the political community. In addition to winning support from ordinary workers, the material and symbolic gains Perón offered attracted Socialist and syndicalist labor leaders. In late 1945, these unionists created the Partido Laborista to defend workers’ new rights and benefits and to provide organizational support for Perón’s successful presidential candidacy.

If there was any possibility that the Partido Laborista would be the vehicle through which union-party ties would finally be strengthened, it soon evaporated. On the eve of his May 1946 inauguration, Perón disbanded the Partido Laborista and replaced it with the highly authoritarian and personalized Peronist Party. Direct institutional ties between the unions and the Peronist Party were very tenuous: both were tied vertically to the executive, not horizontally to one another. Moreover, Perón cultivated individual affective ties between the workers and himself, rather than encouraging workers to identify with the Peronist Party and the vision of society it was said to represent. By constantly reminding his supporters that they belonged to a “movement” that would bring about “real” (substantive) democracy, rather than to a party willing to participate in the “liberal fiction” of “formal” (procedural) democracy, Perón failed to draw the political interests and aspirations of the workers fully into the party system. By the time he was ousted in 1955, the labor movement had gained a Peronist political *identity* without forging a strong commitment to a Peronist *party*.

When Perón was overthrown in September 1955, the unions began immediately to overshadow the Peronist Party as the main organizational repository for the Peronist political identity. The Peronist Party was dissolved by decree in November 1955, and a few months later a ban was placed on future candidacies by Peronist politicians who had held party or elective office before September 1955. An April 1956 decree similarly banned labor leaders who had held union office under Perón from holding such office in the future. Unlike the Peronist Party, however, the unions were not banned as organizations. Banning the unions as organizations would have entailed much higher costs than banning the Peronist Party, which was little more than a creature of Perón. The Peronist Party lacked respected top-level and middle-level cadres and had always been characterized by a low level of membership involvement.<sup>iv</sup> Perón’s followers in the unions, by contrast, had always enjoyed more autonomy from the executive, except at the very highest levels of the CGT.<sup>v</sup> They were also better organized at the base level, through factory commissions which, unlike the party locals, were rooted in the productive structure and hence much more difficult to eradicate.<sup>vi</sup> A few years after the 1955 coup, Peronists would once again dominate the labor movement, but it would be decades before Peronist politicians began to assume a higher profile on the political stage.



The 1955-58 military government also passed a new political party law aimed at discouraging the future reincarnation of the Peronist Party under a new label. According to the new law, only “democratic” parties could henceforth be formed, and a special electoral court, staffed with hard-line anti-Peronists, was created to rule on the “democratic” credentials of parties applying for recognition. Partly to foment divisions among Perón’s followers, recognition was granted to several “neo-Peronist” parties. The neo-Peronist parties, which claimed continuity with the Peronist political tradition but did not take orders directly from Perón, attracted little support until the 1962 legislative and gubernatorial elections, when union leaders began to give them financial and organizational backing. The anti-Peronist legislation was made effective by an implicit veto imposed between 1955 and 1966 by the dominant faction of the armed forces (with a degree of civilian backing that varied partly according to the changing strategic calculations of non-Peronist political parties) on the right of Perón and of Peronists regarded merely as his interlocutors to contest or assume the presidency or the governorships of major provinces.

It is sometimes argued that the electoral restrictions on Peronism constituted a sort of “tragic flaw” that undermined the Argentine party system in the 1955-1966 period. Because of these restrictions, the argument goes, the leaders of the trade union movement, most of whom identified as Peronists, were forced to look toward non-party channels of political participation. These channels ranged from ad hoc negotiations with government policy-makers to the launching of waves of strikes and mobilizations aimed at creating a “climate of instability” in which the government, if all went as planned, would eventually be forced to turn the state over to another more favorable (the proponents of this strategy hoped) to the interests of workers and union leaders.<sup>vii</sup>

The proscription of the Peronist Party undoubtedly contributed to the displacement of workers’ political demands away from the party system, and thereby to weakening that system. However, the argument that proscription was the *fundamental* cause of this displacement is both incomplete and overstated. The weakness of the Argentine party system, and of the Peronist party within it, existed both before 1955 and after 1966, that is, both before and after proscription existed. In the intervening years, moreover, the terms of proscription were altered repeatedly and, in general, were less severe than is often assumed. It is therefore important not to treat the electoral restrictions on Peronism as the main factor preventing the unions from forging links to the political party system. These restrictions, in fact, had consequences that were not altogether inauspicious for efforts to constitute a Peronist party as a viable vehicle for the expression of workers’ political interests—though this transformation never occurred.

During the 1946-1955 period, Perón’s personalization of authority prevented the original Peronist Party from developing an independent cadre of leaders who might have been able to weather the repression that followed the 1955 coup. Peronists, moreover, tended to identify with

Perón's person and perceived historical role more than with the Peronist Party itself. With Perón in exile and the perceived possibilities for his return growing ever more remote, neo-Peronist politicians, who were exempt from proscription, and the Vandorist<sup>Viii</sup> faction of the Peronist union leadership, which advocated a "Peronism without Perón," had an opportunity to increase their own weight in the movement at the expense of the exiled leader. Had they been able to take advantage of this opportunity, it is not unthinkable that the party, with union backing, could have developed a stronger leadership cadre, a more effective network of local organizations, and a deeper sense of party identification. The emergence of such a party would have had positive consequences for the capacity of the Argentine party system to channel the demands and interests of the labor movement.

The main obstacle to the Peronist political and union leaders who advocated Peronism without Perón was not proscription. In fact, by preventing Perón or his closest collaborators from occupying political office, proscription *helped* those who wanted to build a political party representing Peronism without Perón. The Peronism without Perón party-building project was foiled instead by a combination of factors *internal* to Peronism. Perón used his formidable tactical skills to defend his leadership against the Vandorist union leaders and neo-Peronist politicians who sought to move Peronism's main locus of authority away from him and toward a political party under their own hegemony. But Perón's tactical genius would have amounted to nothing had it not been for the continuing allegiance of most Argentine workers to Perón's person and perceived historical achievements rather than to organizations promoting the principles for which Perón stood. And even Perón's tactical skills combined with his continued mass appeal might not have been able to withstand the onslaught of the organizationally powerful pragmatists advocating Peronism without Perón had it not been for the organizational base Perón received in Argentina courtesy of union leaders who, for diverse reasons of their own, were at odds with Vandor. The demise of the Peronism without Perón project shortly before the 1966 coup (see section 3.2) was only the first time that conflict among Peronist union leaders contributed decisively to the failure of an effort to institutionalize Peronism as a political party. Such conflict would play a similar role in the 1973-76 period, and continues to do so in the post-1983 Alfonsín era.

### **2.3. The Power of Argentine Unionism**

Characteristics of the Argentine working class are at the base of the power of the Argentine trade union movement, which gives broad social significance to union leaders' decisions about how to express their political demands in the absence of an effective allied political party. Compared to working classes in other capitalist countries at similar or more advanced stages of economic development, Argentina's working class is large both in absolute

terms and as a proportion of the active population. Also Argentina, due primarily to the land (rather than labor) intensive character of its agricultural production, lacks a large mass of rural poor. Reinforced by the country's low rate of population growth, the absence of a "reserve army of labor" gives unions considerable bargaining power in their relations with employers. Finally, most Argentine workers are located in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area and in a few other large cities, and long ago passed from small and dispersed to large and concentrated work places. These characteristics facilitate communication, a fundamental requisite for political and economic power.<sup>ix</sup>

In addition to characteristics of the Argentine working class, the unity of the Argentine trade union movement, based on its centralized structure and on the shared political identity of most Argentine unionists, helps account for its power. The Law of Professional Associations,<sup>x</sup> which dates from the 1943-46 military government in which Perón held decisive sway, constitutes the legal basis for the highly centralized structure of Argentine unionism and therefore, indirectly, for the power of the union leaders at the peak of that structure. According to the Law of Professional Associations, union personality (*personería gremial*) is granted exclusively to one labor organization in a given sector of economic activity. Labor organizations with union personality are the only ones entitled, among other things, to require employers to install the check-off (mandatory wage deductions and employer contributions destined for the union's administrative expenses and social welfare programs), to call strikes, to participate in collective bargaining, or to represent workers before the labor courts and social security bodies (Alexander 1962:178). The Law of Professional Associations also permits only one national-level union confederation.

In addition to the organizational structure prescribed in the Law of Professional Associations, the methods by which the unions finance their activities and choose their leaders contribute to the monolithic character of the Argentine trade union movement, and especially of its constituent unions. In many unions, notably non-federated, national-scope ones like the UOM (metalworkers), union dues and social welfare contributions are paid directly into the bank account of the central organization, which then distributes the funds among the locals as it sees fit. At the same time, various procedures for calling and supervising union elections make it difficult for opposition groups to displace incumbent leaders at the higher organizational levels (Torre 1974; James 1978; Palomino 1985)—though it could be argued that *this* basis of centralization has contradictory effects in terms of union power broadly speaking, with the entrenchment of a certain group of union leaders leading to rank-and-file apathy and to the absence of creative ideas, as well as to the reduction of divisive dissent. Finally, the national-level leadership retains in most unions the right to "intervene" the locals (to replace local leaders with interim trustees of their own choosing) under a wide variety of circumstances.

Argentine labor law and the rules governing union financing and leadership selection have thus produced in the Argentine trade union movement a centralized and hierarchical structure that permits a degree of concerted action matched only in such countries as Austria and Sweden. To the strength of the Argentine working class and the centralization of Argentine unionism must also be added a third basis for union power: the shared political identity of most Argentine unionists. In the mid-1940s, most Argentine workers came to identify themselves as Peronists. Peronism involves a particular conception of Juan Perón and, perhaps more importantly, a particular view of his historical role. Between 1945 and 1948, Argentine workers, repressed or overlooked by most previous governments, experienced a remarkable increase in income, power, and self-esteem. Out of this brief but vivid experience came an enduring perception that the period of state tutelage under Perón had been a sort of “golden age” for workers.<sup>XI</sup> The Peronist political identity forged during the 1945-1948 period was reinforced after 1955 by the solidarity-promoting atmosphere of siege and struggle generated by anti-Peronist repression in the unions and in the political system (James 1979:85-120).

Having examined how union power is rooted in the strength of the Argentine working class, in the centralization of the unions’ organizational structure, and in the shared political identity of most Argentine unionists, let us examine the bases of the politicization of the Argentine trade union leadership.

#### **2.4. The Politicization of the Argentine Union Leadership in the Post-1955 Period**

The politicization of Argentine union leaders, i.e., their recognition that they have interests that require expression specifically through the state, is what motivates them to make political demands in the first place. The politicization of Argentine union leaders stems first from the fact that most have shared since 1946 a self-perception as key representatives of the Peronist movement, which is above all a political movement in that it seeks to re-implant itself within the state apparatus. The self-perception of Argentine union leaders as controlling the “backbone of the movement” (as Perón often referred to the unions) was reinforced by Perón’s exile between 1955 and 1973, and has never been challenged effectively by the full-time Peronist political personnel who have staffed the various ephemeral party-like organizations that the movement has produced since its inception.

In the decade after the 1955 coup, the self-perception of Peronist union leaders as those primarily responsible for representing the political interests of the Peronist movement as a whole was expressed in two different ways. Until about 1960, many Peronist union leaders saw themselves as working to restore Perón to the presidency, and engaged in militant “direct action” measures (strikes, sabotage, bombings) with the aim of convincing anti-Peronists that the country would remain ungovernable until Perón was restored to the presidency. By 1960, however, most

Peronist leaders in Argentina were becoming convinced that the forces preventing Perón's return were insurmountable. In this context, the implicit definition of what it meant to represent Peronist political aspirations began to change toward reconstructing a *new* version of the alliance between the unions and the state that was "remembered" as having existed under Perón (though Perón's near-total subordination of top union leadership during the 1946-55 period was conveniently forgotten).<sup>xii</sup> Both visions of what would constitute the ideal relationship between the unions and the state propelled Peronist union leaders toward the political arena, contributing to the failure of efforts by successive governments to restrict their activities to defending the "legitimate professional interests of the workers."

A second set of factors that has pushed Peronist union leaders toward the political arena involves material interests rather than imperatives deriving from ideological commitment. Not only the material interests of the workers, but also those of the union leaders as a privileged elite, give the latter an incentive to try to influence public policy. As regards the interests of the workers—which most union leaders respect because they feel it is their duty to do so, and which all must respect if only to keep their constituents from "running amok"—it should be stressed at the outset that the state in Argentina plays an enormously important economic role both as an employer<sup>xiii</sup> and as a manipulator of key economic variables. Owing to the state's crucial role in the Argentine economy, the role of the union leaders as defenders of workers' economic interests drives them to exert pressure on the incumbents of the state apparatus, either to follow a certain course in economic policy, or to give way to a new government that, they predict, will be more likely to enact policies that they and their constituents prefer.

Another incentive for unionists to attempt to control or influence the government is given by the state's capacity to intervene in collective bargaining and labor conflicts. Several governments since 1955, including civilian ones, have restricted or even eliminated collective bargaining and fixed wages by decree. Even during periods in which collective bargaining has taken place, the government may set "ceilings" and "floors" beyond which wages cannot rise or fall. Government supervision of collective bargaining is greatly facilitated by the fact that most provisions for wages and many for working conditions and union representation are negotiated at the national level (by economic sector) rather than at the regional or enterprise level. Finally, in the area of labor conflicts the government retains the right to declare obligatory conciliation between the parties, as well as to declare job actions illegal, a measure that often results in a wave of firings. Because the state plays such an important role in all of these areas, union leaders have a strong interest in being able to influence its policies.

As regards the specific interests of the union leaders as an organizational elite and status group, the government in office has the potential to exercise a broad set of inducements and constraints (Collier and Collier 1979) in the areas of union structure, financing, and processes of

leadership selection. By realizing this potential through the enactment, repeal, or amendment of legislation and decrees, and by enforcing or failing to enforce existing laws, the government can wield important influence over the outcome of manifest or latent conflicts between competing groups of union leaders, and can intervene in the relations between union leaders and ordinary union members. Because union leaders arrive at their positions through a determinate set of arrangements, many of which the government has the potential to alter, it stands to reason that the union leaders will exert pressure on the government to alter these arrangements only in ways that will enhance their power position with respect to the rank and file, to competing union leaders, or to other social elites. If the government seems unwilling to preserve or improve upon the status quo in these areas, union leaders will have an interest in changing the government's personnel and/or policy orientation, or failing this, in removing it.

As an example of the power that the government in office can potentially wield over union leaders, let us return to Perón's 1945 Law of Professional Associations. Paradoxically, this law contributes to the power of the union leadership by dictating a centralized and hierarchical union structure that permits concerted action, but also constitutes the Achilles heel of this power, because it provides a legal basis for state intervention in the unions when they are seen to be "getting out of hand." A union's loss of *personería gremial* deprives it of the right to strike, to bargain collectively, to have dues withheld, etc. Moreover, in addition to or instead of depriving it of its *personería gremial*, the government can "intervene" a union's leadership (replace the union's leaders with its own trustees until such time as the union is "normalized" through new elections), freeze its bank accounts, and confiscate its headquarters, hospitals, recreation centers, tourist facilities, and other properties.<sup>xiv</sup>

Despite the potential for government control embodied in the Law of Professional Associations, government efforts to weaken or repeal the law have always provoked a fierce outcry from the union leaders primarily because, as was just pointed out, this law is also at the basis of the national union leaders' power over the local unions and the rank and file. Perón's 1973 alteration of the Law of Professional Associations to give the generally more conservative leaders of the national unions even more control over the regional and local affiliates marked the successful culmination of a five-year struggle by these leaders to marginalize left-leaning militants who had managed to gain control of some local organizations. For many years, the government's position on maintaining, modifying, or abolishing the Law of Professional Associations was a leading item on the agenda of political debate in Argentina.<sup>xv</sup> The salience of such debates makes the Argentine state, as much if not more than employers and their associations, a central target of trade union action—and raises the question of why political parties have not been more prominent among the instruments of such action. To answer this question, albeit in a preliminary fashion, is the task of the next section.

### **3. Union Leader Conflict and the Absence of a Viable Peronist Party**

During the three most recent periods of civilian rule in Argentina (1963-66, 1973-76, and 1983-present), conflict in Peronism has first produced, and later undermined, some tentative efforts to give the Peronist identity the institutional form of a political party. The following pages will show that intra-Peronist conflict originated in a succession crisis that emerged with Perón's exile, that Peronist union leaders were the main contenders for Perón's mantle, and that these union leaders had strong individual incentives to create and dominate a legal, unified, labor-based political party—and equally strong incentives to prevent their rivals from doing this. It will then be argued that intra-Peronist conflict, particularly among Peronist union leaders, has played a key role in undermining the very party-building efforts it helped to generate, leaving strikes and mobilizations as the main vehicles by which the union movement has expressed its broad political demands. Finally, the “internal conflict” hypothesis will be put into perspective by examining some limitations on alternative “genetic” and “systemic” and explanations for why the union movement has expressed its demands more through strikes and mobilizations than through party activity.

#### **3.1. Union Leader Conflict and Party-Building Incentives**

During Perón's 1946-1955 presidency, most top CGT leaders, Peronist Party officials, and Peronist candidates for elective office were hand-picked (*digitado*) for their positions by Perón and his trusted intimates. Likewise, decision-making power was concentrated at the very highest echelons of the main Peronist organizations. The monolithic structure of the Peronist movement made it vulnerable to decapitation, which is precisely what occurred when, in 1955, Perón was overthrown and exiled, the Peronist Party was abolished, and the CGT was placed under military trusteeship. The anti-Peronist repression of the 1955-1958 years was the proximate cause of the collapse of the Peronist organizational apparatus, but the dependence on Perón that characterized both the Peronist Party and the CGT during the 1946-1955 period made this repression much easier to carry out. Because the Peronist Party was so strictly Perón's creature, it never generated an independent cadre of leaders capable of bargaining for survival with the 1955-58 military government (along the lines that APRA had followed after the 1948 coup in Peru) or of forging an effective clandestine organization.

Perón's exile and the closing down of the main Peronist organizations did not spell the end of the Peronist movement because a significant sector of the population maintained a strong affective attachment to Perón's person and perceived historical role. The survival of Peronism as a political identity, coupled with the gradual realization by Peronists in Argentina that Perón would

probably remain in long-term exile, produced a succession crisis in the movement. Because the Peronist Party no longer existed and because the CGT had been intervened, the individual national-level unions were left as Peronism's only important organizational base. Their leaders became the main contenders to succeed Perón as the day-to-day strategist and recognized power broker for the Peronist movement as a whole.

The struggle among union leaders for the right to act as Peronism's main power broker was one factor underlying efforts to create a viable Peronist party. Any Peronist union leader aspiring to act as the main power broker both for the labor movement (including its minority non-Peronist elements) and for those identifying as Peronists (including many non-unionists) had several incentives to try to construct and dominate a legal, unified, labor-based Peronist party. Controlling such a party would increase the union leader's prestige in the eyes of both Peronists and non-Peronists, provide an additional forum for furthering the union leader's ideological and programmatic goals, open up a new set of patronage resources (party posts, candidacies to elective offices) that would help the union leader consolidate power against rivals, and provide the union leader with a new channel of access to the state and its resources—many of which, like the Ministry of Labor's right to oversee union elections, supervise union finances, and grant or withhold recognition to new unions, have important implications for a union leader's capacity to withstand challenges from rivals. On the other hand—and for the same reasons—each Peronist union leader had an interest in *preventing* rival leaders from forging and dominating an effective Peronist party. Hence, as soon as one union leader began to dominate the party-building process, competing leaders tended to ally themselves against this process. The addition of this temporal dimension resolves the apparent paradox of intra-Peronist competition being able both to generate and to undermine efforts to construct a viable Peronist party.

Other incentives to constitute such a party affected the union movement as a whole rather than union leaders as individual power-seekers. An effective pro-labor political party (which, given the Peronist political identity of the vast majority of Argentine workers, would inevitably present itself as a Peronist party, even if it did not choose a party label with the word "Peronist" in it) would give workers and union leaders institutionalized access to the state, enabling them to supplant, or combine, ad hoc negotiations with the government and politically-aimed strikes and demonstrations with greater participation in the making of long-term policy decisions. An effective labor-based Peronist party would help workers and unions achieve such participation by giving them representation in the legislature and, potentially, executive branches of the government, and by helping to ensure, through mechanisms to be outlined in section 4.3, that bargains struck during incomes policy concertation (if this occurred) would remain binding. Such a party would have a good chance of winning elections because it would have a strong electoral base, access to



the unions' organizational network and financial resources,<sup>xvi</sup> and the opportunity to compete against a historically fragmented opposition.<sup>xvii</sup>

These individual and collective incentives to union leaders to fortify and dominate a Peronist political party remained latent until about eight years after the 1955 coup. Prior to Illia's October 1963 inauguration, when proscription was still being rigidly enforced, union leaders seeking to advance their own power within Peronism, and to increase the labor movement's power within society, would have had difficulty in achieving either of these goals by trying to build a Peronist party, because civilian and military anti-Peronists maintained rigid restrictions on Peronist electoral competition. Once Illia took office, however, there were signs that the government and the armed forces had developed a more permissive attitude toward Peronist party activity. This more permissive attitude derived first from a feeling that Peronist unionism was becoming more independent from Perón's personal control, second from a belief that the forging of ties between the unions and a legal political party might prevent the labor movement from "turning to the left," and third from military officers' worries that continued failure to incorporate Perón's followers into the party system would compel the armed forces to sustain their close involvement in civilian politics, with negative effects on the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the military institution. Thus, during 1964 and 1965, many officers and government officials seemed prepared to grant much broader political rights to a single, unified Peronist party as long as such a party included Perón as nothing more than a symbolic figurehead, called itself something other than "Peronist" or "Justicialist," held internal elections for party leaders and candidates, and made an explicit commitment to democracy.<sup>xviii</sup> It was clear that Peronism would not be allowed to win presidential elections in the near future, but if Peronist leaders in Argentina continued to distance themselves from Perón and to behave in ways that the military considered "responsible," a presidential victory by a candidate of "Peronism without Perón" was by no means inconceivable a few years down the road.

The Illia, Perón, and Alfonsín periods have been the only ones since 1955 when these individual and collective incentives impelling union leaders toward party activity could manifest themselves. During each of these periods, some Peronist union leaders, in alliance with members of the movement's amorphous political wing, tried to institutionalize Peronism in the form of a single, unified Peronist party organization. These attempts at institutionalization are described briefly in section 3.2. During the 1963-66 and 1973-76 periods, these party-building efforts were undermined by the very intra-Peronist competition that had helped to generate them. In the post-1983 period, more progress has been made in transforming the Justicialist (Peronist) Party from a tiny nominating committee into an effective mass organization, but the outcome of this process remains uncertain.

### **3.2. Union Leader Conflict and the Collapse of Peronist Party-Building Projects**

Interneine conflict gives Peronist union leaders incentives to try to build an effective Peronist party, but it also tends to undermine such party-building projects once they get under way. Because an effective Peronist party would provide power resources to those able to dominate it, Peronist union leaders opposed to the party-building faction have an interest in preventing that faction's party-building efforts from going far enough to generate such resources. In post-1955 Argentina, no party-building faction of the Peronist leadership has ever been strong enough to impose its hegemony over all of its rivals, who repeatedly have overcome differences among themselves to band together to undermine or stymie the project of the initial party-building faction. This balance of power between the party-building faction and its adversaries is one reason why the party-building efforts tend to fail. However, another necessary condition for the failure of these efforts involves the historical fact that the weaker factions have never decided that the collective benefits to Peronists of a more institutionalized party, combined with the possibility of gaining the upper hand in such a party at a subsequent date, outweighed the costs of letting the strongest faction win immediate control over the party. Such control, in the eyes of the weaker factions, would bring with it the risk of having the strongest faction pursue undesirable programmatic goals while using the party's resources to consolidate its position through patronage and access to state resources.

The rationale behind the behavior of the weaker factions of the Peronist leadership can be modelled by analogy. It resembles the "balancing" behavior attributed to weak countries in Kenneth Waltz's (1979:102-128) *Theory of International Politics*. International competition, according to Waltz, is an "anarchic" situation to the extent that no central authority is present to enforce any "rules" that may emerge to regulate competition among states. In the anarchic realm of international politics, Waltz argues, peripheral states will seek first to survive and to defend their national identities, and only then to advance their secondary interests in the international arena. The peripheral state's primary interests in survival and identity-preservation are furthered most effectively, in Waltz's view, if it engages in "balancing behavior." This behavior consists of the peripheral state forging alliances with other states that are too weak to absorb or denature it, but are strong enough to help it defend itself against more threatening states. Only if a peripheral state is confident in its survival and integrity will it allow itself the luxury of "bandwagoning": siding with much stronger states in the hope that their resources will help it further its secondary interests in the international arena.

Analogously, Peronism was in an "anarchic" internal situation after the 1955 coup, when Perón could no longer control the movement's day-to-day affairs. The weaker factions of the Peronist leadership resemble the peripheral states in Waltz's theory: they are interested first in

survival, and only then in gaining greater voice within the whole Peronist movement. The weaker factions of the Peronist leadership fear being absorbed or denatured by the dominant faction, so the situation is conducive to “balancing” behavior: they tend to ally with one another against the dominant faction. To forge this alliance of weaker factions, their leaders often set aside significant ideological, programmatic, and personal differences that might otherwise make them sworn enemies. If the resulting alliance among these subordinate factions is more powerful than the dominant faction (as has turned out to be the case under each of the three governments being considered), the party-building efforts of the dominant faction will be undermined.

Conflict in the Peronist union leadership has undermined Peronist party-building during each of the the three periods being studied. Let us begin with the 1963-1966 period. With Illia’s inauguration in 1963, the metalworkers’ Secretary-General Augusto Vandor, the most powerful Peronist union leader in Argentina, began to construct a labor-based Peronist party under his own hegemony. In March 1965, Vandor’s incipient party organization successfully presented pro-labor candidates for National Deputy seats. Later that year, it forged ties with several small “neo-Peronist” parties in the less populated interior provinces. In April 1966, a critical event took place. In the western province of Mendoza, a neo-Peronist party allied with Vandor ran a gubernatorial candidate *against* the candidate favored by Perón.

Vandor wanted to build a political party that would allow him to consolidate his grip on the political wing of Peronism, thereby increasing his chances of relegating Perón to the role of an elder statesman and of becoming the recognized power broker for the Peronist movement as a whole. To win legality for his fledgling party, Vandor was willing to accept the conditions laid down in the Illia government’s draft for a new Statute of Political Parties: internal party democracy, avoidance of “historical, political, or social judgements that create internal divisions,” and demonstration in parties’ platforms and public actions of a commitment to defend democracy.<sup>xix</sup> Vandor’s party-building initiative posed a clear threat to Perón’s control over his political following. From his exile in Madrid, the old leader began a shrewd campaign to undermine Vandor’s project. In April 1966, Perón scored a decisive victory when his candidate for governor of Mendoza outpolled Vandor’s, leading the metalworkers’ chief to announce that he would make no further forays into the political wing of Peronism. But Perón’s opposition was not in itself enough to defeat Vandor’s project. What was decisive for the failure of Vandor’s initiative was the resistance it provoked from other powerful Peronist union leaders.

After Vandor, the three most powerful union leaders in Argentina between 1963 and 1966 were José Alonso (head of the garment workers’ union, Secretary-General of the CGT, and linked by ideological and personal ties to Catholic nationalist army officers), Andrés Framini (head of the textile workers’ union and considered by Perón to be his most faithful representative in the unions), and Amado Olmos (head of the hospital workers’ union and quite clearly, for a Peronist, at

the left end of the ideological spectrum).<sup>xx</sup> Alonso viewed Vandor's initiative as a threat to his own plans to become the power broker for the labor movement in a projected "union of the *pueblo* and the armed forces." Framini viewed Vandor's attempt to build a Peronist party under his own hegemony as an affront to his belief that no one except Perón (who had repeatedly backed Framini in his struggles with other Peronist union leaders) should be allowed to lead the Peronist movement. And Olmos viewed Vandor's project as insufficiently combative and as too willing to accept the existing model of capitalist development. At the beginning of 1966, these three union leaders broke away from Vandor's "62 Organizations"<sup>xxi</sup> and, overcoming their own profound ideological, programmatic and personal differences, formed their own group known as the "62 Standing Right Beside Perón." Without the logistical support of this group in his showdown with the metalworkers' chief, Perón would have lacked an organizational base in Argentina from which to undermine Vandor's effort to become the main power broker simultaneously for the trade union movement and for the Peronist political identity. Had Vandor succeeded in this initiative by building the Peronist party into a viable organization, the post-1966 history of Argentina might have been more democratic. Vandor, who by 1965 enjoyed the protection of forty "bodyguards"<sup>xxii</sup> and who was notorious for supervising a gangsterish "apparatus,"<sup>xxiii</sup> was hardly a paragon of democratic values, but the unintended consequence of his party-building project, had it succeeded, would have been to reinforce the strength of the party system as a whole, removing a key impediment to a possible transition under Illia from precarious civilian rule to stable political democracy.

Similar conflicts among union leaders undermined less auspicious attempts during the second Peronist period (1973-76) to restore a Peronist party organization, and its representatives in parliament, to a significant role in mediating between the unions and the state. Political space for these furtive efforts to strengthen the newly resurrected Justicialist Party, in which a faction of union leaders headed by CGT Secretary-General Adelino Romero participated, began to open up after Perón's death in 1974, but Romero's death and the consequent ascendance of two other factions of union leaders who opposed a greater role for the party (one a neo-Vandorist faction headed by new metalworkers' chief Lorenzo Miguel, the other a pro-López Rega<sup>xxiv</sup> faction headed by Segundo Palma of the construction workers) brought to an end this tentative advance toward party institutionalization (Viola 1982:516-18). In addition, as inflation began to skyrocket and as death squads of the left and right began to take a daily toll of union leaders and base-level militants, the planning horizon of most Peronist union leaders shrank drastically. Faced with the indifference or outright hostility of their colleagues, individual union leaders seeking to reinforce the institutions of "formal" democracy had little chance of success, and the country swept downward into chaos and repression.

Events during the first half of the Alfonsín government illustrate further how competition among Peronist union leaders has impeded the emergence of a viable Peronist party. Prior to the November 1983 presidential elections, Lorenzo Miguel of the metalworkers' union emerged as the main power broker in the Justicialist (Peronist) Party's candidate selection process. Miguel gave choice national deputy slots to union leaders who supported him<sup>XXV</sup> and engineered the selection of Italo Luder, a closely allied Peronist politician from the province of Santa Fe, as the party's presidential candidate (Cordeu et al. 1985:25-29). The evening before the election, Herminio Iglesias,<sup>XXVI</sup> a Peronist ward boss in one of the industrial suburbs of Buenos Aires and one of Miguel's closest allies, burned an effigy of Alfonsín at a mass demonstration in downtown Buenos Aires. The event was carried on all the nightly television news programs and did not sit well with a public exhausted by the violence and intolerance of the previous decade. The next day Luder was unexpectedly defeated by Alfonsín, and Miguel received much of the blame for how the Peronists had conducted their electoral campaign.<sup>XXVII</sup>

In late 1984, the Justicialist Party split. The dissident party leaders, who referred to themselves as the "renewal" wing, included Peronist politicians disenchanted with what they viewed as the gangsterish political style and conservative ideological stance of the party leaders, as well as union leaders who (in contrast to most of Miguel's allies in the unions) had vociferously opposed the military dictatorship,<sup>XXVIII</sup> and also some hangers-on who would later switch back to the "orthodox" wing. In the November 1985 congressional elections, the "orthodox" wing of the party (still effectively under Miguel's control) presented one set of candidates while the dissident "renewal" wing, adopting a political style and ideology reminiscent of European social democracy (coupling strong adherence to procedural democracy with a strong commitment to substantive justice), presented a different set. Although the "orthodox" wing retained control over the official party apparatus in most of the key provinces, including Buenos Aires, the "renewal" wing received far more votes than did Miguel's group, and several union leaders allied with the "renewal" politicians received seats in the Chamber of Deputies (where the Peronist delegation would soon fragment into four mutually hostile blocks).

Since Luder's defeat the renewal and orthodox wings of Peronism (allied respectively with the Peronist union leader factions known as the "Group of 25" and "62 Organizations") have been locked in battle for control of the party organization. Miguel and the orthodox leaders of the "62," though ideologically to the right of the Alfonsín government on issues like the legalization of divorce, policy toward Nicaragua, and the prosecution of human rights violators, have been much more inclined to negotiate with the government on economic and labor policy than have the renewal politicians and their union allies in the "25," whose stances on these other major domestic and foreign policy issues more closely approximate the center-left positions of the government.

Apart from the “62” and “25,” which are in thinly veiled competition for control of the Justicialist Party, a third faction of the Peronist trade union leadership, led by CGT Secretary-General Saúl Ubaldini, is following a strategy of confronting the government with general strikes and mass demonstrations. Beyond being “neutral” in the battle for control of the party, Ubaldini has in fact been ignoring the party and its congressional delegation as a channel for influencing government policy. The CGT between September 1984 and September 1988 called twelve general strikes<sup>xxix</sup> to protest the government’s social and economic policies. Ubaldini, a second-ranking leader of the 5,000 member beer workers’ union, has a power-maintaining interest in calling general strikes. Lacking an organizational base of his own, Ubaldini’s power resides in his formidable charismatic appeal and in the public’s recollection of his record of militancy under the 1976-1983 dictatorship. The mass demonstrations and media attention that accompany the general strikes give Ubaldini an indispensable forum for calling on these power resources, without which he would disappear into obscurity as a minor official in a miniscule union. Miguel, by contrast, who almost never speaks in public, owes his power to his control of the organizational and financial resources of a highly centralized union with nearly 300,000 members and to his legendary skill at behind-the-scenes negotiating.

The leaders of the “25,” most of whom lead smaller or more decentralized unions, derive their power mainly from their reputation as honest leaders responsive to the needs of ordinary union members. Mostly Social Democratic in outlook, they boast an impressive training and research apparatus and receive technical assistance from some of the European Social Democratic parties. Many have won National Deputy seats on slates headed by Peronist politicians from the party’s “renewal” wing. The stance of the “25” toward the Alfonsín government is, on the one hand, to support its drive to consolidate the institutions of “formal” democracy, from which many of them now derive an income (and which most, in conjunction with former “25” member Ubaldini, helped to restore by resisting the dictatorship). On the other hand, the “25” are among the most vociferous opponents of the government’s economic policy, and regard Alfonsín’s economic team as having given in to an IMF-sponsored stabilization plan that shifts the costs of the economic crisis onto the backs of those who can least afford it.

In August 1986, the Alfonsín government launched a campaign to undermine the “Ubaldinist” and “25” groups by appealing for a “separate peace” with Miguel and his allies. The overture was successful, helped along by the government’s sanctioning of a wage increase for the metalworkers above those granted to other unions (in exchange for the generous pay hike, the metalworkers agreed not to strike before June 30, 1987). As the metalworkers’ wage negotiations were taking place, various members of the “Ubaldinist” and “25” factions of Peronist unionism, perhaps convinced by Miguel’s implicit position that Ubaldini’s combative approach was having little effect on the Alfonsín government’s economic policies (a position that had much to

commend it on empirical grounds), decided to join Miguel in advocating a truce with the government, and a new group of Peronist union leaders, known as the "group of 15," was formed. In March 1987, Alfonsín named Carlos Alderete, the Secretary-General of the electrical workers' federation and a member of the "15," to head the Labor Ministry, hoping thereby to undermine Ubaldini's power and to encourage other unionists to abandon their confrontational postures.

The pact between the government and the "15" put a temporary damper on Ubaldini's strategy of general strikes, mass demonstrations, and inattention to parties and parliament, but when Alderete left the labor ministry in early 1988 the general strike strategy again gathered momentum. Ubaldini's personal commitment to democracy is unquestionably greater than that of certain members of the "15," many of whom favored cooperating with the 1976-1983 dictatorship,<sup>xxx</sup> but the logic of Ubaldini's strategy for influencing government policy may well be more dangerous than that of the more pragmatic and conciliatory "15," whose leaders' democratic values are paradoxically more open to question.

By mid-1988, Ubaldini was calling new general strikes even as the Justicialist Party was taking an unprecedented great leap forward toward internal democratization by holding a primary election for presidential and vice-presidential nominees. It is unclear what effect these developments in the party will have on the general strike strategy promoted by Ubaldini. It furthermore remains unclear whether one of the competing sectors of the Peronist union leadership will be able to to achieve hegemony over the others, consciously attempt to strengthen the Peronist party as an effective organization, create a coherent governing project in alliance with Peronist politicians, and effectively contest a general election. It is this development, much more than a shift from general strikes to ad hoc negotiations with the government, that would truly promote the consolidation of democracy in Argentina.

### **3.3. Alternative Explanations for the Collapse of Peronist Party-Building Projects**

Three groups of alternative explanations—genetic, systemic, and internal—can be devised to explain the repeated collapse of Peronist party-building projects in the post-1955 period. After questioning at a logical level the capacity of genetic explanations to provide a complete account for these episodes of collapse, we assess on empirical grounds the relative merits of explanations falling into the systemic and internal categories.

Some recent scholarly work on twentieth-century Latin American politics has highlighted the notion that “critical junctures” punctuate the political evolution of Latin American countries (Collier and Collier 1989). Critical junctures are defined as brief periods in a country’s history during which patterns of interaction among major social and political actors are transformed into new configurations that then become “frozen” into place over many subsequent decades.<sup>xxxix</sup> The 1943-1955 Peronist period is said to be one of the best examples of a critical juncture. The new patterns of party competition, interest group representation, and ideological conflict that grew up under Perón were, it is argued, largely frozen into place over subsequent decades. A genetic argument for the collapse of post-1955 Peronist party-building projects would explain that phenomenon in terms of ideas and institutions inherited from the Peronist era—Perón’s disparaging statements about parties and politicians, the direct, party-unmediated affective ties between Perón and the “masses,” the fact that the original party never developed a cadre of leaders capable of bargaining for survival or of forging an effective clandestine organization once Perón had been expelled from the state apparatus, etc.

These aspects of the “legacy” of the Peronist period are obviously important, but any argument that a tradition of weak party institutionalization was “frozen” into place under Perón needs to explain why this frozen legacy did not “melt” when heated up by the individual and collective party-building incentives described in section 3.1. To prevent these party-building incentives from bearing fruit, some factors specific to the post-1955 period must have “refrigerated” the tradition of weak party institutionalization. It will be argued in this section that the main “refrigerant” was conflict in the Peronist union leadership. To support this argument, the “union leader conflict” hypothesis for the persistence of weak union-party ties (i.e. for the collapse of Peronist party-building efforts) will be shown to have more explanatory power than two other “internal” hypotheses and three plausible “systemic” hypotheses about the same phenomenon.

Let us turn first to some plausible “systemic” explanations for Peronism’s poor institutionalization as a party. The systemic explanations, it will be recalled, focus on the relationship between Peronism and the broader political system. One such explanation, the “proscription” hypothesis, attributes Peronism’s poor party institutionalization to anti-Peronist electoral restrictions in force after 1955. The main problems with the proscription hypothesis were



pointed out in section 2.2, but it is worthwhile reviewing them here. First, Vandor's party-building project—the first important Peronist party-building project since Perón's 1955 exile—failed not during a period when proscription was being rigidly enforced but during the Illia government, when proscription had been significantly relaxed. Second, the aspects of proscription that Illia did *not* relax had the effect of outlawing any party beholden to Perón himself. By outlawing a party representing Peronism *with* Perón, the aspects of proscription that remained in effect under Illia actually facilitated the institutionalization of a political party representing Peronism *without* Perón—precisely the kind of party Vandor was trying to create. Third, the proscription hypothesis cannot explain why Peronism remained poorly institutionalized as a party during under the 1973-76 and post-1983 governments, which were elected without proscriptions.<sup>xxxii</sup>

A second systemic explanation for the post-1955 persistence of weak union-party ties could be that non-Peronist governments, interested in winning the next election, might use the resources of the state to obstruct efforts to make the Peronist party a viable political organization. This explanation is plausible for the 1963-66 and post-1983 Radical governments, which did in fact support Peronist factions opposing the dominant party-building effort. The Illia government tried to undermine Vandor's party-building effort by giving logistical support to the anti-Vandor Peronist candidate in the crucial Mendoza gubernatorial election of April 1966. Likewise, the Alfonsín government in 1987 made a pact with union leaders affiliated with the "orthodox" wing of the Justicialist (Peronist) Party, appointing one such leader as its labor minister. While numerous factors led to this appointment, some observers argued that it represented in part an effort to undercut the "renewal" wing of Peronism, which was spearheading a party-building project that, if successful, seemed at the time to pose a more serious electoral challenge to the Radical Party's electoral chances than would any Peronist party led by the rival "orthodox" wing. However, what might be called the "Radical Party machination" hypothesis cannot account for why no effective Peronist party emerged during the 1973-76 period, when it was the Peronists, not the Radicals, who controlled the executive branch of the state.

A third possible "systemic" explanation for why post-1955 Peronism has not become better institutionalized as a party involves the presumption that Peronist leaders must continually contemplate the possibility of a military coup, in which case any party-building initiative they might have undertaken would have been in vain. Although the perceived possibility of a coup is lower during the current Alfonsín government than it was after the initial stages of both the 1963-66 and 1973-76 governments, few historically aware Argentines rule out completely the possibility of a coup prior to the 1989 presidential contest. Hence, this third "uncertainty about a coup" systemic explanation has *prima facie* plausibility, if only because it was present during each period when party-building projects failed or were stalemated, and because one can easily detail the mechanisms by which it might have contributed to the failure of each of those party-building

projects. What the “uncertainty about a coup” hypothesis *cannot* do is to explain why the Peronist party-building projects *got started in the first place*. After all, if Peronist leaders were really that worried about a coup, why did any of them even bother to try to build a party? Moreover, if Peronist leaders were worried about a coup, the leaders of other political forces should have shared these fears, but there is no evidence (except in the very final stages of the Illia and Isabel Perón governments) that the leaders of, say, the Radical Party had abandoned politicking and resigned themselves to the probability of a coup.

Hence, as global explanations for why Peronism has not become better institutionalized as a party in post-1955 Argentina, the proscription, Radical Party machination, and uncertainty about a coup hypotheses are limited in their independent explanatory power. While all of these hypothesized systemic factors may have *contributed* to the persistence of weak union-party ties, none appears to have been *necessary* for these outcomes. This conclusion lends support to one of this study’s main hypotheses: that factors internal to the Peronist movement, especially factionalism in the Peronist union leadership, have played a key role in impeding the institutionalization of a Peronist party.

Besides factionalism in the Peronist union leadership, two other “internal” explanations might plausibly account for the failure of Peronist party-building projects in the post-1955 period. The first of these “internal” alternatives, which focus on factors *within* the Peronist movement (rather than on aspects of the relationship *between* the Peronist movement and other political actors), has to do with Perón’s efforts to preserve control of his political following. Perón’s deliberate effort to foil the institutionalization of a party representing “Peronism without Perón” was clearly a major cause of the failure of the 1963-66 party-building project spearheaded by Vandor. But as suggested in section 3.2, Perón’s machinations would probably have failed to undermine Vandor’s project had they not received logistical support from the anti-Vandor factions of Peronist unionism. Moreover, the two subsequent Peronist party-building efforts (in 1974-75 and 1983-88) failed *after* Perón’s death.

Out of the economic crises for which Argentina is famous might be constructed a second possible “internal” explanation for the failure of Peronist party-building projects. In this scenario, Peronist union leaders—who control financial and organizational resources essential to building a Peronist party—would find their attention so captured by bread-and-butter issues at times of economic crisis that they would not be able to devote sufficient time and energy to the open-ended, medium-term project of constructing a viable political party. Though this “economic crisis creates other demands on union leader energies” hypothesis could have been operative for the latter part of the 1973-76 period and to some extent for the post-1983 period, it obviously does not apply to the 1963-66 era, which until its last six months was one of economic recovery and boom.

The five alternative hypotheses discussed in the preceding paragraphs—three systemic and two internal—are summarized Table 2. This table uses John Stuart Mill's "method of agreement"<sup>xxxiii</sup> to compare the "union leader conflict" hypothesis to the five alternative hypotheses. The "method of agreement" proceeds as follows. The researcher, noting that widely differing contexts have produced surprisingly similar outcomes, searches for elements that remain constant across the otherwise heterogeneous contexts. If such elements are found, they are candidates for explanatory factors. As can be seen from the chart, conflict among Peronist union leaders stands out as such a candidate, while the other five hypotheses appear less promising as global explanations for the demise of Peronist party-building projects in the post-1955 period.

The entries in this table are based on the author's judgement about how to score the variables during each of the three periods in question. This method, while obviously problematic, is less so than it might be owing to the roughness of the distinctions called for. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the purpose of this discussion of alternative explanations for the failure of Peronist party-building projects is not to demonstrate that the union leader factionalism hypothesis is correct and that the alternatives are not, but merely to suggest some limitations on the explanatory power of the alternative hypotheses, and to illustrate that factional conflict in the Peronist union leadership may help significantly to account for outcomes that the alternatives do not easily explain.

#### **4. Unions, Parties, and Democracy in Argentina**

Having explored the causes of Peronism's failure to institutionalize itself better as a party, let us examine how this failure may have impeded the consolidation of democracy in post-1955 Argentina. After suggesting as a broad empirical generalization that an effective system of party competition, which presupposes minimally institutionalized parties, appears to be a precondition for democracy, it is argued that the *reason* why party competition may be a precondition for democracy is that the *alternatives* to party competition (as a forum for organizing and channelling the demands of a country's powerful and politicized socioeconomic actors) appear to *impede* the consolidation of democracy. This argument is then applied to the case of Argentina.

##### **4.1. Democracy and Party Competition**

Democracy has been sustained longest and most fully where party competition and party government have become integral features of the political system (Smith 1986:206). To think of an empirical case of a full-fledged political democracy based on something other than an effective system of competing political parties requires strenuous interpretive gymnastics. Though such a

democracy is conceivable (Sartori 1976:47; Epstein 1967:13-14), the typical pattern for moderately advanced capitalist societies lacking effective systems of party competition is to descend into fascism, authoritarian corporatism, or military dictatorship.

Except for some references to a presumed affinity between the nature and operation of competitive party systems and the “values and attributes of liberal democracy” (pluralism, qualified majority rule, limited government) (Smith 1986:206), little theoretical work has been done to specify the causal or functional relationships between democracy and party competition. Is an effective system of political party competition a condition, cause, concomitant, component, or consequence of a democratic political regime? The main works on political parties and party systems do not provide a clear answer to this question. To even begin to address the issue, the key concepts need to be specified.

A political regime is understood here as a set of rules for access to top state decision-making posts (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986:73n). A fully democratic political regime may be said to exist where such rules involve fair<sup>xxxiv</sup> and periodic contests between two or more candidates for the people's vote, and where the prevailing definition of the “people” includes the vast majority of the country's adult inhabitants, with the exception of foreign citizens and perhaps a few other groups like convicted criminals or the clinically insane. In short, the democracy referred to here is representative procedural democracy along the lines discussed by Schumpeter (1975:269) and Duverger (1959:353), and the criteria just referred to are basically the same as the “public contestation” and “participation” that Dahl (1971:7) identified in his discussion of democratization.<sup>xxxv</sup>

This definition of a democratic political regime is obviously a “minimalist” one, an ideal type useful for purposes of comparison rather than a comprehensive listing of all the features integral to a democratic relationship between a citizenry and its government. Such a listing would have to include the rights to free speech and association, the absence of institutionalized discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, etc., and other rights commonly associated with broader definitions of representative procedural democracy. Such broader definitions are usually employed, for example, in attempts to quantify democracy for use in cross-national comparisons (Johnson 1977, Bollen 1980). However, it seems useful to categorize freedom of speech and so on as “*requirements* of a democracy among a large number of people” (Dahl 1971:3; emphasis added) rather than as *aspects* of the definition of democracy itself. As a general rule, the definitions of democracy most useful for analysis tend not to be those that inflate the term to encompass democracy's hypothesized causes or conditions. Less useful still are polemical definitions that include everything the analyst feels is normatively desirable in a polity and society. On the other hand, no definition of democracy should pretend to be anything more than a

working definition: it is neither likely nor desirable that struggle over the content of a term with as many and as rich connotations as “democracy” should ever be decided once and for all.

Political party competition, for its part, presupposes the existence of at least two parties, each with enough electoral strength to make a victory at the polls a credible (even if remote) possibility, and each with a minimum of organizational sophistication and continuity. Each must be prepared to act as a loyal opposition, and each must be willing to refrain after an electoral victory from changing the rules of the game in such a way as to make it impossible for opposing political parties to win a subsequent election. A system of political party competition is more effective to the extent that each of the socioeconomic forces powerful enough to “matter” politically expresses its broad political interests through at least one of the country’s political parties.

Having defined the principal concepts, it is possible to attempt to specify more precisely the relationship between democracy and party competition. In one view (Dahl 1966:xvi, emphasis added), party competition is seen as a component of democracy.

Today one is inclined to regard the existence of an opposition party as very nearly the most distinctive *characteristic* of democracy itself; and we take the absence of an opposition party as evidence, if not always conclusive proof, for the absence of democracy.

It seems unwise, however, to consider party competition as a characteristic or component of democracy. As Leon Epstein (1967:13-14) points out,

Electoral competition and the subsequent management of government might conceivably be ordered without parties although, given the Western experience, it is hard to imagine such a state of affairs... So far, parties have developed in every democratic nation.

Because democracy, as defined here, consists of periodic competition among candidates for the peoples’ vote, and because vehicles other than parties could conceivably supply such candidates, an effective system of party competition is analytically distinct from democracy. Such a system is not, in other words, a *component* of democracy, even if one is never found without the other.

Yet if democratic regimes are never found outside of polities with effective systems of party competition, it is hardly likely that the correspondence is accidental, i.e., that the two phenomena are merely *concomitants*. Unfortunately, individual national histories, with their nuances of timing and sequence, do not provide a firm basis on which to answer definitively the question of whether an effective system of party competition is a condition, cause, or consequence of a democratic political regime. Most analysts seem to lean toward “condition.” For James Bryce (1921 V.1:119), “no one has shown how representative democracy could be worked without [parties].” For V.O. Key Jr. (1942:9-10), “democratic orders have discovered no other way, besides party systems, for organizing succession.” And E.E. Schattschneider (1942:1), while boldly asserting that parties “have created democracy” (i.e. parties are causes of

democracy), goes on to argue more temperately that democracy “is unthinkable save in terms of the parties” (i.e. parties are necessary conditions for democracy). A cautious preliminary answer to the question of whether an effective system of party competition is a condition, cause, or consequence of a democratic political regime—and one that takes account of the strong probability that weak party systems and difficulties in consolidating democracy are mutually reinforcing—would be “a little of each.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> To the extent that an effective system of party competition is, in line with this answer, a condition for or perhaps even a cause of democracy, then whatever inhibits the development or survival of such a system must be regarded as a potential obstacle to democracy.

#### **4.2. Parties and Organized Interests in Argentina**

Throughout much of the 20th century, political democracy in Argentina has been partial, ephemeral, or non-existent. This is not surprising, in view of the preceding analysis, in a country where political party competition has been repeatedly interrupted, where powerful political leaders have sought to build majoritarian “movements” rather than political parties (Cavarozzi 1984:2-3; Rock 1987), and where parties representing large sectors of the population have often seen their possibilities for functioning challenged, obstructed, or denied. The result of these repeated blows to the system of party competition has been to render it ineffective, creating a political vacuum that has been filled by the country’s organized interest groups: the armed forces, the Church, employers’, ranchers’, farmers’, and merchants’ associations, and the trade unions.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Particularly since Perón was ousted in 1955, political demands in Argentina have been organized and channeled more by these organized interests than by political parties. This balance of forces between the parties and organized interests has impeded the consolidation of a stable democratic political regime.

Organized interests tend to pressure the national executive on behalf of the immediate sectoral or corporate interests of the particular social group each represents. They are geared for combat, and their demands are invariably backed by an implicit threat of coercion. The armed forces realize this threat through coups and *planteos* (demands for policy or personnel changes backed by the implicit threat of a coup in the event of non-compliance), workers’ and employers’ organizations by withdrawing their labor and investment respectively. By contrast, political parties—at least those committed to “formal” democracy—are compelled by the heterogeneity of their social bases, which invariably exceeds that of the unions and employers’ associations, to aggregate and reconcile a variety of interests. More than organized interests, they tend to be guided by a logic of compromise, based on the need to maximize votes at election time and to gather support for legislation in Congress.

All other things being equal, the possibilities for consolidating a democratic political regime are enhanced to the degree that at least the broader political demands of the major socioeconomic sectors are channeled through political parties with their greater propensity toward compromise, rather than by organized interests with their tendency to promote narrow, short-term goals by “twisting the arm” of the national executive with threats to withhold their labor, investment, or willingness to refrain from a coup.

Channeling a greater share of political power through the party system need not imply the exclusion of groups like unions and employers’ associations from public policy-making. Within an institutionalized framework, the political participation of such organized interests, particularly in setting broad wage and price guidelines, can contribute to meeting economic challenges and to strengthening democratic institutions by providing an alternative to labor and investment strikes. On the basis of the European experience, however, it is apparent that mechanisms for incomes policy “concertation” are difficult to institutionalize in the absence of a strong labor-based political party that, through its position in the legislature and through its control of, potential to control, or influence over the national executive, can compensate for the disadvantages that labor faces in the marketplace with respect to capital.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The existence of a strong labor-based party supplies a partial guarantee that the state and employers will deliver the long-term benefits in exchange for which workers have agreed to short-term sacrifices. Without such a guarantee, unions acting “rationally” will be less inclined to enter into bargains that require their constituents to moderate their immediate demands. Moreover, a labor-based political party commanding the respect of ordinary workers can appeal to its constituents to refrain from launching wildcat strikes once a bargain has been struck, increasing employer confidence that the union leaders with whom they are negotiating will be able to “deliver the goods” (Pizzorno 1978). From this perspective, the emergence of stronger union-party ties, even as it reduces the urgency for concertation (by providing an alternative to strikes as a channel for the expression of workers’ broad political demands), increases the possibility that concertation will succeed (by providing partial guarantees to both workers and employers that decisions made at the bargaining table will remain binding).

#### **4.3. Weak Union-Party Ties and “Political” Strikes: Effects on Democracy**

In the absence of a Peronist party regarded as useful for making political demands, the predominantly Peronist labor movement has searched for other ways of expressing those demands. Because strikes, factory occupations, and mass demonstrations are the political instruments most readily accessible to a labor movement with weak party ties, these modes of political action have become “by default” the main channels through which the labor movement has acted politically. By impeding the institutionalization of an effective Peronist party, conflict

among Peronist union leaders has played an indirect role in promoting politically-aimed strikes and demonstrations. Such conflict however has also set in motion a separate dynamic that has played a more direct role in promoting politically-aimed strikes and demonstrations. After analyzing this dynamic, examples are given of how the Peronist union leadership has used strikes and demonstrations (or threats thereof) as “political bargaining” tools under the Illia, Perón, and Alfonsín governments. We conclude by summarizing how the use of strikes and demonstrations in political bargaining can seriously weaken newly implanted civilian governments, and by assessing Argentina’s current prospects for transforming newly implanted civilian rule into stable political democracy.

The popular press in Argentina often cites conflict among union leaders as a cause of strikes and demonstrations. However, it rarely suggests mechanisms by which such conflict might be translated into strikes and demonstrations. What follows is a hypothesis about how this translation occurs, focusing on the impact of smaller unions on larger ones and on the impact of base-level militants on national-level union leaders. Many of Argentina’s large, cohesive, relatively rich, and economically important unions have considerable negotiating power with employers and the state. The leaders of such unions as the metalworkers or oil workers can “twist the arm” of employers or of the government by threatening to cut off production and/or to call their large and concentrated memberships into the streets. Given the costs to all sides of such action, government officials, employers, and the leaders of these relatively strong unions prefer to keep this threat latent, and to settle disputes through back-room bargaining. However, pressure from smaller, poorer, and less economically important unions, which lack equivalent negotiating power with employers and the state, can force the stronger unions into a more combative position. Striking usually entails even more costs to weaker unions than to stronger ones, but because weaker unions have less impressive resources with which to bargain, these costs are not offset by countervailing incentives to negotiate. The leaders of the weaker unions thus appeal more readily to strikes and militant rhetoric, and sometimes accuse the leaders of the stronger unions of “selling out” the Peronist movement and/or the less privileged sectors of the working class to gain preferential treatment for their unions (e.g. special wage concessions).<sup>xxxix</sup>

Especially at times of economic crisis and associated rank-and-file pressure, such pressure from the weaker unions can serve as a warning to the leaders of the stronger ones that continued conciliation toward employers and the government may alienate base-level militants, raising the specter that the rank and file will repudiate the national leadership or that more combative union locals will break away from the parent union. If this dynamic takes hold, the overall level of socially significant strike activity is raised as the stronger unions join the weaker ones in taking to the streets, hoping thereby to demonstrate their commitment to their members’ welfare (even if striking in the midst of an economic crisis is not always a good way to ensure their



members' welfare, either in the long run or, given increased employer intransigence during such periods, in the short run).

The dynamic described in the preceding paragraphs has been most evident in the post-1983 period, but let us back up for a moment to analyze how the union leadership used strikes and demonstrations to political ends during the three governments studied in this paper. The CGT's 1963-1965 Battle Plan, whose second stage in 1964 consisted of an enormous wave of factory occupations, is usually interpreted as having been launched with the intent of weakening the government of Arturo Illia to the point where it could not function. What the union leaders hoped would replace the Illia government is a matter of some controversy, with some observers viewing the Battle Plan as an attempt to force the government to give the union leaders direct participation in policy-making, others seeing it as an effort to restore Perón to the presidency, and still others interpreting it as an invitation to a military coup that would create, some union leaders hoped, a new edition of the "union of the *pueblo* and the armed forces" that they considered to have existed under Perón.<sup>xl</sup>

After Perón's return to the presidency in 1973 and his endorsement of a "social pact" among the CGT, business leaders, and government officials, many unions launched strikes and demonstrations in a largely successful effort to force the government to relax its wage guidelines. When Perón died in 1974, leaving the government in the hands of the bizarre López Rega clique surrounding Isabel Perón, the CGT again used strikes and demonstrations to try to gain more influence over policy. In June 1975, it launched a two-day general strike that succeeded in its aim of forcing the removal of López Rega and his cronies, who had just imposed an ultra-conservative stabilization program.<sup>xli</sup>

The twelve general strikes (lasting from 12 to 36 hours) that the CGT has called between September 1984 and September 1988 have been aimed at changing the content of government policy, not at creating a climate propitious for overthrowing the Alfonsín government. In May 1985, however, CGT Secretary-General Saúl Ubaldini raised the specter of a repetition of the Illia experience by challenging the government to "change its economic policy or get out."<sup>xlii</sup> Although the statement was much more of a verbal *faux pas* than a veiled threat—Ubaldini, who was in the forefront of the pre-1983 struggle to restore the institutions of liberal democracy, now seems genuinely committed to preserving them—the storm of criticism it provoked showed that many Argentines remain fearful that union combativeness still has the potential to generate a climate of instability within which democratic institutions cannot function. Similar questions about the unions' commitment to democracy were raised when Miguel Angel Correa, head of the CGT's Córdoba regional (and closely tied to Córdoba's notorious Third Army Corps), announced that a thirty-six hour general strike planned for April 1986 would be "revolutionary" in character. Pressed

to define what he meant by “revolutionary,” Correa denied advocating the overthrow of the government.<sup>xliii</sup>

Each of these episodes forms part of a syndrome of union political action in which strikes and demonstrations, coupled with sporadic ad hoc negotiations with the national executive, have almost completely supplanted political party and parliamentary activity and institutionalized bargaining over incomes policy as the main channels through which workers and unions express their broad political interests. The intensive use by the Peronist union leadership of general strikes and factory occupation campaigns has worked against the consolidation of a democratic political regime.

Strikes and mass demonstrations constitute oblique and rather blunt instruments for expressing workers’ political interests. At best, they are means of vetoing policies which are inconsistent with these interests; at worst, they create a power vacuum to be filled by political forces whose orientations are difficult to predict. A strike which “succeeds” in the political arena is one that vetoes a policy or topples a government perceived by the strikers as “undesirable.” This “success,” however, may prove ephemeral, since without *institutionalized* access to the state (as is given by a pro-labor political party or by established incomes policy “concertation” arrangements) the strikers and their supporters have no guarantee that the new policy or government will be any more compatible with their perceived interests than the last one was. There is no reason to believe that, in the long run, the use of strikes and demonstrations as the primary means of promoting workers’ political interests will result in policies or political arrangements beneficial to the workers themselves, much less to society as a whole. Taking a long-term perspective, an alliance between the unions and a political party with representation in the legislature and with full, partial, or potential control over the national executive is more likely than the blunt instrument of strikes and mobilizations to produce policies and political arrangements that truly benefit workers. In addition, it is more likely to contribute to the consolidation of democratic political institutions in a country where unions are powerful and deeply affected by government policies.

Strikes, mass worker mobilizations, and other direct action measures organized by Peronist union leaders have not had a uniformly negative impact on democracy. When army officers accused of human rights violations launched uprisings in April 1987 to attempt to force the government to grant them an amnesty, the CGT, led by Secretary-General Ubaldini, declared a general strike in support of democracy (the main rebellion fizzled out the day before the strike was to have taken place). Under military governments, moreover, union combativeness has often helped to bring about a democratic opening. Most analysts agree that the adoption of combative postures by key sectors of the union movement in May 1969 (the mass uprising in Córdoba known as the Cordobazo) and in April 1982 (the general strike that took place on the eve of the

war with Britain) made important contributions to the electoral openings of 1973 and 1983. On balance, nonetheless, it seems justifiable to regard union combativeness as having had a net negative impact on democracy. For one thing, the 1987 general strike specifically in support of democracy was the first of its kind. For another, a strong argument can be made that the unions only found themselves in a position to contribute to these democratic openings because their combative stance toward the previous civilian government had helped to create a situation conducive to a military takeover.

To summarize, intra-Peronist conflict, both indirectly (by impeding the formation of an effective Peronist party) and directly (via the efforts of competing union leaders to appear more combative than their rivals), has created a situation in which politically-aimed strikes and demonstrations have almost completely supplanted party activity as the channel through which the Argentine labor movement has expressed its broad political demands. Such “political” strikes and demonstrations, when used intensively under precariously rooted civilian governments, can and have contributed to a “climate of instability” propitious for military coups. In addition, the absence of a Peronist party capable of channelling some of labor’s political demands appears to have reinforced among Peronist union leaders a general disenchantment with party politics and party government. Such skepticism may help explain why, except during the current Alfonsín government, most top union leaders in Argentina have been surprisingly reticent about taking a decisive stand against possible military coups, even though workers invariably suffer under the ensuing dictatorships. The mechanisms by which the absence of an effective Peronist party have impeded the consolidation of democracy in Argentina are diagrammed in Table 3.

Prior to the 1966 coup, some top union leaders were so disenchanted with party competition and party government that they collaborated with military officers promising a “union of the *pueblo* and the armed forces.” Such active collaboration did not take place prior to the 1976 coup, but few top union leaders were at Isabel Perón’s side when her government was overthrown, and there were numerous indications that many such leaders felt that a military government might not be much worse than government by civilian politicians<sup>XIV</sup> (even when those politicians—who came, by and large, not from any well-institutionalized Peronist party but from Isabel Perón’s personal entourage—identified themselves as Peronists). In the post-1983 period, however, broad sectors of the Peronist union leadership appear to be revaluing party activity, indicating that the possibility for consolidating democracy, insofar as the strengthening of union-party ties enhances this possibility, may be greater now than under the past two civilian governments.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The urban working class is not the only powerful social actor in Argentina to have circumvented the party system in expressing its political demands. The landowning elite has displayed similar behavior, and the absence of a political party representing the interests of this social actor contributed heavily to the original weakness of the party system. From a structural perspective, however, Argentina's lack of a strong labor-based political party is more perplexing than is the absence of a party representing the interests of the tiny landed elite. There are millions of urban workers in Argentina, most of whom have shared since the mid-1940s a common Peronist political identity. Because urban workers, unlike big landowners, are numerous, and because most workers in Argentina, unlike those in many other countries, share a common political identity, the labor movement's tendency to express its demands almost exclusively through non-party channels is more curious than is similar behavior by the landed elite. With their main social base in the large and predominantly Peronist labor movement, party organizations representing Peronism, though poorly institutionalized, have been formidable contenders at the polls, partly because urban workers share their Peronist political identities with a strong minority of the metropolitan middle classes, with many of the rural poor, and with numerous entrenched provincial politicians with local clientelistic followings.

<sup>2</sup> Argentina experienced military rule from 1955-58, 1966-1973, and 1976-1983. The 1962-63 interval was nominally one of civilian rule, but the military exercised enormous influence in shaping government policies during this period. To a lesser degree the same was true for the Frondizi government of 1958-1962, during which the military on more than thirty occasions threatened to launch a coup if its demands for policy and cabinet changes were not met.

<sup>3</sup> During and just after the November 1983 presidential election, the "National Coordinating Board" faction of the Radical Party (consisting mainly of left-of-center politicians from the Federal Capital) advocated initiating a "third historical movement" behind Alfonsín to succeed earlier "movements" led by Yrigoyen and Perón (Cavarozzi 1985:23). However, the initiative failed to generate support from other party factions. In fact, the unprecedented brutality of the 1976-1983 dictatorship appears to have triggered among Argentina's politically active sectors a re-valuation of the principle of political opposition and of the worthwhileness of party activity. How far this re-valuation will proceed in the face of deeply-ingrained historical tendencies toward "movementism" remains to be seen.

<sup>4</sup> On the characteristics of the Peronist party under Perón, see Little (1973), Ciria (1983:Chapter 3); and Blanksten (1953:335-343). The informal procedures by which the Peronist party actually chose its leaders and candidates are detailed in transcribed interviews with Oscar Albrieu, Alberto Iturbe, Delia Parodi, and Vicente Saadi at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella's Oral History Project (Buenos Aires).

<sup>5</sup> During 1953 and 1954, the leaders of many individual national-level unions, notably the metalworkers, textile workers, and electrical workers, became increasingly autonomous from Perón. By contrast, Perón retained the power to hand-pick whomever he wanted for top leadership positions within the CGT (Doyon 1978:407-425,561-578).

<sup>6</sup> On the emergence of the factory commissions during the Peronist period see James (1981:375-402) and Doyon (1984:210-212).

<sup>7</sup> The proscription of the Peronist party is a crucial element in Guillermo O'Donnell's analysis of 1955-1966 Argentine party politics as an "impossible game" (O'Donnell 1979:Chapter 4). In Gary Wynia's view, Peronist labor leaders during the Illia government "did all they could to encourage a coup by undermining Illia's authority at every turn, quite aware of where their efforts would lead" (Wynia 1986:131). According to Wynia (1978:126), actions like the CGT's 1964 campaign of factory occupations, which followed an election in which Peronist candidates were proscribed,

were motivated primarily by the Peronist union leadership's "opposition to the government because of the illegitimate manner of its election."

<sup>8</sup> The term "Vandorists" refers to the group of Peronist union leaders who supported the leadership of metalworkers' chief Augusto Vandor, the most powerful union leader in early 1960s Argentina.

<sup>9</sup> A discussion of the bases of union power in Argentina that coincides in many respects with the one given here may be found in Torre 1983:13-21.

<sup>10</sup> The Law of Professional Associations was inspired by Italian labor law under Mussolini, specifically the Ley Rocco of April 1926 (Zorrilla 1983:53). It was first enacted in 1943, then repealed later that year. It was enacted again, in a substantially modified (and what proved to be a definitive) form, in 1945, repealed again in 1956, restored in 1958, and modified substantially in 1973.

<sup>11</sup> On the notion of a "myth of a golden age" and its implications for the evolution of Argentine politics, see Halperín Donghi (1972:105) and Cavarozzi (1983:25-28). It needs to be emphasized that the 1943-1955 Peronist experience, despite its subsequent mythification and undeniable authoritarian components, was one of the most important steps toward building a full-fledged modern political democracy in Argentina. It incorporated into the political system important social actors, most notably the industrial working class, which had previously had very limited participation in politics.

<sup>12</sup> Perón's imminent return to the presidency in 1973 jostled the memories of many Peronist union leaders. "For those in a position to remember the vicissitudes of unionism during the first Peronist administration between 1946 and 1955, the years to come [1973 and beyond] were more than uncertain; they were filled with bad omens" (Torre 1983:43-44).

<sup>13</sup> The 1980 census counted more than two million persons employed by the state in public enterprises and in the civil administration at the national, provincial and municipal levels. The state is by far the largest employer in the country, employing 21 per cent of the economically active population and 29 per cent of wage and salary earners (Palomino 1985:21).

<sup>14</sup> An idea of the discretion a government enjoys in imposing such sanctions is given by Article 43 of the 1958 version of the law, which entitles the government to revoke a union's *personería gremial* for "violating legal or statutory dispositions" or for "failing to comply with dispositions dictated by competent authority [i.e. the government] in the exercise of its legal faculties." In other words, an error in computing the union dues deducted from a single worker's salary, or a single day's delay in calling a union assembly when the periodicity of such assemblies is written into the union's statutes, constitutes grounds for suspending or revoking a union's *personería gremial* (Lozada 1960:62-64).

<sup>15</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell (1982) traces the debates between "paternalists" and "liberals" in Onganía's military government over whether to repeal this law. The Law of Professional Associations issue remains alive in the post-1983 era, though debates over new collective bargaining legislation and over union representation on the boards of state enterprises have also come to the fore. Overshadowing all of these issues since 1983 has been a struggle between union leaders and government officials over which elite should be allowed to manage the vast social welfare funds generated by mandatory employer and worker contributions. As a reminder of the importance these organizational features of government labor policy may assume in relation to political and economic aspects, some union leaders in early 1985 were protesting the government's refusal to turn back to them the management of these social welfare funds (the *obras sociales*) even more strenuously than they spoke out against the drastic decline in real wages that was occurring at the time. This stress on the importance of union leader control over the *obras sociales* was particularly visible among a group of union leaders whose trajectory on the

national political stage led from guarded cooperation with the 1976-1983 military government, to the "Gestión y Trabajo" group in 1984 and 1985, and to the "Grupo de las 15" in 1987 (author's interviews).

<sup>16</sup> Unions were forbidden by the 1965 Statute of Political Parties to contribute directly to party coffers, but in practice they gave the Popular Union (the party label under which most Peronist candidates ran for national deputy seats in the March 1965 elections) financial aid by putting its candidates up in their hotels, printing leaflets, supplying automobiles and drivers, helping with security during the campaign, and contributing other indirect forms of assistance (interviews).

<sup>17</sup> The 1957 breakup of the Radicals into two mutually hostile parties, the Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (UCRI) and the Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo (UCRP), was crucial in contributing to the Peronists' perceived potential to win an unrestricted election. In the five major elections that took place in Argentina between 1957 and 1965, the Peronist vote (blank ballots and/or votes for neo-Peronist parties) never exceeded the combined vote of the two offshoots of the Radical party.

<sup>18</sup> These were the basic conditions for readmitting the Peronists to the political system as laid down in Articles 23, 35, 52, and 64 of the 1965 Statute of Political Parties (Law 16,652). For descriptions of this law and of the debates leading up to its approval, see *Primera Plana* 25 February 1964: 6; 15 March 1966:10, and 22 March 1966:16-17.

<sup>19</sup> *Primera Plana* 25 February 1964:6 and 24 March 1964:8.

<sup>20</sup> Of these four top Peronist union leaders only Framini, whose star fell in 1968 when he lost control of his union, would survive to see Perón return to the presidency. Vandor and Alonso were murdered by terrorists in 1969 and 1970 respectively. Olmos was killed in an automobile accident in 1968. Each of these unionists, it is interesting to note, played a significant role in the labor movement prior to 1955, suggesting that there is a need to modify the conventional wisdom that the post-1955 Peronist union leadership represented a "new generation." Vandor had been named in late 1954 to head the Federal Capital section of the metalworkers' union (*Primera Plana* 12 January 1965:11; Walsh 1985:135). Alonso had a much longer trajectory. In 1944, he helped to found the garment workers' union and served as its Secretary-General for most of the Perón period. Alonso was a member of the Argentine delegation to the annual ILO meeting in Switzerland six times during the Peronist period, and served on the editorial board of *La Prensa* after Perón handed it over to the CGT. In 1952, he was elected as a National Deputy from the Federal Capital and participated in important legislative projects until congress was closed in September 1955 (CGT 1949; typewritten report dated 6 February 1963 from the archives of *La Razón*; *Clarín* 28 August 1970). In 1954, Amado Olmos of the hospital workers' union joined Alonso in the Chamber of Deputies (*Primera Plana* 19 December 1967:48). Andrés Framini was elected Secretary-General of the textile workers' union in 1953 after making several unsuccessful bids for this post in the late 1940s and early 1950s (interviews; Doyon 1978:588).

<sup>21</sup> The "62 Organizations" was an informal group of top Peronist union leaders, formed in 1957, that billed itself as the "political arm of Peronist unionism" and effectively controlled the CGT from 1959 to 1976. Vandor and his allies gained control of the group in late 1959.

<sup>22</sup> *Primera Plana* 2 March 1965:9.

<sup>23</sup> Walsh 1985:146.

<sup>24</sup> José López Rega, who organized a right-wing death squad known by the acronym AAA, was in mid-1974 president Isabel Perón's personal adviser (and astrologer). In the months to come López Rega would be appointed minister of social welfare and would act as the de facto power behind the scenes in the government.

25 Diego Ibáñez of the oil workers and Jorge Triaca of the plastics workers were among the Peronist union leaders who parlayed support for Miguel into choice slots on the lists of Peronist national deputy candidates.

26 Iglesias' political views are not always easy to distinguish from those of right-wing extremists in the armed forces. The Alfonsín government, Iglesias suggested in a February 1985 interview with the conservative newspaper *La Prensa*, had been conducting "a propaganda campaign to defame not only men but institutions, like the armed forces and the Church, in order to impose a decadent lifestyle where pornography and nudity appear to be more important than the hunger and misery of the people." "The best help we can give to our Latin American brothers," Iglesias continued, "is to get our country moving...but to do so we cannot keep threatening the owners of land, raising taxes, or withholding [foreign exchange earnings from agricultural exporters]." Iglesias has strong opinions on the appropriate methods for conducting politics as well as on the content of policy. "Those who worry about the methods that must sometimes be used do not seem to be equally concerned by the aims of those who govern. A party of *señoritas* will not suffice to confront those who seek to dissolve the nation" (interview with Iglesias reprinted in *Mirador* (October 1985:10), the monthly newsletter of the glass workers' union).

27 Several interesting English-language analyses of the results of the 1983 elections may be found in *Government and Opposition* 19, No. 2 (Spring 1984). A more detailed study of the election results by analysts associated with the renewal wing of the Justicialist (Peronist) party is that of Maronese et al. (1985).

28 Miguel himself, who was one of a very few prominent Peronists to stand by Isabel Perón to the bitter end, spent three and a half years in prison after the 1976 coup, followed by a year of house arrest. Like Augusto Vandor, similarly a leader of the powerful metalworkers' union and of the "62 Organizations," Miguel likes to operate behind the scenes. For a rare interview with the metalworkers' chief, see *Siete Días* 19 December 1984:3-11.

29 Twelve general strikes in four years is surely a world record. The period of Alfonsín's government has witnessed a ritualization of the general strike to a degree unmatched in the annals of the technique.

30 In April 1985, a conservative Peronist union leader who would later become prominent member of the "15" group experienced a sudden attack of amnesia when questioned publicly about the "disappearance" of thousands of unionists during the military government. *La Razón* 25 April 1985:1, 12-15, 24-25; *Clarín* 27 April 1985:12.

31 The critical juncture idea in comparative politics is both contemporaneous with and parallel to the concept of "punctuated equilibrium" in new theories of evolution, which hold that presumed gaps in the fossil record actually reflect sudden, major changes in adaptation which are subsequently preserved with little change for millions of years.

32 In the May 1973 elections called by the military government of Alejandro Lanusse, Perón was effectively forbidden to stand as a presidential candidate. However, Perón won the presidency when new elections were called four months later. The 1983 elections, won by Alfonsín, were held without any kind of proscriptions.

33 John Stuart Mill, "Of the Four Methods of Experimental Inquiry" (In Mill 1874).

34 By a "fair" electoral contest is meant one without voter intimidation, proscription of candidates, electoral fraud, or similar impediments to a candidate's chances of winning the election.

35 It could be argued that no political regime would be fully democratic without a third defining characteristic, namely that the officials elected under such conditions were those who exercised

real power within the country. It does not seem necessary to include this obviously important consideration in the definition of the adjective “democratic,” however, since it is already implicit in the definition of the noun “regime” as involving rules for access to the “top” state decision-making posts, i.e. those from which real power is exercised.

36 It is also possible that democratic political regimes are always found in the context of effective party systems because both phenomena result from a common antecedent cause. Until such a cause can be specified, however, it seems reasonable to treat the relationship as a non-spurious one.

37 In the early 1960s, journalists, intellectuals, and politicians in Argentina began to refer to these organized interest groups as “power factors”: those social actors that (1) have “permanent roots” in society, (2) are able to formulate their own goals, (3) seek to influence national decisions, and (4) have enough power to constrain policy decisions by their mere presence. Discussions of the “power factor” concept may be found in Bidart Campos (1961) and Imaz (1964). Charles Anderson’s (1967) notion of “power contender” is quite similar to the power factor concept.

38 “Corporatist interest intermediation” appears to have been most successful in those European countries where Social Democratic parties constitute powerful political forces (Sweden and Austria being the outstanding examples). Social Democratic control of the national executive seems also to be correlated with reduced strike rates both cross-nationally and over time within countries (Korpi and Shalev 1979:164-187).

39 Such conflicts between big and small unions have been particularly visible during the 1959-1970 and post-1983 periods. The 1970-75 period, by contrast, due partly to the prevailing international climate (Allende in Chile, student protests around the world, the Medellín conference that launched the Movement of Third World Priests), saw serious conflicts based for the first time on ideological (left-right) differences begin to break out inside some of the more powerful unions (electrical workers, auto workers, metalworkers). By 1975, most of these conflicts had been resolved in favor of the right, though not before death squads had eliminated many of the principal figures on both sides.

40 Descriptions of the second stage of the CGTs battle plan and analyses of the motivations behind it may be found in Servicio de Documentación e Información Laboral, Informes Laborales No. 51 (May 1964):33-36 and No. 52 (June 1964):33-34; and in Bisio and Cordone 1980.

41 On union-government relations between 1973 and 1976, see Torre 1983 and Viola 1982.

42 Siete Días 23 May 1985:13.

43 La Razón 4 April 1986:19; 10 April 1986:12.

44 A few days before the coup took place, Casildo Herreras, the Secretary-General of the CGT, dealt with the impending overthrow of Isabel Perón’s government by saying “I wash my hands of the whole affair” (interview with Miguel Unamuno in Cardoso and Audi 1982:103).



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TABLE 1

## Argentine Presidents and Regimes 1943-1988

<b>Presidents</b> (Shading indicates military regime)	<b>Focus of Analysis</b>
1943 Castillo-->Rawson-->Ramírez 1944 Farrell	
1946 Perón	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- most workers become Peronists</li> <li>- unions become more powerful</li> <li>- unions become more politicized</li> <li>- Perón creates fragile, highly personalized party</li> </ul>
1955 Lonardi-->Aramburu  1958 Frondizi  1962 Guido (Military Dominated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perón exiled</li> <li>- Peronist party disbanded</li> <li>- Neo-Peronist parties appear</li> <li>- Peronist “62 Organizations” formed</li> <li>- Vandor consolidates power</li> <li>- Peronism moves away from Perón</li> </ul>
1963 Illia  <b>PERIOD 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1964 factory occupation campaign</li> <li>- Vandor party-building project</li> <li>- union leaders support 1966 coup</li> </ul>
1966 Onganía   1970 Levingston 1971 Lanusse	
1973 Cámpora>Lastiri>Perón 1974 Perón>Isabel <b>PERIOD 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1975 general strike</li> <li>- 1975-76 party-building project</li> <li>- union leaders accept 1976 coup</li> </ul>
1976 Videla   1981 Viola-->Galtieri 1982 Bignone	
1983 Alfonsín  <b>PERIOD 3</b>  1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 12 general strikes 1984-88; Ubal dini promotes CGT as main vehicle of Peronist opposition</li> <li>- battle between “orthodox” and “renewal” party-building projects</li> </ul>



TABLE 2

**Alternative Explanations  
for the Collapse of Peronist Party-Building Projects  
During Argentina's Three Most Recent Periods of Civilian Rule**

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	
	<b>(1963-66)</b>	<b>(1973-76)</b>	<b>(1983-88)</b>	
President	Arturo Illia	Juan Perón Isabel Perón	Raúl Alfonsín	
<u>A. Systemic explanations (involving relations <i>between</i> Peronism and other political actors)</u>				
Restrictions on Peronist party activity	Initially	No	No	
Radical Party government with interest in weak Peronist party	Yes	No	Yes	
Perceived possibility of military coup	Yes	Yes	Reduced	
<u>B. Internal explanations (involving relations among actors <i>within</i> Peronist movement)</u>				
Perón works to impede party institutionalization	Yes	No (Dies 1974)	No	
Economic crisis demands attention of Peronist union leaders	No	No (1973-4) Yes (1975-6)	Yes	
Factional conflict in the Peronist union leadership	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<u>C. Outcome of Peronist party-building project</u>				
	<b>Collapse</b>	<b>Collapse</b>	<b>Stalemate</b>	



**TABLE 3**

**How the Absence of an Effective Peronist Party  
Impedes Democratic Consolidation in Argentina**

party expressions of Peronism  
remain poorly institutionalized

Peronist unions lack  
allied political party  
to help express  
broad political demands

union leaders lack  
stake in continued  
party competition

(given union leader  
politicization)

intensive use of  
politically-aimed strikes  
and demonstrations

union leader  
support (1966)  
or tolerance (1976)  
for military coup

(given union power)

climate of instability  
in broader society

(given union power)

broad social acceptance  
of military coup

failure to convert  
civilian rule  
into stable  
political democracy

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END NOTES

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i The urban working class is not the only powerful social actor in Argentina to have circumvented the party system in expressing its political demands. The landowning elite has displayed similar behavior, and the absence of a political party representing the interests of this social actor contributed heavily to the original weakness of the party system. From a structural perspective, however, Argentina's lack of a strong labor-based political party is more perplexing than is the absence of a party representing the interests of the tiny landed elite. There are millions of urban workers in Argentina, most of whom have shared since the mid-1940s a common Peronist political identity. Because urban workers, unlike big landowners, are numerous, and because most workers in Argentina, unlike those in many other countries, share a common political identity, the labor movement's tendency to express its demands almost exclusively through non-party channels is more curious than is similar behavior by the landed elite. With their main social base in the large and predominantly Peronist labor movement, party organizations representing Peronism, though poorly institutionalized, have been formidable contenders at the polls, partly because urban workers share their Peronist political identities with a strong minority of the metropolitan middle classes, with many of the rural poor, and with numerous entrenched provincial politicians with local clientelistic followings.

ii Argentina experienced military rule from 1955-58, 1966-1973, and 1976-1983. The 1962-63 interval was nominally one of civilian rule, but the military exercised enormous influence in shaping government policies during this period. To a lesser degree the same was true for the Frondizi government of 1958-1962, during which the military on more than thirty occasions threatened to launch a coup if its demands for policy and cabinet changes were not met.

iii During and just after the November 1983 presidential election, the "National Coordinating Board" faction of the Radical Party (consisting mainly of left-of-center politicians from the Federal Capital) advocated initiating a "third historical movement" behind Alfonsín to succeed earlier "movements" led by Yrigoyen and Perón (Cavarozzi 1985:23). However, the initiative failed to generate support from other party factions. In fact, the unprecedented brutality of the 1976-1983 dictatorship appears to have triggered among Argentina's politically active sectors a re-valuation of the principle of political opposition and of the worthwhileness of party activity. How far this re-valuation will proceed in the face of deeply-ingrained historical tendencies toward "movementism" remains to be seen.

iv On the characteristics of the Peronist party under Perón, see Little (1973), Ciria (1983:Chapter 3); and Blanksten (1953:335-343). The informal procedures by which the Peronist party actually chose its leaders and candidates are detailed in transcribed interviews with Oscar Albrieu, Alberto Iturbe, Delia Parodi, and Vicente Saadi at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella's Oral History Project (Buenos Aires).

v During 1953 and 1954, the leaders of many individual national-level unions, notably the metalworkers, textile workers, and electrical workers, became increasingly autonomous from Perón. By contrast, Perón retained the power to hand-pick whomever he wanted for top leadership positions within the CGT (Doyon 1978:407-425,561-578).

vi On the emergence of the factory commissions during the Peronist period see James (1981:375-402) and Doyon (1984:210-212).

vii The proscription of the Peronist party is a crucial element in Guillermo O'Donnell's analysis of 1955-1966 Argentine party politics as an "impossible game" (O'Donnell 1979:Chapter 4). In Gary Wynia's view, Peronist labor leaders during the Illia government "did all they could to encourage a coup by undermining Illia's authority at every turn, quite aware of where their efforts would lead" (Wynia 1986:131). According to Wynia (1978:126), actions like the CGT's 1964 campaign of factory occupations, which followed an election in which Peronist candidates were proscribed, were motivated primarily by the Peronist union leadership's "opposition to the government because of the illegitimate manner of its election."

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viii The term “Vandorists” refers to the group of Peronist union leaders who supported the leadership of metalworkers’ chief Augusto Vandor, the most powerful union leader in early 1960s Argentina.

ix A discussion of the bases of union power in Argentina that coincides in many respects with the one given here may be found in Torre 1983:13-21.

x The Law of Professional Associations was inspired by Italian labor law under Mussolini, specifically the Ley Rocco of April 1926 (Zorrilla 1983:53). It was first enacted in 1943, then repealed later that year. It was enacted again, in a substantially modified (and what proved to be a definitive) form, in 1945, repealed again in 1956, restored in 1958, and modified substantially in 1973.

xi On the notion of a “myth of a golden age” and its implications for the evolution of Argentine politics, see Halperín Donghi (1972:105) and Cavarozzi (1983:25-28). It needs to be emphasized that the 1943-1955 Peronist experience, despite its subsequent mythification and undeniable authoritarian components, was one of the most important steps toward building a full-fledged modern political democracy in Argentina. It incorporated into the political system important social actors, most notably the industrial working class, which had previously had very limited participation in politics.

xii Perón’s imminent return to the presidency in 1973 jostled the memories of many Peronist union leaders. “For those in a position to remember the vicissitudes of unionism during the first Peronist administration between 1946 and 1955, the years to come [1973 and beyond] were more than uncertain; they were filled with bad omens” (Torre 1983:43-44).

xiii The 1980 census counted more than two million persons employed by the state in public enterprises and in the civil administration at the national, provincial and municipal levels. The state is by far the largest employer in the country, employing 21 per cent of the economically active population and 29 per cent of wage and salary earners (Palomino 1985:21).

xiv An idea of the discretion a government enjoys in imposing such sanctions is given by Article 43 of the 1958 version of the law, which entitles the government to revoke a union’s personería gremial for “violating legal or statutory dispositions” or for “failing to comply with dispositions dictated by competent authority [i.e. the government] in the exercise of its legal faculties.” In other words, an error in computing the union dues deducted from a single worker’s salary, or a single day’s delay in calling a union assembly when the periodicity of such assemblies is written into the union’s statutes, constitutes grounds for suspending or revoking a union’s personería gremial (Lozada 1960:62-64).

xv Guillermo O’Donnell (1982) traces the debates between “paternalists” and “liberals” in Onganía’s military government over whether to repeal this law. The Law of Professional Associations issue remains alive in the post-1983 era, though debates over new collective bargaining legislation and over union representation on the boards of state enterprises have also come to the fore. Overshadowing all of these issues since 1983 has been a struggle between union leaders and government officials over which elite should be allowed to manage the vast social welfare funds generated by mandatory employer and worker contributions. As a reminder of the importance these organizational features of government labor policy may assume in relation to political and economic aspects, some union leaders in early 1985 were protesting the government’s refusal to turn back to them the management of these social welfare funds (the obras sociales) even more strenuously than they spoke out against the drastic decline in real wages that was occurring at the time. This stress on the importance of union leader control over the obras sociales was particularly visible among a group of union leaders whose trajectory on the national political stage led from guarded cooperation with the 1976-1983 military government, to

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the “Gestión y Trabajo” group in 1984 and 1985, and to the “Grupo de las 15” in 1987 (author’s interviews).

xvi Unions were forbidden by the 1965 Statute of Political Parties to contribute directly to party coffers, but in practice they gave the Popular Union (the party label under which most Peronist candidates ran for national deputy seats in the March 1965 elections) financial aid by putting its candidates up in their hotels, printing leaflets, supplying automobiles and drivers, helping with security during the campaign, and contributing other indirect forms of assistance (interviews).

xvii The 1957 breakup of the Radicals into two mutually hostile parties, the Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (UCRI) and the Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo (UCRP), was crucial in contributing to the Peronists’ perceived potential to win an unrestricted election. In the five major elections that took place in Argentina between 1957 and 1965, the Peronist vote (blank ballots and/or votes for neo-Peronist parties) never exceeded the combined vote of the two offshoots of the Radical party.

xviii These were the basic conditions for readmitting the Peronists to the political system as laid down in Articles 23, 35, 52, and 64 of the 1965 Statute of Political Parties (Law 16,652). For descriptions of this law and of the debates leading up to its approval, see *Primera Plana* 25 February 1964: 6; 15 March 1966:10, and 22 March 1966:16-17.

xix *Primera Plana* 25 February 1964:6 and 24 March 1964:8.

xx Of these four top Peronist union leaders only Framini, whose star fell in 1968 when he lost control of his union, would survive to see Perón return to the presidency. Vandor and Alonso were murdered by terrorists in 1969 and 1970 respectively. Olmos was killed in an automobile accident in 1968. Each of these unionists, it is interesting to note, played a significant role in the labor movement prior to 1955, suggesting that there is a need to modify the conventional wisdom that the post-1955 Peronist union leadership represented a “new generation.” Vandor had been named in late 1954 to head the Federal Capital section of the metalworkers’ union (*Primera Plana* 12 January 1965:11; Walsh 1985:135). Alonso had a much longer trajectory. In 1944, he helped to found the garment workers’ union and served as its Secretary-General for most of the Perón period. Alonso was a member of the Argentine delegation to the annual ILO meeting in Switzerland six times during the Peronist period, and served on the editorial board of *La Prensa* after Perón handed it over to the CGT. In 1952, he was elected as a National Deputy from the Federal Capital and participated in important legislative projects until congress was closed in September 1955 (CGT 1949; typewritten report dated 6 February 1963 from the archives of *La Razón*; *Clarín* 28 August 1970). In 1954, Amado Olmos of the hospital workers’ union joined Alonso in the Chamber of Deputies (*Primera Plana* 19 December 1967:48). Andrés Framini was elected Secretary-General of the textile workers’ union in 1953 after making several unsuccessful bids for this post in the late 1940s and early 1950s (interviews; Doyon 1978:588).

xxi The “62 Organizations” was an informal group of top Peronist union leaders, formed in 1957, that billed itself as the “political arm of Peronist unionism” and effectively controlled the CGT from 1959 to 1976. Vandor and his allies gained control of the group in late 1959.

xxii *Primera Plana* 2 March 1965:9.

xxiii Walsh 1985:146.

xxiv José López Rega, who organized a right-wing death squad known by the acronym AAA, was in mid-1974 president Isabel Perón’s personal adviser (and astrologer). In the months to come López Rega would be appointed minister of social welfare and would act as the de facto power behind the scenes in the government.

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xxv Diego Ibáñez of the oil workers and Jorge Triaca of the plastics workers were among the Peronist union leaders who parlayed support for Miguel into choice slots on the lists of Peronist national deputy candidates.

xxvi Iglesias' political views are not always easy to distinguish from those of right-wing extremists in the armed forces. The Alfonsín government, Iglesias suggested in a February 1985 interview with the conservative newspaper *La Prensa*, had been conducting "a propaganda campaign to defame not only men but institutions, like the armed forces and the Church, in order to impose a decadent lifestyle where pornography and nudity appear to be more important than the hunger and misery of the people." "The best help we can give to our Latin American brothers," Iglesias continued, "is to get our country moving...but to do so we cannot keep threatening the owners of land, raising taxes, or withholding [foreign exchange earnings from agricultural exporters]." Iglesias has strong opinions on the appropriate methods for conducting politics as well as on the content of policy. "Those who worry about the methods that must sometimes be used do not seem to be equally concerned by the aims of those who govern. A party of señoritas will not suffice to confront those who seek to dissolve the nation" (interview with Iglesias reprinted in *Mirador* (October 1985:10), the monthly newsletter of the glass workers' union).

xxvii Several interesting English-language analyses of the results of the 1983 elections may be found in *Government and Opposition* 19, No. 2 (Spring 1984). A more detailed study of the election results by analysts associated with the renewal wing of the Justicialist (Peronist) party is that of Maronese et al. (1985).

xxviii Miguel himself, who was one of a very few prominent Peronists to stand by Isabel Perón to the bitter end, spent three and a half years in prison after the 1976 coup, followed by a year of house arrest. Like Augusto Vandor, similarly a leader of the powerful metalworkers' union and of the "62 Organizations," Miguel likes to operate behind the scenes. For a rare interview with the metalworkers' chief, see *Siete Días* 19 December 1984:3-11.

xxix Twelve general strikes in four years is surely a world record. The period of Alfonsín's government has witnessed a ritualization of the general strike to a degree unmatched in the annals of the technique.

xxx In April 1985, a conservative Peronist union leader who would later become prominent member of the "15" group experienced a sudden attack of amnesia when questioned publicly about the "disappearance" of thousands of unionists during the military government. *La Razón* 25 April 1985:1, 12-15, 24-25; *Clarín* 27 April 1985:12.

xxxi The critical juncture idea in comparative politics is both contemporaneous with and parallel to the concept of "punctuated equilibrium" in new theories of evolution, which hold that presumed gaps in the fossil record actually reflect sudden, major changes in adaptation which are subsequently preserved with little change for millions of years.

xxxii In the May 1973 elections called by the military government of Alejandro Lanusse, Perón was effectively forbidden to stand as a presidential candidate. However, Perón won the presidency when new elections were called four months later. The 1983 elections, won by Alfonsín, were held without any kind of proscriptions.

xxxiii John Stuart Mill, "Of the Four Methods of Experimental Inquiry" (In Mill 1874).

xxxiv By a "fair" electoral contest is meant one without voter intimidation, proscription of candidates, electoral fraud, or similar impediments to a candidate's chances of winning the election.

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xxxv It could be argued that no political regime would be fully democratic without a third defining characteristic, namely that the officials elected under such conditions were those who exercised real power within the country. It does not seem necessary to include this obviously important consideration in the definition of the adjective “democratic,” however, since it is already implicit in the definition of the noun “regime” as involving rules for access to the “top” state decision-making posts, i.e. those from which real power is exercised.

xxxvi It is also possible that democratic political regimes are always found in the context of effective party systems because both phenomena result from a common antecedent cause. Until such a cause can be specified, however, it seems reasonable to treat the relationship as a non-spurious one.

xxxvii In the early 1960s, journalists, intellectuals and politicians in Argentina began to refer to these organized interest groups as “power factors”: those social actors that (1) have “permanent roots” in society, (2) are able to formulate their own goals, (3) seek to influence national decisions, and (4) have enough power to constrain policy decisions by their mere presence. Discussions of the “power factor” concept may be found in Bidart Campos (1961) and Imaz (1964). Charles Anderson’s (1967) notion of “power contender” is quite similar to the power factor concept.

xxxviii “Corporatist interest intermediation” appears to have been most successful in those European countries where Social Democratic parties constitute powerful political forces (Sweden and Austria being the outstanding examples). Social Democratic control of the national executive seems also to be correlated with reduced strike rates both cross-nationally and over time within countries (Korpi and Shalev 1979:164-187).

xxxix Such conflicts between big and small unions have been particularly visible during the 1959-1970 and post-1983 periods. The 1970-75 period, by contrast, due partly to the prevailing international climate (Allende in Chile, student protests around the world, the Medellín conference that launched the Movement of Third World Priests), saw serious conflicts based for the first time on ideological (left-right) differences begin to break out inside some of the more powerful unions (electrical workers, auto workers, metalworkers). By 1975, most of these conflicts had been resolved in favor of the right, though not before death squads had eliminated many of the principal figures on both sides.

xl Descriptions of the second stage of the CGTs battle plan and analyses of the motivations behind it may be found in Servicio de Documentación e Información Laboral, Informes Laborales No. 51 (May 1964):33-36 and No. 52 (June 1964):33-34; and in Bisio and Cordone 1980.

xli On union-government relations between 1973 and 1976, see Torre 1983 and Viola 1982.

xlii Siete Días 23 May 1985:13.

xliii La Razón 4 April 1986:19; 10 April 1986:12.

xliv A few days before the coup took place, Casildo Herreras, the Secretary-General of the CGT, dealt with the impending overthrow of Isabel Perón’s government by saying “I wash my hands of the whole affair” (interview with Miguel Unamuno in Cardoso and Audi 1982:103).