

Introduction to Rozitchner

Léon Rozitchner is one of the generation of Argentine intellectuals who emerged in the 1950s around the journal *Contorno*. As a psychoanalyst and Marxist – and massively influenced, as were all his confrères, by Sartre and the phenomenological tradition – he undertook a lengthy theoretical project that attempted to engage psychoanalytical categories in the understanding of politics, most notably in explaining and countering that most protean and influential phenomenon of Argentine politics, Peronism – the baleful legacy of Juan Domingo Perón himself, and its links to the catastrophic dictatorship of 1976–83. From the seminal *Freud and the Limits of Bourgeois Individualism* (first edition 1972), in which he developed an account of the relation of psyche and capital, and the revolutionary implications of Freud’s supposedly ‘conservative’ social works, to the recent *The Thing and the Cross* (1997), in which he explores the archaeology of capitalism in Augustinian Christianity, Rozitchner has laboured to provide a categorial apparatus that links libido, leadership and economic form. But he has also been a prolific writer on the conjuncture, intervening for fifty years in debates on the Left across the continent. As a committed supporter of the Cuban Revolution, he lived in Havana during the early years, where, on the basis of interviews with captured Bay of Pigs invaders, he produced his important analysis of bourgeois morality, *Bourgeois Morality and Revolution* (1963) – the basis of the dilemmas addressed in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s film *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968). During the Argentine Junta’s period of power, the so-called *Proceso* or Process of National Reorganization, he lived in Venezuela. Never a popular intellectual, always prepared fiercely to oppose leftist pieties, he remains – now in his eighties – an imposing but strangely ignored figure of the Latin American Left, almost completely unknown in the English-speaking world, to the latter’s detriment.

‘Exile, War and Democracy’ was originally presented at a conference in 1984 on the reconstruction of Argentine political culture after the dictatorship had allowed the return of democracy (‘the Pact’) with the election of Raúl Alfonsín in 1983. As well as giving a flavour of the textual quality of his work and his attentive but cutting style of commentary, it develops some of the themes he discussed in his 1979 book on Perón, *Perón – Between Blood and Time*, in which Marx, Freud and Clausewitz are combined to form a framework of articulation. But perhaps what is most striking is his passionate denunciation of left-Peronist and leftist fantasies that were in some ways complicit with or tributary to the political debacles of the Process. This is the context for his harsh criticisms of Rodolfo Puiggrós, a well-known sociologist (one of the first to criticize the work of Andre Gunder Frank from a Marxist perspective) and member of the Argentine Communist Party, who had migrated to Peronism to become part of its ideological apparatus. Almost alone in the Argentine Left, Rozitchner opposed the Gadarene rush to support the Malvinas/Falklands adventure, seeing this capture of the oppositional energy of the Left by the Junta’s irredentist nationalism as a stunning defeat. Some of the key intellectuals involved in such support, like José Aricó and Juan Carlos Portantiero, who had been exiled in Mexico, were present at the conference Rozitchner addresses here. Rozitchner’s book *Las Malvinas: de la guerra sucia a la guerra limpia* (1985) also raises interesting questions for those of us who opposed the Thatcherite ‘recovery’ of the Falklands.

Philip Derbyshire and John Kraniauskas

Exile, war and democracy

An exemplary sequence

León Rozitchner

The question we want to pose is this: how do we open up a field of democratic politics as we emerge from terror and war?

In my exposition I will start where the previous speaker, Feinemann,* left off as he endorsed the categories that Perón had taken from Clausewitz to move from the discussion of war to that of political leadership. My analysis, which is at the same time a response, tries to offer a different analysis of the space of tolerance emerging as war disappears and politics appears and with it democracy. But in contrast to the formulations offered by Feinmann, my starting point keeps in mind the category of war as a *foundation* from which to think and perhaps to understand the problem of politics.

The pre-eminence of the categories of war in Perón's politics

The conception of war and politics that Feinemann finds in Clausewitz is the same as that developed by General Perón. In a book that was the fruit of lectures given in the Consejo Superior de Guerra, and which was later extensively used by the Peronist Left and the Montoneros† (some of its chapters being re-edited and published in Peronist political journals), Perón developed his theory of war, following the interpretation of Clausewitz that the French and German colonialist military (from Dudenrodorf to Marshall Foch) had put forward. He thus appropriated the categories used by the most aggressively reactionary European military: these figures thought of war as a process of internal domination over their own people and as the external conquest of foreign territories through which they could expand the domain of their own nation. These categories were: the war of annihilation, the imposition

of naked force, offensive war, the primacy of the war leader – the soldier become politician – as fundamental even in conditions of political peace. The central category that regulates this project is the global concept of the 'nation in arms'. These categories – impossible to develop in a dependent country – were the same ones that Perón applied to the political field. This was his 'originality'. Clearly, however, it was impossible to think of true national liberation from within such a conception of war, as the minds of our military were governed by the categories of the enemy. Since it was impossible for the military to assert control over external territory, they could only assert domination over what was internal to their own nation. They thus asserted domination over their own people. This is where General Perón applies the categories of war to the field of politics, so the latter becomes a field of simulated confrontation, a pure representation of a conflict of forces that is in fact avoided. Politics, in other words, is developed as if it were war, suggesting a radical confrontation. But this very conception was instrumental in the failure of the popular movement. Terror was its culmination, along with the murder of the very people who though ignorant of the origins of this conception of politics in Perón's misapplication of Clausewitz, nevertheless constituted themselves as his followers, saying: 'we are Perón's tactics'; the 'armed wing' of the Peronist body, they were subsequently snapped off by the General himself.

Let us begin, then, by posing our problem from another point of view, offering a critique of the categories of war as developed by Perón and the Right, and looking at them again in the light of how they emerge in Clausewitz.

The double concept of war and politics

One of Feinemann's first mistakes in his exposition of Clausewitz is the following: in Clausewitz there is not one theory of war but two, something Perón also failed

* Juan Pablo Feinemann is a historian and sociologist.

† The Montoneros were the armed wing of the Peronist Youth, annihilated along with the other guerrilla groupuscules in the early years of the military terror.

to see. The first theory of war, a purely 'objective' one, which both the Right and Perón leaned on, is a 'monist' theory that starts from an individualist conception, centred fundamentally on the annihilation of the adversary, the escalation of the conflict to extremes and the predominance of war over politics. Even Clausewitz criticized this as a 'logical fantasy', a spawn of the imagination, because it began by conceiving war as a 'duel' centred on the drives of an individual body and ignoring the powerful energies of the collective body of the people.

There is a second theory of war, critical of the former, and constituted as an account of a 'wonderful trinity'. This theory takes into account both the appearance of new popular forces and the advance of the Napoleonic army which transformed the whole military horizon of the French Revolution, on the one hand, *and* the undefeated resistance of the Spanish guerrilla war against those forces, on the other. It is this new experience that Clausewitz had to integrate into his theory of war. The 'wonderful trinity' is the basis of every war and comprises: (1) the 'natural' impulse of the people, which Clausewitz considers as a 'blind', merely natural force; (2) intelligence, which resides in the political cabinet and consists of the right-thinking rationality of politics in war, which the people lack; and (3) the war leader, who articulates the blind drives of the people with the forms of rationality elaborated by the cabinet and gives them soul and will to integrate and push them forward. This second conception of war is radically different from the first. Clausewitz formulates it on the basis of defensive rather than offensive war – that is, from the perspective of a nation that is defending itself from an enemy that is trying to occupy or has already occupied it. In other words, he transforms the categories of the powerful and colonizing, dominant force and reverses their perspective: how may its domination be confronted and opposed from within one's own nation? This leads Clausewitz to recognize the predominance of so-called 'negative' objectives over 'positive' ones. The colonizer and conqueror, the forces attacking and attempting to occupy a foreign territory, have a 'positive' objective: conquest. From the perspective of defence, and thus the defence of one's own national territory – the position of every dependent country – positive objectives acquire a different nuance: they simply become the attempt to preserve what the powerful want to seize from us by force. In the face of pillage and aggression, we define defence against an aggressor as 'negative'. From this perspective, Clausewitz criticizes the first theory of war – the one Perón defends.

War as illusion: the negation of politics as truce

Clausewitz criticizes the illusory, purely imaginary, daydream-like character of the first theory of war that posits the end of war as the annihilation of the enemy through a presumed escalation of the conflict to its extremes. This illusory field is associated with the overbearing mentality of the military in the dominant countries, who cannot conceive of a defensive, popular force, not just physical and technological but, above all, moral. This force is also material, albeit with a materiality the colonialist military are ignorant of. Hence the critique of war of annihilation: the people cannot be annihilated. There is thus no final and definitive destruction of the enemy while there is resistance.

And if there is no annihilation, every war results in a truce, in the opening up of a political dimension. Politics, there from the beginning, may seem to have disappeared in the deafening clamour of war, but it re-emerges and reveals itself again at war's end. The truce at the end of the war implies that both attacker and defender have come to an equilibrium. This is because, despite appearances, equilibrium is not simply decided by the attacker. It signals rather the appearance of a fundamental asymmetry between the attacker and the defender, which is what leads to the truce and hence the definition of peace. The fact is that although the attacker may be stronger on the offensive, the defender can be stronger on the defensive: they are of a *different nature* and of *unequal force*. And it is this fact – that there are two different forces in confrontation – which opens up the space of equilibrium we call truce, and which is, in reality, the opening up of a political field where war is continued by other means. Politics opens up as peace (a truce) between two wars: the one it emerges from and the one it moves towards.

It is obvious that Clausewitz is referring to war between nations and not to the confrontation of forces within a single nation, as is the case with revolutionary wars. His conception is important because it excludes the commonsensical appearance that separates politics from war, as if it were a matter of a radical or essential opposition: we are in both, although we do not want to be. Because when Clausewitz tells us that 'war is just the continuation of the politics of the state by other means', he means both are politics. It is also true that there is a fundamental difference between the armed confrontation to the death of war, and the peaceful truce of politics. But what is at issue in the essence of the phenomenon that defines conflict is in reality an appearance if we do not keep sight of the fact that politics is about the reorganization of forces.

Forgetting this could have fatal consequences for those who engage in the political field as if it were in reality – pure appearance of peace and not of truce – a formal field, a juridical pact and not an effective material field where the struggle continues to develop, only here too ‘by other means’. This is what we are now seeing. As we emerge from terror and the unpunished domination of the military over the whole nation, it would appear that we are required to think this new political space that has been opened up from a formal, purely juridical angle that is radically opposed to any reference to the development of our own (defensive) forces. This is because we continue to think with the categories of the forces that are on the offensive rather than with those on the defensive: with the simple concept of offensive physical force rather than from the perspective of that other force which is stronger in defence.

The Right’s categories of war on the Left

I think that this has been the consequence of thinking politics and war with the categories of the Right and the Colonizer. As the political and military model for the Left, furthermore, it preceded the appearance of terror. I also believe that it was a consequence of the way Perón deployed the apparent schema of radical confrontation in Argentina, taking under his power (and organizing as his own) the forces that in reality he wished to contain and split – those of the workers – leading them to failure, destruction and to the death of so many of his followers. It was Perón who posed the problem in terms of the categories of war: a simulated war that, as politics, deprived the people of the material and moral bases on which any real confrontation must be based. Because the truth is that he did everything necessary in this confrontation to strip the popular classes of their effective power and leave them disarmed, even though they *appeared* to have a force, which ideologically, materially and morally they had been deprived of.

The popular forces are powerful on the defensive

Hence our interest in taking up this problem again, but from a political position that does not move in the realm of appearance and does not exclude what is specific to each of the forces concerned. What is at issue in war is the following: paradoxically, the attacker, the one on the offensive, does not want war. The invader would prefer to take over the enemy terrain peacefully, make the enemy give up the will to resist, dominate him, and thus achieve the ‘positive’ object at the least cost. War only begins when the defender

resists this alien incursion and offers resistance and defence on the ground. War begins with confrontation and ends with a truce: not even the enemy’s surrender entails the end of the conflict. What opens up here is the field of another resistance, politics, in which what the war had not managed to settle continues to be elaborated, by other means. If there is no annihilation – only the nuclear bomb promises that – it means that the defeated enemy carries on with that peculiar and specific force that resists annihilation. At some level, at the point where the war stopped, the attacker (and, perhaps, victor) is stronger on the offensive, but the one who resists is stronger in defence. The truce is the point at which force, on its own, can do no more: here violence ceases, and the new sphere of politics opens up in which the suspended conflict will continue to develop. The conception of politics and war held by Peronist (and some non-Peronist) groups was shaped by a conception of the popular forces and armed confrontation that General Perón had imposed through his interpretation of war and politics. And it is these categories that prevent the appearance, constitution and development of a new force in the space opened up by the current truce – that is, in the new democracy that followed the military terror.

The new force

What is required is that we set out the preconditions of this new force so that in our restored democracy it is not tyrannized by a false choice: pure politics or pure war. By this I mean that we do not posit a purely formal politics, subject exclusively to a juridical schematism, which leaves out of consideration the new materiality and the new morality (and morale) that have to be created. I think that if we occlude the problem of the war from which the field of politics opened up we are condemned once more to the illusion of peace, a peace that obscures the fact of violence and death on which it rests. We will also be condemned to shock and surprise should terror erupt again, because we will have failed to recognize the depth of the enemy and his real force. We must recognize that in democracy, that is to say in truce, we need our own force to confront and contain the enemy. And the forceless formalism of Alfonsín’s Radical Party is insufficient for this task.

In reality, politics is a field that opens up after a prior war – whether a long time in the past or not. And it then appears as the result of a prior confrontation to the death. Confrontation in war, we have seen, opens up a site of transaction and formalized reconciliation within the juridical field which establishes the new norms that will regulate this confrontation of forces

without clear resolution. There are abundant examples of this emergence from war. The Latin American national revolutions show clearly how a new juridical space, that of liberalism, opened up after a prior war. This defined the norms and laws that came to regulate the economic, social and political relations of the area's inhabitants with each other: a new sharing out of power. This juridical field is in reality fenced in by the power of the victor. In the last instance, I insist, there will be a reorganization of forces, seemingly in peace, in order for the crucial confrontation to find another attempt at resolution. Politics, once again, does nothing more than prepare for this. No one has yielded power in peace, and politics is the extreme limit where this transformation of quantity into quality is elaborated. And in saying this we are not just talking in terms of physical force, in 'war' language. We are talking about that force which is of *a different nature* to that of the enemy. Only this force can avoid the armed confronta-

tion that the enemy wants and is counting on – because it is stronger on the offensive. The irruption of military force is the limit of democracy. The military forms a system with the political field that it engendered and had to expand as it emerged from the war with an external enemy, Britain, that it lost. 'The dirty war' was not a war, but just the unleashing of terror against a disarmed, internal enemy, whose perpetrators have yet to be punished.

What is peculiar to the force of 'a different nature' for confronting military armed force

So we are concerned with a force that is different from the merely armed force of military power. The nature of this force cannot be perceived if it is considered merely as a collective accumulation inscribed in the formal 'representation' of politics: it is a matter of

a real force. We are not fetishizing the 'fighter': the failure of that attitude among the armed guerrillas is patent and obvious. What we are saying is that this form of 'offensive' war was undertaken according to the enemy's categories, apparatus against apparatus, military force against military force. What we want to refer to here is another force, which has another materiality and another morality, a force which is more effective in defence than in offence. Under the conditions of democracy, only such a power could be real and different from military power which rests on nothing more than physical force. But as yet it can only be invoked, expressed as a desirable end. Nor is it a question of our wanting war, and precisely because we do not want it, we have to reconsider how to prevent our enemies from resorting to it. We have constantly to keep in view the limits of a merely formal approach to the project of democracy and consider the character of the truce that led to it, so that within this new space we can create the popular force that would consolidate and conquer its real power in the materiality that is peculiar to it. If not, I think that we are going to be faced with another disappointment in a few years' time. Even as we open up the field of democracy, we will be unable to counteract that shadowy power that confronts us, which is already, preparing for our undoing.



Daniel Santero, *Eva Perón Punishes the Marxist-Leninist Child*, 2005.

Beyond illusion

Hence I would like to talk about the responsibility that we all have to go beyond the fantasies and illusions that brought us to the current situation. It is not just an 'intellectual' or theoretical problem: it is a question of constructing a different reality and making it visible. And in the attempt to learn from our past experience and correct its mistakes and errors, we will use two examples, two political positions, both with their 'before' and 'after', where the mistakes that we are trying to point out are clearly revealed. The first example we will consider is that of Puiggrós. Here we see the passage from Peronism in power (1973) to its expression after the military had imposed their dictatorship (1977). The second example is the position taken on the Malvinas War by the Socialist Discussion Group in Mexico (1982) and the subsequent political positions adopted by two of its members in 1984. The first passage reveals the failure of a political project that had no real moral and material basis, which finished up in exile. The second reveals how the fantasy of a war to recover the Malvinas collapsed and was replaced by the acceptance of democracy in its purely formal aspect, a political field from which war would now be excluded and politics would be a social 'pact'.

Perhaps in these examples it is a matter of thinking through the concept of democracy which underlay both political projects and in both cases led, albeit unconsciously, to their failures. In part this was because of the conception of popular power that these projects sought to create, a conception that proved to be no longer viable. What is at issue is the following: what sort of relation is there between the formal and the material, the individual and the collective, the subjective and the objective, between what we have now and what we can hope for? What project would carry the relation between forces? In short, what is the relation between politics and war, peace and violence? How, then, can force and power be conceived?

First passage: from triumphalist Peronism to military terror – Rodolfo Puiggrós

In 1972 Rodolfo Puiggrós wrote *Where Are We Going, Argentines*, a book in which he outlines the road by which Argentina under the leadership of General Perón would arrive at national socialism, and hence the most developed form of social democracy. The year 1972 was when Argentine youth were feverishly caught up in Perón's imminent return: it was also the year when the guerrilla movement was developing with uncontainable intensity. They were prepared to risk and sacrifice

everything in the pursuit of a reality and politics from another time whose origin they were ignorant of. Puiggrós, among many others, offered a theoretical and historical basis for this new Left: his critique of the abstract and dependent character of Communist internationalism led him to stress the specifically national content, what was specific and *creole* (that is, Latin American) about our road to socialism. But this critique of the theory and practice of the Argentine Communist Party did not prevent him from remaining attached to the same old modality of Stalinism, even if this time it was nationally rooted. The dispersion of the social whole and hence the atomization of its forces – individuals and opposing interests, groups and levels of reality in which these find themselves dispersed (ideology, history, economy, politics, trade unions, armed forces) – find their unification in the Leader, who must contain and direct them towards national socialism:

This dispersion paralyses any tendency for change and shows the lack of a global and realistic conception of social and techno-scientific revolutions ... and manifests itself in the furious opposition to the leadership that is indispensable to push them forward.

Puiggrós thus outlines the key ideas, the two conditions for the move to socialism:

1. A global and realistic conception of socialist revolution that *inevitably* would have to develop in Argentina.
2. The *inevitable* necessity of the leadership of General Perón to attain it.

The exceptional nature of the moment, the uniqueness of the opportunity, does not escape him: 'We Argentines are living the decisive moment of our history which will mark our destiny for the coming centuries'.

In Puiggrós's conception, whose basic category of the 'historical dialectic' is the accentuation of the nationally particular (which would be the concrete) opposed to the universal (which would be the abstract), the dispersed collective in our reality, so different to any other, finds its specific and distinctive unity in the human figure of the Leader, Perón, where the two combine, as a point of departure. The totality in its dispersion converges in him: hence everyone must surrender his own self and submit to Perón's superior leadership. A happy sacrifice of the subjective: 'Party based liberalism is incompatible with the democracy of the working classes'. And this peculiar democracy is conceived as having

A single leadership that would centralise and drive forward the revolutionary activity of millions of Argentines (which) will save us from the great catastrophe and place us on the threshold of the vanguard of 21st century humanity.

The singleness of leadership means not only that it does not allow for co-participants but also that it is that supreme orientation of the interdependent technological revolutions, the union of theory and practice, the dialectical synthesis of ideology, politics, history, economics, trade unionism and the armed forces.

Since we want to understand this new force, the human foundation of its power, its 'different nature', it is useful to stress what Puiggrós makes of it. We thus read his conclusion: it is the integration of the individuals in the Leader that will solve the equation and determine the new meaning of human rights within the democratic society that transcends the limits of bourgeois individualism.

Puiggrós thus sets himself against the Rights of Man and the Citizen. These principles that bourgeois liberalism proclaims in law at the same time as it denies them in application in fact are also decisively negated by Puiggrós, as if what is stated in them were a mere mystification. He does not understand that at the juridical level they constitute a historic conquest which, distorted in reality, nevertheless remain a goal to be attained. On the contrary, forgetting the tension and the social conflict that exist between facts and law, and refusing to inscribe the full application of the Rights of Man as a specific goal for a truly socialist process, Puiggrós contents himself with flatly and blithely asserting that they must be 'transcended' in Peronism, in fact embedding their negation to the benefit of a state centralized under the leadership of General Perón.

The negation of the Rights of Man

Puiggrós considers 'individual freedom' as an abstraction and mystification. With the rule of the strong state, the mendacious idea appears that 'all men are free by nature' and 'free through the rule of law', as if this idea of freedom were not the expression of a historical struggle and the juridical reassertion of a conquest yet to be achieved: the historical struggle is about the shift from purely formal to material validity. And he accepts its 'transcendence' – its negation – in the Peronist state. Individual freedom, negated in its effective essence by liberalism, becomes unnecessary and dispensable in the organization of the centralized state.

The same thing happens with the 'freedom of the press', which Peronism would claim to carry beyond

its liberal conception: 'the freedom of the press has been defined in liberalism as the freedom to publish ideas, opinions and news without previous censorship and without legal action.' And he then claims that its 'transcendence' has been realized during General Perón's government under the direction of his secretary Apold in the Secretariat of Press and Broadcasting.

And the so-called pluralism of political parties would also be 'transcended' and supplanted by the single party:

Peronism [is] the greatest movement of the masses ever known in Argentina. Though the antagonism between liberal party politics and revolutionary popular nationalism is still played out in it, it can count on the backing of the workers and students who have chosen the road of the struggle for a socialism that grows from the seeds that already exist in their own country.

The single party, then, led by Perón, against the fragmentation of liberal party politics:

Never in the history of the nation have the popular masses reached such a level of politicization and such clarity about their objectives.

This politics rejected the Rights of Man as bourgeois and dissolved the subjugated individuality of men into the dictates and leadership of the Leader, who maintained the appearance of his power on the basis of a military and economic structure that was antagonistic to him. The corruption of union leaders consolidated the apparent power of the masses but limited to a strictly economic perspective. All this constructed an 'as if': the fantasy of a real power without a moral and material base. Collective organization in the service of the leader produced a simulation at the level of politics of preparedness for a real confrontation, for war, yet without material basis and support. This is why it dissolved at a stroke, without resistance to the military coup which began and found support inside the ranks of Peronism itself. Thus Peronism culminates in terror against its own forces, encouraged by General Perón.

But what is at issue for us, as we said at the outset, is the creation of a real force in the sphere of politics that would not leave the popular classes disarmed and defeated in the face of its enemies' political and military offensive. It is a question of a real power not a fantasized one, an apparent one, a mere representation that in reality is impotent both to resolve the conflict of interests in the field of politics and to prevent the emergence of idealist solutions to an unequal confrontation.

Outcome and verification

In 1977, when he was already in exile, Puiggrós published his confession and recantation. Here he negated everything that he had previously adored. He reveals the real basis of the fantasy and illusions that had been nurtured in those young people who had believed in the power that their fathers and the intellectuals had taught them to extol and had put forward as an alternative, as though there were a real revolution at stake.

In an interview that appeared in *The Argentine Case*, published in Mexico in 1977, the writer who had previously demanded the univocal leadership of the Leader confesses. Not only does he explain how Perón conquered the workers' organizations from his base in the military but also how he replaced their Marxist and leftist leadership, granting by gift of power what had previously been the result of a hard social struggle.

On the basis of his power, Perón dictated the resolution of industrial conflicts and strikes, using the threat of military intervention on behalf of the workers:

The strike is won like this and the Communist Peter is replaced by Colonel Perón. This happened in all the trade unions and explains how in a short time, weeks or days, the Argentine workers' movement is transformed. The old leaders, with years of struggle like Peter himself, are replaced by new ones who have no idea what socialism or any sort of social change is about, but who are very conscious of the need to raise the standard of living of the workers. In this way, the Peronism of Perón and Evita is a movement born without its own ideology, it is pragmatist.

Perón had no precursors, preparation or knowledge of social struggles. He was ambitious but not in the pejorative sense.

What Puiggrós had previously held to be the basis of revolutionary and socialist drive, he now confesses to be the original sources of failure, something hidden in the mythical account of Peronist history.

The problem for the Peronist masses was not social transformation ... It was a heterogeneous movement. In it there were Nazis, right wing nationalists, liberal nationalists – reformists, socialists and communists like us. All this was mixed up. And Perón was always conscious that this heterogeneity of his movement was his major weakness. But he knew how to overcome it thanks to the growth in the economy in the nation during this period. Greater income improved the situation of the workers as well as profits of the bosses.

And Perón – Puiggrós adds – never allowed the masses in practice to be more than a means of pressure. What had previously been the foundation of the revolutionary

impulse directed by the Leader now yields the real and effective meaning of its limit: a means to put pressure on Perón's enemies, without its own force:

Perón's task was to stick the masses together. Why did Perón fall? What collapsed was Peronism.

He enumerates the forces that continued to command Peronist social reality, persisting in their own power without being effectively opposed:

Perón's politics towards the military was not one of ideological capture given there was no coherent ideology. It was a politics of bribes and privileges. Instead of tying the military, it corrupted them.

And the same thing happened with the leadership of the workers:

The leading organization of the workers' movement the CGT [General Confederation of Workers] was formed with groups of parvenus and people on the make who got rich. Obviously they gave something to the workers, at the same time as they were getting rich themselves and reaching an accommodation with the government, or they wouldn't have been leaders.

And Puiggrós's judgement of Perón contrasts with his previous conviction, put forward only a few years before. But he knew all this before:

Perón was enormously opportunistic.

Now Perón got entangled. In 1946 he could harmonise many sectors, but in 1973 he wanted to be on good terms with God and the Devil.

Perón was tied up against it. There are aspects of his psychology and private life which have a great deal of importance here.

Perón had come to power conditioned by a series of contrasting ideologies and interests.

And so, speaking from exile and failure, the very people who knew the falsity and weakness of the project they had justified to the youth of Argentina confess to its and their own inadequacies. Yet even as they recognize how this weakness and distorted content had alienated the Peronist workers from their own interests, and therefore deprived them of a real and effective sense of their force, the Peronist guerrilla movement still finds endorsement:

Young students and many professionals slowly came closer to and were won by Peronism. This is how the first armed, popular [!] movements emerged, clumsily like everything always happens: full of gaps, without experience ... The Montoneros emerged from Catholic nationalism. Eventually they arrived at Marxism ... But with a little spirit

of struggle, perhaps unconsciously these groups slowly matured until they came to support national socialism.

The problem that worries me here is when Puiggrós, at the end of this process, has to deal with the painful experience that meant not only political failure but the terrible and desolate fact of the death of his own son.

The last time I saw my son was the night in which I came here, that is in 1974. We didn't say goodbye, because neither he nor I knew that we were coming here. He wrote to me, saying: Dad, we won't see each other again. Another time he wrote a letter to me in which he said that he was with his comrades but for the first time he felt alone. I tried to imagine what was happening: I was in a state of enormous anxiety, I knew that he was going to his death, but that he had no other road. He could not give up. I found out when I got back to Mexico: imagine the situation, my only son, 26 years old, he'd been my secretary. When he told me he was a rebel, what sort of rebel? They had to live their lives, and the slogan they fought under, was 'No surrender'.

Death now shrouds both father and son, but beyond this fact I want to reflect on Puiggrós's pathetic words as a father, in no way to condemn him but, as a father myself, to understand the legacy we are bequeathing our children. 'I knew that he was going to his death and had no other road', 'the slogan they fought under was "No surrender"'. Is this really the way to create life or is it simply the glorification of death? And when he says 'No surrender', we would want to read that one should not abandon oneself, but stay alive so as to maintain the coherence of the stakes of our fight, but not to obey the call to the ritual of sacrifice and death. I insist on this: I am not judging him as a father. I am simply drawing the consequences of what must have been for him a most painful experience, consequences we cannot responsibly ignore. I am thinking of the necessary elaboration of our responsibility for crucial actions that led to the useless sacrifice of a whole generation of young people, and not just of them, determined in great part by the falsity and fantasy of a conception of politics. This mortal fantasy had its genesis a long time ago, and the intellectuals whose responsibility should be to tell the truth have a share in the blame that is not minimal.

Second passage: from support for the armed 'recovery' of the Malvinas to the democratic 'pact'

In the second example we will use to verify our thesis, we will leave the positions taken during Peronism's

triumphalist euphoria (1972) and the cruel confirmation of failure in the face of the terror imposed by the Military Junta (1977) as revealed in Puiggrós. Now we are going to consider the positions taken during the *Proceso* itself, on the occasion of the Malvinas War, by the Socialist Discussion Group (SDG) formed by Argentine exiles living in Mexico (1982) and the new conception of politics outlined by various members of the group after the defeat and failure, when democracy was reintroduced into Argentina (1984). Here we see the same mechanisms at work in a group of intellectuals of the Left. First, reality is covered over, then a later political position replaces an initial programme in which fantasy and illusory solutions were preponderant. But fantasy and illusion are going to reappear, we believe, although now in the contradictory aspects of conflict and peace, in the new programme for democracy.

The reasons for supporting the armed 'recovery' of the Malvinas

What made it possible for the members of the SDG to support the recovery of the Islands undertaken by the Military Junta can be found in the following theoretical assertions formulated in the 1982 document they published during the war:

1. It was necessary to abandon our subjective and affective experience of the origin of the Junta, as well as the 'a priori' rationality that resulted from our previous political experience, since these were both based on logical fallacies. According to the theoretical method that the Group offered us, we should abandon as fallacious that fundamental – rational and affective – experience because it was opposed to an 'objective' and true grasp of reality. The two fallacies result from trying to 'explain a phenomenon exclusively in terms of its origins'. This means that we have to erase our subjective experience as our means of assessing the significance of the Junta. We should also reject as a 'fallacy' 'the attribution of a priori coherence to political events'. Here we are invited to abandon the rationality which made it possible for us to take positions since the Junta came to power, a rationality that hitherto we have considered to be a necessary index of truth.
2. It was necessary to abandon political ethics in order to assert an opportunism indifferent to values in political activity. This allows the SDG to invert the hierarchy of values, so that the main enemy is now the British rather than the Military Junta. Which means saying that at least at the military level we should establish an alliance of common objec-

tives, even if wrong ones, with the *genocidaires* in power.

3. Once the subjective as a place where truth could also be elaborated is removed, the absolute and current index of political truth becomes the 'objective', scientific, direct or immediate 'just interests of the people' – that is, the working class. The political process is thus regulated by the mechanism of history, in its simplest and most linearly deterministic version. Where the working class expressed itself immediately and directly in support [of the War] was the place of truth for the social scientist of the Left.
4. This led to a fundamental conclusion that the problem of morals, that is ethics, should be excluded from political confrontation, as if it had no value of its own and had no contribution to make to the constitution of political force. And this led in consequence to thinking that victory could be achieved with any politics, any power, any economy or any morality, a conclusion that the simplest objective logic would have rejected. And to think that it is only physical force, without morale or morality that leads to victory in social conflicts. In the case of the Malvinas, it led to a claim that a victory for the Junta's war aims would also be an advance for the popular forces and a raising of their consciousness. The assertion and affirmation of pure force as political power.
5. All this implied that it was only politico-economic conditions within an 'objective' strategy that should be the basis of our politics and that we should discard any concerns with the meaning and effectiveness of the popular forces which have to be created, as if this specific force, *of a different nature*, as we have seen, were not determinant in the political struggles with a class opposition. Hence in the Malvinas War, it meant laying stress on what could be won economically and strategically at national and international level, that is endorsing 'objective' gains for the nation, while obscuring the fundamental contradictions within the nation itself.

Separation, then, between the objective and the subjective, the past and the present, the internal and external, the individual and collective, and hence, at the very moment where the SDG claimed the most objective far-sightedness, a blindness in the face of reality. Because this attitude turned out to be completely fallacious, given the result and consequences of the conflict. It showed us not only that fantasy and illusion were being projected onto the political field, but also

that theoretical conceptions continued to be regulated by the categories of the Right.

The absence of 'self-criticism' and the new solution

After this, we might have expected self-criticism, but there was none. Let us see whether theoretical work does not necessarily imply critical work in the theorist, and whether this requirement is essential for thinking or not. And this is what is shown by an article written by two members of that same Socialist Reflection Group published in *Punto de Vista*, number 21, August 1984, in Buenos Aires.* Here again what was once adored is abandoned, and a new solution is offered for a different confrontation with the raw reality that has to be seasoned and cooked again.

It is the passage from the rule of the Military Junta (1982) to the implantation of democracy in 1984. And once again the experience that dictated the failure of previous theory and politics dictates the new mode of understanding and the new position (no, not self-criticism): simply a new theory and a new conception.

And what is specifically asserted is:

- The previously negated subjectivity and the ethics which had been happily put to one side now receive encomia:

The recovery of the topic [*sic*] of subjectivity, as well as the rebirth [*sic*] of investigations into the relation between ethics and politics have always been produced in situations of crisis.

The crisis displaces 'objectivity' in favour of 'subjectivity': it produces actors and projects.

The crisis produces a recovery of questions of ethics.

[The crisis teaches us] to go beyond a schema of political action that is a prisoner of abstract dichotomies that separate 'objective conditions' from 'subjective conditions'.

To save the subjectivity of the actors, the explosion of subjectivity that constitutes it.

And these assertions, in which reflective subjectivity is only included as a 'topic', where the separation between the subjective and objective, this time in theory, is extended, are backed up with a bibliography of the international great and good. But our extensive, elaborate, theoretical critique, published over the last twenty years in their own country, is

* The article 'Social Crisis and Democratic Pact' is signed by Emilio de Ípola and Juan Carlos Portantiero.

completely ignored: Paggi, Habermas, Gramsci, Crozier, Friedberg, Frankfurt School, Adler, Bernstein, yes; Rozitchner, no.

- What is now recovered is the ‘irreducibly indeterminate, that is to say political, character, in all its human density and fullness, of ‘the social subsystems’, as against the political, strategic and economic, mechanical and abstract determinism that had placed the direct and immediate definition of its truth and meaning in a particular social class:

Identities that appear to be subsumed in a particular centre, ‘class’ for example, or ‘nation’ ... fragment in a multiple manner.

And what is rejected is the relation between people and state proper to populism – now described as specular:

With the crisis certainties have collapsed, liberating new sets of questions: not only the centrality attributed to certain social subjects (the proletariat) has been interrogated.

But the crisis they flag up so repetitively is only really a crisis and useful for predicting political history when it is *their own thought that has gone into crisis*. And their own crisis takes on world dimensions.

- But what is most important is something else: to the previous affirmation of the war unleashed to ‘recover’ the Malvinas, and which they supported, now, by contrast, they oppose a sharp negation of the war to allow the passage to pure politics, which would exclude war altogether. And what they put forward is the venerable and originary notion of the ‘pact’ as the rational foundation of the democratic political accord that has been initiated in Argentina. All that remains of the complex equation between politics and war is their disjunction: either war or politics. And naturally, since the war was lost, it is excluded, leaving only the political pact.

War and politics once more

The authors write that Foucault criticizes this conception of politics, as he tries to ‘rethink politics according to the categories of war’ where politics would be ‘a war continued by other means’. In the politics that does not forget its foundation in force, ‘political power’, says Foucault, ‘would have the role of perpetually reinscribing that relation of forces by means of a type of silent war, inscribing it in institutions, in economic

inequalities, in language, and finally in bodies’. An equivalence, it is said, between war and politics. But I think that this conception does not do justice to Clausewitz, who thought of politics as the field of truce. Perhaps Foucault himself has abandoned that essential distinction that differentiates the power ‘of a different nature’ of the forces in confrontation, where war which turns into truce, because it is *necessary* for both contending parties: one is stronger on the offensive, but the other is stronger in defence.

This conception maintains the effective presence in politics of the potential specificity of each force and on that basis allows us to think democracy as a field of elaboration of forces, without war necessarily predominating, precisely because we are in a situation of truce. Here each side has its own, specific force, but the one on the defensive, Clausewitz reminds us, is *stronger*. So, if our authors previously asserted with Crozier that politics ‘rests on a relation of forces’, the ‘pact’ they offer us cannot just be a voluntaristic one. It cannot be put forward as purely formal leadership in which everyone would be compelled to take part and hide the fact (simulate) that it is the relation of forces that constitutes the limits and possibility of attaining the formal pact. It is not the will that establishes it – if indeed the will means anything as a concept (and we already know that ‘good will’ is what is postulated as the necessary accompaniment for purely formal rationality to enter historical reality and assert itself as true). It is not the will, however good it is, which establishes this pact, but the material recognition of an equilibrium that of necessity leads the stronger to open up that space of truce called ‘politics’. Is it not perhaps utopian to think that democracy, currently, at least among us, corresponds to that condition which requires the ‘pact’: ‘that there exists if not a culture then at least a democratic will solidly rooted in the social actors’? Who can seriously think that all the social actors will accept the surrender of their own privileges that led the country to destruction and murder, torture and death as political system, to save a system that is inimical to them?

What we see in this passage from 1982 to 1984 is the appearance of a thought that has lived through crisis, and although this time it coincided with one more crisis of the system, this thought in and of crisis continues to be dependent in its basic, political formulations on a new utopia: an abstract rationalism that excludes the reality of the forces present. Does it not make us suspect that it is another case of the appearance of fantasy in politics?

Translated by Philip Derbyshire