

# An Unbroken Loyalty in Turbulent Times: *La Prensa* and Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1946<sup>1</sup>

JORGE NÁLLIM  
*University of Manitoba*

In recent years, a growing body of scholarship has revised one of the most controversial periods in Argentine history: the sixteen years between the military coup of September 1930 and the presidential election of Juan Perón in 1946. These years have been traditionally interpreted as a transition period, a “prelude” to the emergence of Peronism, characterized by the decadence of the nineteenth-century liberal republic in a context of political and ideological crisis and economic and social transformation. While acknowledging some of those features, new studies emphasize the blurred political and ideological boundaries of the main political and social actors and locate them within the broader historical framework of the interwar years. For example, they show that the Radical and Socialist parties and the conservative groups that gathered in the ruling *Concordancia* coalition were deeply divided and far from being ideologically homogeneous, and that varied positions on state economic intervention, free trade, and industrialization generated both sharp intra-party differences as well as cross-party coincidences.<sup>2</sup>

This new historiography offers a particularly fruitful context to explore one of the most important national newspapers in this period, *La Prensa*. Founded in 1869 by José C. Paz in the city of Buenos Aires, *La Prensa* eventually achieved a large national circulation and a reputation as a “serious press,” which made it widely accepted as a reliable source of information and a frequent reference in congressional debates. Firmly controlled by the Paz family, the newspaper and its owners prospered during Argentina’s elitist liberal republic which lasted

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nallimja@cc.umanitoba.ca

until 1916. This conservative socio-economic and political role was shared by the other great Argentine newspaper, *La Nación*, which led to some general perceptions and assumptions. Both newspapers were labeled Argentina's "great liberal press," and it was understood that they represented the interests of the conservative political sectors restored to power in the years 1930 to 1943 and that they espoused similar positions concerning major historical processes. Nevertheless, more recent studies show the limits of this interpretation—especially, for *La Nación*. Furthermore, given the fact that *La Prensa* has not been the subject of a detailed study other than general descriptions and references to its anti-Peronist position after 1943, there are doubts now whether *La Prensa* actually conformed to that characterization.<sup>3</sup>

To address this question, this article focuses on *La Prensa*'s editorials and opinion columns in order to locate it within the political and ideological context of those years. It shows that the newspaper held a distinctively conservative liberal position during a period of profound ideological, political, and economic transformation. However, rather than simplistically being the voice of the oligarchy, the newspaper expressed strong disagreement with, and criticism of, the national administrations between 1930 and 1946, including the conservative *Concordancia* governments of 1930 to 1943 with which it shared a general concern for social and political order. At the same time, *La Prensa* on many occasions supported positions held by the opposition parties in the 1930s and early 1940s, such as the support of an anti-Fascist, pro-Allies liberal front during the Second World War. Furthermore, a comparison with Ricardo Sidicaro's analysis of *La Nación* makes clear that there were strong similarities as well as important differences between the two newspapers. Based on the evidence, this article argues that *La Prensa*'s identification with a peculiar conservative version of Argentine liberalism did not mean unequivocal support for any government or political group in the 1930s, as it assumed more clearly defined political positions only from 1943 to 1946 facing the rise of Peronism.

By approaching the subject in this way, this article makes several contributions. First, it contributes to a better understanding of the history of Argentine liberalism after 1930 that goes beyond narratives of decadence and irrelevance. As the analysis of *La Prensa* shows, the profound national and international crisis of liberalism in the 1930s and early 1940s did not prevent important social and political actors from appealing to different elements of that tradition and for very specific reasons, a point also noted by Halperín Donghi, Persello, Béjar, Bisso, McGee Deutsch, and Nállim, among others.<sup>4</sup> In the case of *La Prensa*, its unique defense of a conservative liberal position was rooted in a particular interpretation of Argentina's nineteenth-century liberalism. The newspaper envisioned an ideal democracy headed by the most qualified citizens and responsible political parties

that included strong criticism of anti-liberal ideologies and organizations—such as Communism, Fascism, and local nationalist groups—and an equally ardent defense of the liberal constitutional regime, public and individual rights, social and political order as opposed to mass democracy, secularism, and classical, free-market economic liberalism.

*La Prensa*'s conservative liberalism is thus not an oxymoron but a selective, consistent, and logical position defined in its editorials in the 1930s and early 1940s in relation to three main areas. The first was the country's political situation and the progressive crisis of the traditional political system between 1930 and 1946, which included military coups and regimes in 1930-1932 and 1943-1946, restricted democratic governments in 1932-1938, and the rise of Perón and his movement in 1944-1946.<sup>5</sup> The second referred to the conflictive ideological landscape of those years, including the rise of European totalitarianism and the growing visibility of anti-liberal groups and ideologies in Argentina.<sup>6</sup> Third, *La Prensa* defined its position regarding the transformation of Argentina's traditional export economy after the crisis of 1929 and experiences of state economic intervention implemented at both the national and international levels.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, this article also directly engages the new scholarship on the 1930s and early 1940s already cited, as *La Prensa* provides a window into the ambiguities and tensions of the period in general and conservative groups in particular. The analysis of the editorials and opinion columns not only qualifies the supposed similarities between *La Prensa* and *La Nación* but also puts to rest simplistic interpretations of *La Prensa* as either embodying the traditional landowning oligarchy or being the selfless provider of impartial news.<sup>8</sup> While *La Prensa*'s attempts to carve out a more impartial position make it different from other more politicized and factious newspapers in this period like *Crítica*, this difficult course eventually proved impossible, as the newspaper was drawn into the country's increasing social and political polarization during the Second World War and the rise of Peronism.

In terms of organization, the article's first section focuses on *La Prensa*'s main characteristics and political opinions during the administrations of Gen. José F. Uriburu (1930-1932) and Agustín P. Justo (1932-1938). A second section then covers the crisis of the conservative restoration in 1939-1943 and the military regime and the rise of Juan Perón in 1943-1946. Regarding methodology, the article follows Sidicaro's analysis of *La Nación*, dealing with *La Prensa* as a unified subject that voiced consistent political and ideological positions in its attempt to influence public opinion. Those positions were advanced in the editorials, which expressed the newspaper's official opinion, and the *Actualidad* columns, which were written by anonymous contributors and followed the same general orientation regarding more specific issues.

Restriction of access to *La Prensa*'s archives has prevented identifying the anonymous authors of editorials and opinion columns which might have illuminated the negotiations and debates involved in their elaboration, an aspect inherent in any collective writing enterprise, that remains open for future research.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, fruitful examination of the editorials shows that, through them, *La Prensa* expressed a “distinguishable ethos” and a “common body of practice,” as explained by Raymond Williams in his theoretical formulations regarding the analysis of cultural groups.<sup>10</sup> The analysis reveals the remarkable consistency of the newspaper's positions over the years, which might be explained by the fact that, under the strict control of the Paz family, it had only three directors between its founding in 1869 and the expropriation by the Peronist government in 1951: José Clemente Paz (1869-1908), Ezequiel Paz (1898-1943), and Alberto Gainza Paz (1943-1951).

### ***Between demagoguery and dictatorship: democracy, liberalism, and free trade in La Prensa, 1930-1938***

By 1930, *La Prensa* was established as one of the leading Argentine newspapers. Since its founding in 1869, it sought to differentiate itself from the more partisan and factious press that characterized Buenos Aires in the late nineteenth century. *La Prensa* clearly distinguished between more general and impartial information and its opinions, which were published in the editorials and the *Actualidad* columns. Although the newspaper's very aristocratic and traditional tone was more appealing to Buenos Aires' upper classes, its large section of classified ads also targeted the middle and lower-middle classes. The reputation of reliability and impartiality as well as its cross-class audience might explain its constant growth during the first decades of the twentieth century. Circulation reached 100,000 at the turn of the century; 160,000 by 1914; 235,000 by the mid-1920s; and 340,000 in 1946. The newspaper's expansion was accompanied by cultural and technological changes. By the 1920s, its Sunday special section competed with *La Nación*'s for the collaboration of the most prestigious Argentine and Latin American writers, and in the 1930s it prided itself as the only newspaper on the continent to print a special color supplement.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1930s and early 1940s, *La Prensa* was part of a broad context of newspaper enterprises in Argentina that was growing, expanding, and improving technologically, boosted by high literacy rates and widespread circulation and consumption. The late 1920s and early 1930s saw the rebirth of not only a popular press but also a more factious press that was most notably embodied by *Crítica*.<sup>12</sup> *La Prensa* occupied an ambiguous position within that universe.

Although it did not associate itself with a particular political group or faction during most of the period, its editorial line actively voiced strong political opinions. Eventually, it adopted a more strident and vocal political position against the military regime and the rise of Peronism in 1943-1946.

In terms of politics and ideology, the analysis of the newspaper's editorial line in the 1930s shows that its owners' upper-class position did not necessarily translate into the defense of the restricted political system consolidated under Gen. José F. Uriburu's and Agustín P. Justo's administrations in 1930-1938. In fact, *La Prensa's* search for an ideal liberal democracy of conservative tones was quite critical of every administration and political group in power from 1930 to 1946. Sharing ideas widely held by the political opposition to Hipólito Yrigoyen's Radical administration in 1928-1930, *La Prensa* justified the military coup of September 1930 led by Uriburu in the liberal Constitution of 1853. In this view, Yrigoyen had turned the national government into a "partisan committee" and a virtual dictatorship, and the democratic Argentine people had reacted against "those who abused universal suffrage and the National Congress" with "the sole purpose" of defending these institutions. Uriburu's Provisional Government (1930-1932) had to respect the constitution, the fundamental laws, and "the desire to return as soon as possible to normalcy" so the country "can elect its new and legitimate authorities in free elections."<sup>13</sup>

The newspaper did not see any contradiction in supporting both the coup against Yrigoyen and universal suffrage democracy because it explicitly advocated a very conservative liberal democracy. Democracy, progress, and liberalism were identified with a select social group, in an argument linked to Positivist and Spencerian liberalism. A long editorial published in 1931 presented "liberal democracy" as "the pinnacle of civilization" and "human progress" as based on "the purest sentiments of the individual" found "in superior men, ... in evolved beings who have really progressed." Democracy and progress could only flourish where those qualities are "the person's outstanding and predominant characteristics." "People of lesser capacity, aptitude, or reflection" attack liberalism "because they feel incapable and impotent of understanding it," because "it requires a special technique—knowledge, aptitudes, superior qualities, broad spirit—that are not within the reach of the mediocre man, who is especially defective and selfish."

Praising the 1853 assembly that produced the liberal national constitution, *La Prensa* then attacked those who preached "oligarchy or autocracy as formulas of collective government," which were a "historical regression," "a return to primitivism and the reign of violence" opposed to the "supreme generosity of liberal democracy." Fortunately, the newspaper concluded that anti-liberal governments and regimes—"aristocratic, oligarchical, dictatorial, Communist, etc." represented mainly by Russia and Italy, could not be established in Argentina. "The

liberal tradition of our people” was deeply rooted and found expression in “the liberal democracy of the Republic,” characterized by “representative government, good social education, respect for alien ideas,” and political tolerance.<sup>14</sup>

This lengthy editorial helps us understand the critical relationship of the newspaper toward mass democracy, the political parties, and the government that emerged from the military coup. *La Prensa* heavily censored mass democracy which identified with Yrigoyen’s Radicalism and it constantly called for the Radical party to “purify” itself and rid itself of those “skillful elements in the art of deceiving proselytism” and “undesirable professionals of politics” who rallied “committee mobs” in exchange for “paid positions, impunity for their crimes, and ample tolerance for the exploitation of social vices.” Radical purification was possible; it was embodied by Marcelo de Alvear, the former president and leader of the Radical reorganization after the coup, who represented “the healthy part of Radicalism” related to the “old ideals of legality and morality.”<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, *La Prensa* also sharply attacked conservative political groups restored to power by Uriburu, who attributed “the political evils suffered by the country since 1916”—when Yrigoyen and the Radical party first reached the presidency—to the Sáenz Peña law and “the liberalism of our democratic institutions.”<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that they presented themselves as “elements of superior culture,” it was clear that their “civic indifference,” “laziness,” and selfishness had made “the socially and intellectually most qualified elements” abandon “civic action” and left the field open “to those who exploited politics as a lucrative activity.” Criticism was particularly harsh against anti-liberal and nationalist conservatives who clearly surfaced under Uriburu’s government. The newspaper vehemently opposed Uriburu’s efforts to establish a corporatist regime, presented as “incompatible with our country’s republican and democratic traditions” because it damages “individual civil and political liberties” and leads “to the establishment of an oligarchy.” For *La Prensa*, the country “wants a true democracy, without the deformations of demagoguery and the restrictions of governments of force.”<sup>17</sup>

Clearly, the editors of *La Prensa* believed that the country’s problems could not be attributed to either universal suffrage democracy or the people, but rather political parties who represented either “old oligarchies, built upon fraud and oppression,” or “demagogic corruption, still latent.” As the reference indicates, Conservatives and Radicals were particularly held responsible for the crisis of 1930 because they had not renewed their programs and organization.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the newspaper distanced itself from the debates on the need for structural reforms to state structures and the political system. These debates had appeared in the early twentieth century regarding issues such as *caudillismo* and electoral procedures, and intensified in the wake of the political and economic crisis of the

early 1930s, and they permeated the major political and social forces throughout the decade.<sup>19</sup> However, for *La Prensa*, the country's political problems would be resolved only by improving the liberal system that was created by the Constitution of 1853 and ideally presided over by healthy political parties headed by "the most qualified and honest citizens" who would make it effective.

*La Prensa's* search for the ideal liberal democracy thus involved a difficult balance that continued during Agustín Justo's administration from 1932 to 1938. Despite his origins that were tainted by electoral fraud, and the exclusion of the Radical ticket from the 1931 presidential elections, *La Prensa* initially hoped that Justo would consolidate "the process of institutional normalization" to reestablish "constitutional authorities" and "public liberties."<sup>20</sup> Besides, the newspaper defended positions regarding female suffrage and anti-Communism that were championed by conservative elements within the governmental coalition presided over by Justo, the so-called *Concordancia*. In September 1932, the Chamber of Deputies passed a bill on female suffrage, a bill that was never debated by the Senate and, therefore, did not become law. Echoing the most conservative arguments in the National Congress, *La Prensa* had proposed "the gradual concession" of female suffrage, "starting with the literate and older woman on a voluntary basis." Therefore, it strongly disapproved the final bill and saw it as the product of "cold reasoning and the ideological influence of foreign examples." Unlike men, whose civic participation dated back to the beginnings of the nation when the "genre of life accustomed [them] to listen and think," limited suffrage for women was justified because of a woman's lack of knowledge about "issues she might not even suspect" and that "until now have not concerned women."<sup>21</sup>

*La Prensa* also shared with conservative groups its fervent anti-Communism, which blended the newspaper's conservatism and anti-totalitarianism and justified the restriction of individual and public liberties. In 1931, at a time when Uriburu's regime was using anti-Communist arguments to justify repression against different groups, *La Prensa* defined the "imported" "Bolshevik ideology" as the enemy "of family, property, and public order" that could be discovered "in virulent forms in national colleges and universities" and whose goal was "to cause spiritual anarchy" and "organize bands of thieves and murderers." In February 1932, *La Prensa* attributed an aborted Communist plot in Uruguay to "excessive tolerance ... of immigrants" and "the international Anarchist, Communist, and Syndicalist conspiracy," and later in that year it published the complete text of the first bill of repression of Communism, presented to the Senate by conservative nationalist senator Matías Sánchez Sorondo.<sup>22</sup>

While these positions were certainly close to the conservative groups in power, *La Prensa* slowly developed a more critical view of Justo and the *Con-*

*cordancia* throughout the 1930s. Its initial hopes about the restoration of the liberal republic were shattered in 1935 when the Radical party lifted its electoral abstention and decided to return to the ballots. In order to keep control, Justo and the national administration shifted the balance of power toward the most conservative and even anti-liberal elements of the *Concordancia*. This conservative shift was represented, for example, by the government's complicity in large-scale electoral fraud in the provincial elections of Buenos Aires and Mendoza in 1935-1936 and the presidential elections of September 1937, the federal intervention of Progressive Democrat-ruled Santa Fe, and the support of reactionary bills in the *Concordancia*-dominated Senate in 1936 such as the bill of repression of Communism.<sup>23</sup>

In this new environment, from 1935 *La Prensa* vehemently and openly attacked Justo and the ruling coalition for corrupting the political system through violence and fraud. In August 1936, the newspaper noted that "deformations of the system" had recently worsened "to inconceivable extremes" with fraud in Buenos Aires, Corrientes, and Mendoza and the bill passed by the Senate suppressing the participation of minority political forces in the electoral college for the election of president and vice-president. The newspaper also criticized the federal intervention in Santa Fe as an unconstitutional abolition of provincial autonomy and covered the provincial and national elections of August/September 1937, criticizing rampant fraud in Buenos Aires, attacking Justo for his partisan actions, and blaming national authorities for electoral abuses throughout the country.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, *La Prensa* gave favorable coverage to the acts of the political opposition aimed at creating a democratic Popular Front. It reported extensively on the acts of Labor Day, May 1, 1936, and another one honoring Roque Sáenz Peña in August, jointly organized by Radicals, Socialists, Progressive Democrats, Communists, students, and labor organizations. Reprinting their speeches against the government, the newspaper argued that those acts offered hope for "future days of peace and social calm under the protection of fundamental laws that offer safe guarantees to individual work and the enjoyment of its benefits."<sup>25</sup>

Even as it delimited a clearer defense of liberal democracy, *La Prensa's* conservative and anti-leftist assertions made it clear that its support was not unqualified, as can be seen in its statements regarding the Spanish Civil War from 1935 to 1939. Instead of using Gen. Francisco Franco's uprising to defend liberalism and secularism and criticize totalitarianism, the newspaper kept an official neutral position throughout the conflict, calling for the Argentine government to retain moderation, supporting international mediation in the conflict, deploring the loss of lives, and arguing for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the newspaper was widely perceived as supporting the Nationalist rebellion and attacking the Republic, a position consistent with



its anti-Communism, the overwhelming support of Argentine upper classes for Franco, and the government's official position regarding the conflict. In particular, Mark Falcoff has noted that *La Prensa*'s coverage was based on dispatches from the Nationalist area that were written by Ricardo Sáenz Hayes and were sympathetic to the insurgents.<sup>27</sup>

Besides the electoral situation, *La Prensa* also developed a sharp critique of Justo, the *Concordancia*, and the conservative groups regarding three other issues. The first issue was freedom of the press, in which it obviously had a vested interest. The newspaper had already criticized Uriburu's measures restricting freedom of the press, and during Justo it demanded clear rules and the prompt end of censorship and martial law. It staged a major campaign against the bill restricting freedom of the press discussed in the Senate in 1934, when senator Sánchez Sorondo noted that *La Prensa* devoted twelve editorials to oppose the bill.<sup>28</sup>

The second issue was *La Prensa*'s strong defense of Argentina's liberal secular tradition, which clashed with Uriburu and Justo in the context of the increasing mobilization of the Catholic Church and its influence on the national government and conservative groups in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>29</sup> During Uriburu's tenure, *La Prensa* denounced the pastoral letter issued by the bishop of Santa Fe in November 1931, urging Catholics not to vote for parties with programs contrary to the Catholic Church—a clear endorsement of Justo's candidacy against the Socialist-Progressive Democrat ticket. For the newspaper, the document not only showed the “true intervention of the Church in the electoral process” but also that its political mobilization was influenced by “foreigners,” who were the majority among the clergy and carried out “an open campaign to impose a true Vatican hegemony over Argentine Catholicism that completely disregarded national authorities.” *La Prensa* also attacked Uriburu for creating new bishoprics and archbishoprics, arguing that this was a legislative prerogative of the suspended National Congress.<sup>30</sup>

In its campaign against the Church's intervention in politics, *La Prensa* clarified that the constitution had defined the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church, and that those “who attacked liberalism in the religious field” and extended their criticism to political and economic liberalism confused “theological and constitutional issues.” This absolute condemnation of liberalism was a fallacy, because nineteenth-century Argentina had been liberal in politics and Catholic in spirit.<sup>31</sup> During Justo's first years, the newspaper had covered other issues that could create problems with the Catholic Church without comment, as was the case of the Congressional treatment of a divorce bill and the International Eucharistic Congress in 1934.<sup>32</sup>

The third issue of disagreement with Uriburu's and Justo's administrations was economics. *La Prensa* probably carried out the most consistent and articulated defense of classical economic liberalism and the traditional export economy, against the policies of state intervention implemented in the 1930s as a response to the problems created by the Great Depression. It emphatically opposed new tariff barriers established in the country since 1931, arguing that they were part of an erroneous policy of economic nationalism. Free trade had "produced the state of progress achieved in the early twentieth century," while "protectionism attacks international trade" and undermines the "foundations" of national economies. *La Prensa* linked state economic interventionism to totalitarian tactics such as those of the Soviet Union, "aberrations of the individualist system" that "impose state intervention not to channel and stimulate but to limit the free and useful activities of responsible individuals." Tariffs and state economic intervention were "an anti-economic regression," a "suicidal policy" of "economic nationalism" resulting in expensive "artificial industries" that would harm consumers with higher prices.<sup>33</sup>

When Argentina signed the Roca-Runciman Treaty with Great Britain in 1933, the newspaper acknowledged its value given the unfavorable international context; however, it criticized the treaty's creation of a bilateral trade relationship detrimental to broader free trade and took advantage of the occasion to voice its opposition to Uriburu's and Justo's economic policies, "artificial remedies doomed to failure" due to "economic manipulation and political demagoguery." Those remedies had neglected the country's "mother industries," agriculture and livestock, whose recovery depended "on the reestablishment of the international liberal trade that this newspaper has always preached."<sup>34</sup> *La Prensa* staunchly opposed the main policies of state economic intervention implemented under Federico Pinedo's tenure as Minister of Finance from 1933 to 1935. It criticized the decrees of November 28, 1933, which devalued the peso, subsidized agricultural producers, and established a dual exchange rate, as an "illegal and arbitrary ... state-directed economy" without the intervention of the national Congress.<sup>35</sup>

The newspaper's campaign against the government peaked with the financial and economic projects presented to the National Congress in early 1935, which included the revaluation of gold held by the Conversion Office, the creation of a Central Bank, and measures to deal with bankrupt debtors.<sup>36</sup> *La Prensa* argued that the projects had been initiated without considering public opinion and the Congress, and they had been submitted to Congress only to be passed by a "parliamentary majority." The gold reevaluation was an "illegal intervention of the Executive Power" in currency and exchange policy that, along with the creation of the Central Bank, would lead towards inflation.<sup>37</sup> The whole financial reform was a "smoke screen" to cover its real goal: the Conversion Office reevaluated

gold in order to pay part of the floating debt and to rescue those debtors close to the ruling sectors who had lost money because of “bad business and wrong management.”<sup>38</sup> At the heart of the criticism was the profound belief, explained in an editorial in 1936, that the Argentine people were essentially individualistic, and therefore opposed the expansion of state power in economics that characterized “extremes” such as Fascism and Communism.<sup>39</sup>

*La Prensa*'s traditional economic liberalism explains its reluctance, if not its direct opposition to labor legislation. In general, it agreed that the state should assist poor people and that governmental policies such as tariffs and financial manipulations would hurt the poor through inflation.<sup>40</sup> However, when discussing specific labor issues, *La Prensa* showed little concern for the social consequences of the policies it defended and simply assumed that restoring the traditional export economy would benefit the whole population. Such was the case with two bills proposed by Socialists to the National Congress in September 1932, mandating that workers would receive full payment for working a half day on Saturdays—the *sábado inglés*—and regulating rural hygienic and labor conditions. The newspaper argued that the bill on *sábado inglés* was unconstitutional and an example of forceful state intervention that was inconvenient at “a difficult time for national industries and economies.” Regarding rural legislation, it noted that general legislation from the national government was useless because of regional differences in rural production and conditions, and unconstitutional because it would overrule provincial prerogatives in these fields.<sup>41</sup>

The analysis of *La Prensa*'s main editorial positions helps locate it more correctly in the political and ideological landscape of the 1930s. Clearly, *La Prensa* cannot be identified as simply representing the opinion of the conservative groups restored to power by the coup of 1930—who, besides, were far from a homogenous and unified force in terms of both politics and ideology.<sup>42</sup> Ruiz Jiménez's argument that *La Prensa*'s audience was not the *oligarquía agroexportadora* should be qualified given its strong defense of, precisely, the traditional export economy. Also, her description of the newspaper as voicing positions held by “the most modernizing groups in the country, professionals and upper-middle classes” is not completely accurate, given the conservative tones of the political system envisioned by the newspaper.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, *La Prensa*'s strict defense of political and economic liberalism resulted in an ambiguous position that had connections with both the ruling conservative groups and the political opposition of the 1930s. While it shared with conservatives the mistrust of mass democracy and a fervent anti-Communism, as the 1930s progressed the newspaper's negative perception of Justo and the *Concordancia* put it closer to positions defended by Radicals, Socialists, and Progressive Democrats along three lines: the general criticism of anti-liberal

ideologies, especially their influence in government; the defense of Argentina's secular tradition, similar to the one carried out by Progressive Democrats and Socialists since 1931; and the defense of free-market liberalism and the export economy, which closely followed the central arguments publicly voiced by Socialist legislators and the party newspaper, *La Vanguardia*, and the Radical magazine *Hechos e Ideas*.<sup>44</sup> While *La Prensa* agreed with the criticism of the three main opposition parties against the economic measures implemented since the 1930s, it differed from them in terms of their support for labor unions and laws, an area of no particular concern for the newspaper.

The comparison of *La Prensa*'s editorial position with that of *La Nación* in those years, as analyzed by Ricardo Sidicaro, also reveals coincidences and differences. Both newspapers supported the 1930 military coup, defended the return to constitutional rule in 1932, and criticized demagoguery—represented by Yrigoyen's Radicalism—and anti-liberalism—embodied by Communism and Fascism. Both also condemned the country's worsening political situation, especially after the Radical return to the electoral field in 1935, and both bitterly attacked Justo and the *Concordancia* for their increasing engagement of electoral fraud. Beyond this general consensus, the newspapers did present some differences. *La Nación* had a less confrontational tone and ideological position regarding the governments of the 1930s, indicating a more pragmatic position toward the groups in power and changes in the political environment. Also, *La Nación* in general had a more respectful attitude toward the Catholic Church that starkly contrasts with *La Prensa*'s anticlerical zeal.

Finally, the newspapers disagreed in their evaluation of the process of state economic intervention under Uriburu and Justo. *La Nación* supported the main governmental economic policies with arguments that resembled those used by *Concordancia* legislators in the National Congress, while constantly warning against the dangers of “excessive” state intervention that could distort the economy.<sup>45</sup> *La Nación*'s economic positions clearly contrast with *La Prensa*'s ideological defense of classical, *laissez-faire* economic liberalism. Their disagreement, in a way, captures the doubts and ambivalence generated by the world economic crisis within Argentina's traditional upper classes, a crisis that would deepen in the following years.

### **Against foreign and local totalitarianism: from conservative anti-Fascism to anti-Peronism, 1938-1946**

During the period 1938-1946, *La Prensa* maintained a notable ideological consistency with the positions it had held during the previous decade, empha-

sizing them as the limited democratic restoration initiated in 1932 entered its final crisis in 1939, which lasted until 1943, when it gave way to the military regime and the rise of Peronism from 1943 to 1946. At the same time, the difficult ideological balance involved in its conservative liberalism ultimately proved impossible, as the newspaper eventually adopted a more defined political position against the military regime and Peronism from 1943 to 1946.

Between 1938 and 1943, *La Prensa* followed with concern the deterioration of the political situation fueled by the internal divisions in the *Concordancia* and the Second World War. After Justo stepped down, President Roberto Ortiz's commitment to a program of electoral cleansing led to the federal interventions of the conservative-led provinces of Catamarca and Buenos Aires, alienating his conservative allies in the *Concordancia*. However, when he was forced to resign due to health problems in July 1940, vice-president Ramón Castillo once again allowed rigged elections in Santa Fe and Mendoza in December 1940 and January 1941, benefiting the conservative sectors of the *Concordancia*. Internal divisions among the *Concordancia* groups were deepened by the impact of the Second World War. Castillo pursued a neutral policy during the conflict, which generated not only criticism by the pro-Allies opposition groups—Radicals, Progressive Democrats, and Socialists—but also alienation of pro-Allies groups within the *Concordancia*. Castillo's neutral foreign policy, as well as his attempts to secure his position with the support of nationalist army officers, led to Castillo being criticized as suspiciously favorable to anti-liberal and totalitarian groups and ideologies.

*La Prensa* intensified its criticism of the *Concordancia* during this period. Its conservative liberalism put it closer to those conservative groups who joined the opposition parties—Radicals, Socialists, and Progressive Democrats—and anti-Fascist intellectuals in new pro-Allies circles in 1940-1943, such as the institution *Acción Argentina* and the weekly publication *Argentina Libre*. These groupings consolidated ideological and political links among members of those parties and intellectuals from the literary magazines *Sur* and *Nosotros*, the liberal Catholic magazine *Orden Cristiano*, the writers' national association (SADE), and the institution of higher education *Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores* (CLES) in Buenos Aires. All of them developed an anti-Fascist liberal discourse in which criticism of Castillo as inclined toward authoritarianism and leniency concerning totalitarian ideologies was coupled with support for the Allies.<sup>46</sup>

Echoing those positions, *La Prensa* argued that Argentina's liberal tradition implied unequivocal commitment to democracy in the country and support for the Allies in the world conflict. The Revolution of May 1810 had established "the concept of individual freedom," and the country's essential liberal and democratic stance put it in opposition to doctrines of "individual submission

to the state” advocated by totalitarianism and local “misguided minorities of Communist and rightist activists.” “The political institutions founded upon liberalism, supported by the most eminent spirits of the vilified nineteenth century,” were “still useful to correct social imbalances that are expressed in economic needs.”<sup>47</sup> After cautiously supporting Ortiz’s program, *La Prensa* angrily reacted to Castillo’s electoral fraud in Santa Fe and Mendoza in late 1940. It explicitly blamed the government for the unstable political situation, noting that “everything revolves around electoral fraud,” and arguing that the country needed a “truce from institutional lies,” “clean elections,” and respect for “our democratic Constitution.”<sup>48</sup> When Castillo closed Buenos Aires’ city council in October 1941, *La Prensa* agreed with the opposition that it was an illegal measure and proof that the government was influenced by anti-liberal and anti-democratic ideas.<sup>49</sup>

In terms of foreign policy, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 confirmed the newspaper’s pro-Allies sympathies, and *La Prensa* now demanded that the government end its “isolationist policy” and openly embrace “pan-Americanism.”<sup>50</sup> Consistent with this orientation, *La Prensa* also asked the government to repress Nazi propaganda and infiltration and to support the formation and activities of the Commission on Anti-Argentine Activities, pressed by Radicals and Socialists in the Chamber of Deputies to investigate Nazi activities in the country.<sup>51</sup> Also, it shared with the pro-Allies groups a constant and emphatic attack against anti-liberal ideologies and groups such as revisionist historians, nationalists, and Fascist Catholics, all of whom were identified as part of the “fifth column” that betrayed the country and threatened essential freedoms.<sup>52</sup>

In these years, *La Prensa* still believed that the fundamental problem was not the political structure created by the liberal Constitution of 1853 but the lack of responsible and educated leaders and, specifically, the illegal actions carried out by the *Concordancia* administrations. This search for an ideal democracy beyond demagoguery and fraud led *La Prensa* to support non-partisan, liberal, and democratic groups who could provide a solution for the country’s political ills. For this reason, the newspaper praised *Acción Argentina* as “an apolitical institution,” “a voice of public opinion” committed to legality and to the “defense of our liberal institutions, methodically threatened.” In the same line, it supported *Acción Argentina*’s failed campaign, under the influence of the Socialist Party, for creating a coalition of the country’s liberal and democratic forces—the first Democratic Union—in late 1942.<sup>53</sup>

*La Prensa* also stubbornly defended *laissez-faire* economics, precisely at the moment when World War II’s effect on the Argentine economy had expanded the process of industrialization and state economic intervention. The newspaper declared that industrial protectionism violated principles of economic freedom

advanced by the nineteenth-century liberal thinker Juan B. Alberdi and adopted by the Constitution, and that “prevailed in the civilized world” before 1914. Historically related to Colbert’s “restrictive and protective system,” protectionism implied “the unlimited and despotic intervention of the law,” had caused the “immense chaos” of the world economy after 1914, and had been adopted by Socialist and dictatorial countries. Claiming that “systems founded upon freedom of commerce and international collaboration maintain their advantages,” *La Prensa* denounced the government’s “exaggerated protectionism” since 1930 and the myth of “industrial economic autarky,” because “freedom of exchange must be restored . . . to improve the conditions of life in every nation.”<sup>54</sup>

Based on those premises, *La Prensa* vigorously attacked the economic plan presented to the Congress by Castillo’s Minister of Finance, Federico Pinedo, in November 1940, which was the most clearly articulated attempt of state intervention and organization of the national economy until then.<sup>55</sup> It disputed Pinedo’s data and information and charged that Argentina’s economic problems were not due to the war but to the fact that “the country’s agricultural evolution stopped with the policy started on November 28, 1933.”<sup>56</sup> While the plan would give the president unrestricted legislative powers and violated constitutional and institutional principles and practices, the newspaper argued that the government should act instead within the law, reducing public expenditures and freeing industry and commerce from the “tangle of laws, decrees, regulations.”<sup>57</sup> State promotion of cheap housing, one of the plan’s main elements, was not really needed and could be achieved without state intervention through the reduction of high taxes on construction and property. Supporting the complaints of some rural sectors who criticized the plan’s industrial aspects for repeating the “protectionist mistake,” *La Prensa* warned that its approval would result in “the installation of a kind of economic dictatorship” that would abolish economic and political freedom.<sup>58</sup>

*La Prensa* clearly stated that it only accepted state intervention to support “natural” industries and exports that were labeled as bases of the national economy, as was the case, for example, with the State Merchant Fleet created in 1941.<sup>59</sup> However, this was the exception, because, in *La Prensa*’s words, the defense of individual initiative and the rejection of state intervention “have inspired our liberal doctrine in politics and economics.” Thus,

enemies of extremes, we accept but with some restrictions the postulates of liberal individualism that Spencer expressed in two principles. First, the best government is the one that governs least; second, the ideal of society must be a minimum of government and a maximum of freedom.<sup>60</sup>

*La Prensa*'s remarkably consistent liberal economic discourse can also be found in the official criticisms of the Radical and Socialist parties in the National Congress to the Plan Pinedo.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that those positions must be understood in the context of the partisan struggle of those years. In fact, the growing voices within both parties supporting liberal and democratic state economic intervention that had appeared in the previous decade were also reflected in the positions expressed by the institutions and publication with which Radicals and Socialists collaborated, such as *Acción Argentina* and *Argentina Libre*.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, as Sidicaro shows, *La Nación* and other important economic institutions such as the *Sociedad Rural Argentina* and the *Unión Industrial Argentina* increasingly moved to positions closer to *La Prensa*. In late 1942, they all criticized Castillo's proposal to create new taxes as excessive state intervention against private initiative, linked to outrageous growth of state bureaucracy and expenditures.<sup>63</sup>

*La Prensa*'s ideological and political background explains its strong opposition to the military regime that emerged out of the military coup of June 4, 1943. To be sure, the military regime was not homogeneous; on the contrary, it was divided by struggles between internal factions that prevailed at different moments and frequently adopted contradictory policies.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, in the second half of 1943 the military regime adopted a series of clear anti-liberal and anti-democratic measures pushed by nationalist hardliners in the army and their civilian advisers. These moves placed the regime in sharp conflict with *La Prensa*'s ideological positions. In July, the government closed *Argentina Libre*, *Acción Argentina*, and other pro-Allies institutions claiming that they were infiltrated by Communist ideology and militants. Along with maintaining neutrality in the war, the military appointed several nationalist intellectuals to different offices. While unleashing a severe repression in public universities, in October the government fired several prominent liberal intellectuals and politicians from positions in the public administration for having signed a manifesto demanding effective democracy and pan-American solidarity regarding the war. The military regime also created a Secretariat of Press that consolidated press censorship, abolished all political parties, and imposed mandatory Catholic education in public schools.

*La Prensa* did not wait long to articulate its opposition to the military regime, which grew in intensity as the regime confirmed its anti-liberal turn in the second half of 1943. By September, it noted that some of the measures adopted by the military regime were not urgent and should have been taken by constitutional legislature. In October, it criticized the government for maintaining Argentina's neutrality, published the manifesto of October 15<sup>th</sup> and announced the firing of the people who had signed it, and criticized the violent repression imposed by



the nationalist rector, Jordán Bruno Genta, appointed by the government at the University of the Littoral.<sup>65</sup> In December, it published several articles defending secular education and religious freedom as linked to democracy and the Argentine liberal tradition, arguing that “modern absolutisms” had tried to manipulate public education and quoting John Stuart Mill’s treatise on liberty.<sup>66</sup> *La Prensa* particularly attacked press censorship as incompatible with “freedom of the press or the republican system,” stating that “the history of Argentine freedoms is the history of freedom of the press.”<sup>67</sup> *La Prensa*’s positions finally moved the government to suspend the paper from April 26 to May 1, 1944, in response to an article criticizing governmental measures to save money in public hospitals.<sup>68</sup>

By the beginning of 1944, then, *La Prensa* could agree with wide sectors of the political opposition that the military regime represented the installation in the country of a totalitarian regime favorable to the Axis powers. Along with the World War, this was the lens through which all of them interpreted the rise of Perón, who by mid-1944 was Vice-President, Minister of War, and Secretary of Labor. Perón’s rise to power has been the focus of a great deal of scholarship which does not need to be reiterated here.<sup>69</sup> For the purpose of this article, it is sufficient to highlight the fact that he built his political movement in 1944-1945 based on legislation that gave concessions to workers in exchange for their support. These policies, along with his considerable skill at changing his position with changing circumstances, allowed Perón to secure his advantage against rival army officers by gaining the support of the working class as well as that of Radical, Conservative, and Socialist rank-and-file and mid-level leaders. For *La Prensa*, as for leaders of the traditional parties, Perón was the natural offspring of the anti-liberal military regime, and the rise of his policies was proof that he was a demagogue similar to Hitler or Mussolini, building an anti-democratic regime akin to European totalitarianism.

*La Prensa* thus openly sided with the political opposition against Perón and the military regime in 1944-1946.<sup>70</sup> It gave wide coverage to the massive demonstrations in Buenos Aires celebrating the liberation of Paris in August 1944 and the fall of Berlin in May 1945 that would signal the impending demise of Nazism’s supposedly local version. It noted that the crowds “chored the words freedom and democracy” and included the participation of “groups of qualified citizens” [*ciudadanos calificados*], and it detailed the governmental repression and prohibitions that tried to stop them.<sup>71</sup> Echoing the arguments of the anti-Peronist opposition, *La Prensa* argued that Germany’s defeat was not the end of the anti-totalitarian struggle; the final victory would not be achieved until “the seeds of dictatorship and violence” were extirpated throughout the world and “freedom’s benefits” were assured.<sup>72</sup>

By mid-1945, *La Prensa* was openly campaigning against the military regime and Perón. It published and approved demands from intellectual and professional groups to return to a constitutional regime, asked the government to respect freedom of thought and end firings “for political reasons,” and denounced the action of nationalist groups in the universities.<sup>73</sup> The newspaper also supported and gave wide coverage to the massive March of Constitution and Liberty staged by the opposition to the regime in September. It described it as “a high example of civic culture” and proof that the Argentine people did not need “mentors, tutors, prophets, messiahs, redeemers, protectors, or saviors,” noting that it had succeeded despite governmental attempts to prevent its success.<sup>74</sup> Conversely, *La Prensa* tellingly ignored the massive demonstrations of 17 October 1945, a foundational event in the Peronist mythology. On 18 October, the main pages were dedicated to the governmental crisis, while the demonstration was relegated to page seven. The newspaper expressed its opinion later in January 1946, when it denounced aggressions by Peronist “organized bands of armed men,” whose immediate precedent were the events of October 17 and whose methodology was “typical of Nazi-Fascism.”<sup>75</sup>

The characterization of the military regime and Perón as totalitarianism’s local version was certainly linked to the economic and social policies carried out since June 1943 and *La Prensa*’s consistent defense of free trade and economic liberalism since 1930. Soon after the coup, it expressed its desire that the military regime would end “the long period of deep state intervention” that characterized the previous decade and return to the economic liberalism of 1880 to 1916, when “the Republic experienced a process of prosperity and evolution” unmatched in Argentine history and “the state *did not intervene*, on the contrary, *it let do* [*italics in the original*]; it allowed millions of human beings to work, with each one working hard, on his account, to solve alone his economic problems.” The newspaper praised Alberdi and his dictum that “wealth and freedom are intrinsically linked,” meaning that “it is not possible to limit or curtail one freedom as if it were alone and detachable from the others.”<sup>76</sup>

Based on those arguments, *La Prensa* soon started opposing the government’s economic ideas and policies, especially state-promoted industrialization, warning that the state should neither obstruct private initiative with “annoying bureaucratic interventions” and high taxes nor protect artificial industries. The creation of the Bank of Industrial Credit in April 1944 prompted the newspaper to ask the government to protect only those industries with “natural roots in the national economy” and not those that “live under the protection of custom barriers” and scarcely benefit the country.<sup>77</sup> *La Prensa* attacked the military plans of industrialization connected to national defense as “programs of economic war” aimed at “maintaining the policy of isolation, with such fatal consequences.” It also

commented that Perón's speech at the University of La Plata on that topic had created concerns in the United States that he was leading the country toward "a way of life characteristic of war times" and a "war economy" that would fatally end in "the same tragic fate suffered by Italy."<sup>78</sup>

Regarding labor, *La Prensa* argued that it supported "social conquests without cataclysms" that resulted from "evolution" and "equilibrium" between labor and capital.<sup>79</sup> Its conservative liberalism made it approve the government's decree of July 1943 regulating labor organizations and union activity, and the exclusion of those sectors that attacked "nationality and the country's fundamental institutions," as was the case with communists. However, it complained that the decree should protect individual freedom concerning participation in professional organizations.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the newspaper opposed any kind of state economic and social intervention, as the product of "the temporary decomposition of the state," and opposed the forceful imposition of rulers that would cause class war.<sup>81</sup> Even moderate examples such as the New Deal were criticized as the consequence of "extraordinary circumstances but [that] do not respond to the desire of the people." The newspaper explicitly argued that "the state must only do what individuals cannot do, or what it does with an evident advantage;" an "indifferent state" was desirable "in nations where public administration is not efficient and almost always inferior to private action."<sup>82</sup>

Thus, *La Prensa* arrived at 1945 with a well-defined position against the military regime's economic and labor policies, perceived as the logical complement of its totalitarian nature, and it clearly sided with the employers against Perón. In June, it praised the declaration issued by more than three hundred employer organizations—the famous *Manifiesto de las Fuerzas Vivas*—that questioned the legality of the regime's labor policies and denounced Perón for creating "an environment of social agitation, ... suspicion, provocation, and rebellion that stimulates resentment and generates constant demands."<sup>83</sup> In December, *La Prensa* also opposed a decree that raised wages and implemented an extra month's salary. It published its rejection by the employers and supported their claims on its unconstitutionality, its partial benefits to the detriment of "capital and independent workers," and its arguably negative effects in terms of inflation and expanding bureaucracy.<sup>84</sup> The newspaper darkly reminded its readers of the tragic example of Hitler's Germany, where "the people ... let themselves be dazzled by a promised fast and deep transformation" and "believed in the superhuman efficacy of a leader."<sup>85</sup> *La Prensa* also favorably covered the employers' three-day lockout against the decree in January 1946 and cited it as proof that "we were not wrong and the government must understand the need to rethink the measure."<sup>86</sup>

By the end of 1945, and in an environment of sharp social and political polarization, the newspaper's social conservatism as well as its defense of political and economic liberalism logically led it to support the anti-Peronist coalition, the Democratic Union. It covered the coalition's massive rally of December 12, a "beautiful assembly" and a "magnificent popular act" full of "civic fervor." The newspaper reproduced the violent anti-Peronist speeches of its leaders, denounced attacks orchestrated by the government and Perón's followers, and linked them to Nazi and Fascist regimes and practices.<sup>87</sup> For *La Prensa*, the Democratic Union represented the ideal gathering of the "most qualified elements" it had been looking for since 1930, as its electoral platform "rightly synthesizes the ideas and aspirations shared by the different sectors that form national public opinion."<sup>88</sup>

By this time, the military regime and the rise of Perón had finally moved *La Nación* to positions similar to those championed by *La Prensa*. However, *La Nación* arrived at those conclusions through a more sinuous path, a situation consistent with the each newspaper's previous positions. *La Nación* cautiously approved some of the government's economic policies in 1943-1944, including a positive evaluation of the work carried out by the Secretary of Labor and the creation of the Industrial Bank. In July 1944, unlike *La Prensa*, it defended Perón from the State Department's accusations that his ideas about economic organization were proof of his totalitarianism.<sup>89</sup> In that sense, *La Nación* slowly changed its position as the political situation evolved, and its similarities with *La Prensa* by 1945—demands of return to constitutional rule, support for employers' requests—should not obscure their differences.

## Conclusion

Based on the evidence provided by the editorial pieces analyzed in this article, it is not an exaggeration to state that *La Prensa* was certainly the most ardent advocate of political and economic liberalism in Argentina in the 1930s and early 1940s. It maintained a remarkable and consistent ideological line based on a strict defense of traditional liberal democracy and *laissez-faire* economics at a time when Argentina was undergoing profound transformations. While the newspaper's positions can be generally described as conservative, the analysis reveals the problems of locating it in the ideological and political landscape of those years. Far from being the voice of a supposedly unified oligarchy restored to power by the coup of September 1930, *La Prensa*'s support of liberal democracy put it in conflict with the *Concordancia* governments of 1930-1943 and closer to arguments voiced by the political opposition. In terms of economics,

its loyalty to classical liberalism sets it apart not only from the *Concordancia* but also from the military regime of 1943-1946 and, eventually, the positions regarding state economic intervention that were gaining ground within Radicalism and Socialism.

The deconstruction of *La Prensa*'s ideological and political line not only reveals the limits of traditional interpretations of the 1930-1943 period as the "infamous decade" dominated by a nefarious and unified conservative oligarchy. If anything, *La Prensa*'s positions make clear that conservative liberalism was not synonymous with strict adherence to the national governments of the period. In fact, this analysis is more in line with scholarship that has shown the political and ideological fragmentation of the conservative groups included in the *Concordancia*, which ranged from traditional conservative to anti-liberal and semi-Fascist groups and individuals as represented by Manuel Fresco and Matías Sánchez Sorondo. The same subtlety should be applied to the supposed similarity, under the label "great liberal press," between *La Nación* and *La Prensa*. While the latter could certainly fit this characterization, the comparison with *La Nación* reveals that general areas of consensus coexisted with important differences. *La Prensa*'s rigid ideological line sharply contrasts with *La Nación* as presented by Sidicaro, which shows a different attitude toward and adaptation to the groups in power. This difference would be dramatically displayed under the Peronist regime, when *La Prensa*'s criticisms, consistent with its history, led to its expropriation in 1951, while *La Nación* once again adapted to a government that it had opposed at its inception.

Finally, *La Prensa*'s complex ideological positions should caution historians not only against meaningless labels such as "the infamous decade" but also about the unqualified acceptance of the "crisis of liberalism" undergone by Argentina in the 1930s and early 1940s—or, for that matter, during previous periods. It is undeniable that, parallel to international developments, liberalism lost its hegemonic nature as the dominant and legitimizing ideology for political action. In the years between the coup of September 1930 and the election of Juan Perón in 1946, the liberal system established by the Constitution of 1853 showed its inability to deal with the political, social, economic, and ideological challenges and transformations of Argentina.

On the other hand, it is equally undeniable that even in that context, many individuals and groups within the traditional political parties continued appealing to different elements of the liberal ideology to legitimize their positions. In that sense, it seems more appropriate to explore which groups claimed liberalism in this period, for what reasons, and with what meanings. In the case of *La Prensa*, the evidence suggests that its owners believed that it was possible to recreate the type of liberal society and system they envisioned—a stubborn yet odd belief

given the depth of the transformations undergone by Argentina during those years. This more fruitful approach, which lies at the core of the new studies on the 1930s and early 1940s, also informs this study of *La Prensa*'s editorial opinions, thus contributing to a better understanding of the complexities and contradictions of the turbulent years that characterized the final transit from the old republic to mass democracy in twentieth-century Argentina.

## NOTES

- 1 I want to express my deep gratitude to Sandra McGee Deutsch, Eduardo Zimmermann, and the article's anonymous reviewers for their useful comments and suggestions. A grant from the University of Manitoba Social Sciences and Human Research Council (SSHRC) in 2007 allowed completing research and writing.
- 2 María Dolores Béjar, *El Régimen Fraudulento. La Política en la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005); Ana Persello, *El Partido Radical. Gobierno y Oposición, 1916-1943* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2004); Hernán Camarero y Carlos Herrera, eds., *El Partido Socialista en Argentina. Sociedad, Política e Ideas a Través de un Siglo* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005); Tulio Halperín Donghi, *La República Imposible, 1930-1945* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2004) and *Argentina y la Tormenta del Mundo* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003); Alejandro Cattaruzza, ed., *Nueva Historia Argentina. T. VII. Crisis Económica, Avance del Estado e Incertidumbre Política* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2001).
- 3 Ricardo Sidicaro, *La Política Mirada desde Arriba. Las Ideas del Diario La Nación* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1993); Laura Ruiz Jiménez, *Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña en la Prensa Diaria de Buenos Aires, 1926-1945* (PhD diss., Madrid: Instituto Ortega y Gasset, 1994) and "Peronism and Anti-Imperialism in the Argentine Press: 'Braden or Perón' Was Also 'Perón is Roosevelt'," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30: 3 (1998), 551-571; Carlos Ulanovsky, *Entre las Rotativas. Historia de los Grandes Diarios, Revistas y Periodistas Argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1997); Carlos Páez de la Torre (h), "El Periodismo," in Academia Nacional de la Historia, *Nueva Historia de la Nación Argentina. T. IX* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2002), 332-359. For *La Prensa* under Peronism, see Pablo Sirvén, *Perón y los Medios de Comunicación, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1984).
- 4 Halperín Donghi, *República Imposible*; Béjar, *Régimen*; Persello, *Partido*; Andrés Bisso, ed., *El Antifascismo Argentino* (Buenos Aires: CEDINCI/Buenos Libros, 2007) and *Acción Argentina. Un Antifascismo Nacional en Tiempos de Guerra* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005); Sandra McGee Deutsch, "Argentine Women Against Fascism: The Junta de la Victoria, 1941-1943" (paper presented at conference of the *Latin American Studies Association*, Montreal, 2007); Jorge Nállim, "Del Antifascismo al Antiperonismo: *Argentina Libre, ...Antinazi*, y el Surgimiento del Antiperonismo Político e Intelectual," in *Fascismo y Antifascismo, Peronismo y Antiperonismo. Conflictos Políticos e Ideológicos en la Argentina, 1930-1955*, ed. Marcela García (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2006),

- 77-106, and *The Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1946* (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2002).
- 5 For the political history of Argentina in these years, see Cattaruzza, *Crisis Económica*; Luis A. Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 59-99; Enrique Zuleta Álvarez, “Los Gobiernos de la Concordancia,” in Academia Nacional de la Historia, *Nueva Historia*. T. 7, 265-297; Béjar, *Régimen*; Camarero y Herrera, *Partido Socialista*; Persello, *Partido*; Alejandro Cattaruzza, *Marcelo T. De Alvear: El Compromiso y la Distancia* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997); Luciano De Privitello, *Agustín P. Justo. Las Armas en la Política* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997).
  - 6 The bibliography on nationalism and antiliberalism in the period between the 1920s and the 1940s is large and dense. Some recent works have updated the debate and analysis on the topic: Alberto Spektorowsky, *The Origins of Argentina’s Revolution of the Right* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); Daniel Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y Antisemitismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Vergara, 2003); Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Vida y Muerte de la República Verdadera* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2000), 218-33, 599-614, and *República Imposible*; Fernando Devoto, *Nacionalismo, Fascismo y Tradicionalismo en la Argentina Moderna: Una Historia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002); Federico Finchelstein, *Fascismo, Liturgia e Imaginario: el Mito del General Uriburu y la Argentina Nacionalista* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002). See also Ronald Dolkhart and Sandra McGee Deutsch, eds., *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to Present* (SR Books: Delaware, 1993), David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina. The Nationalist Movement, its History and its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), and for a comparative perspective, Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas. The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). For the specific case of the Catholic Church, see Loris Zanatta, *Del Estado Liberal a la Nación Católica. Iglesia y Ejército en los Orígenes del Peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Quilmes, 1996).
  - 7 For the impact of the Great Depression and the policies of state economic intervention in the 1930s and early 1940s, see Roberto Cortés Conde, *La Economía Política de la Argentina en el Siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2005), 86-139; Mario Rapoport, *Historia Económica, Política y Social de la Argentina, 1880-2003* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2007), 208-240, 267-286; Arturo O’Connell, “Argentina into the Depression: Problems of an Open Economy,” in *Latin America in the 1930s. The Role of the Periphery in World Crisis*, ed. Rosemary Thorp (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1984), 188-221; Peter Alhadeff, “The Economic Formulae of the 1930s: a Reassessment,” in *The Political Economy of Argentina, 1880-1946*, eds. G. Di Tella and D.C.M. Platt (Oxford: St. Anthony’s College, 1986), 95-119; Juan Carlos Korol, “La Economía,” in Cattaruzza, *Crisis Económica*, 17-47.
  - 8 For *La Prensa* as a tool of the oligarchy, see Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza-Capital Federal, *Cien Años Contra el País* (Buenos Aires: Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza 1970) and Arturo Jauretche’s *Manual de Zonceras Argentinas* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2006), 205-206. For positive views on the newspaper, see Diario “La Prensa” de Buenos Aires, *Por Defender la Libertad* (4th ed., Buenos Aires: La Prensa, 1957) and Mario A García,

- Recuerdos de Mis 45 Años en "La Prensa"* (La Plata: Editorial de la Universidad de la Plata, 1998).
- 9 Secondary sources help identify contributors such as Eduardo Augusto García. An ardent conservative and anti-Peronist, he recalls in his memoirs that he wrote for *Actualidad* in the early 1930s, although he does not provide further detail regarding editorial debates. Eduardo García, *Yo Fui Testigo. Antes, Durante y Después de la Segunda Tiranía* (Buenos Aires: Luis Laserre, 1971), 129.
  - 10 Raymond Williams, "The Bloomsbury Fraction," in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, ed. John Higgins (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 229.
  - 11 Ulanovsky, *Paren*, 17-22; Páez de la Torre, "Periodismo," 332-337; Ruiz Jiménez, *Estados Unidos*, 23-24.
  - 12 Silvia Saïtta, *Regueros de Tinta: el Diario Crítica en la Década de 1920* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998) and "El Periodismo Popular en los Años Veinte," in *Nueva Historia Argentina*. T. VI. *Democracia, Conflicto Social y Renovación de Ideas, 1916-1930*, ed. Ricardo Falcón (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2000), 435-471; James Cane-Carrasco, *The Fourth Enemy: Journalism and Power in the Making of Peronist Argentina* (forthcoming, Pennsylvania State University Press), chapter 2.
  - 13 *La Prensa* (September 7, 1930), 5; (September 9, 1930), 2; (September 10, 1930), 8, 14.
  - 14 *La Prensa* (June 3, 1931), 10.
  - 15 *La Prensa* (June 1, 1931) 8; (April 20, 1931), 7.
  - 16 The Sáenz Peña law had established universal, mandatory, and secret male suffrage in Argentina in 1912.
  - 17 *La Prensa*, (April 9, 1931), 10; (June 13, 1931), 9; (March 3, 1931), 13; (June 3, 1931), 9.
  - 18 *La Prensa* (October 9, 1934), 6; (June 5, 1931), 8; (June 8, 1931), 10; (June 29, 1931), 8.
  - 19 Persello, *Partido*, 214-222; Halperín Donghi, *República Imposible*, 25-56.
  - 20 *La Prensa* (February 20, 1932), 8.
  - 21 *La Prensa* (September 18, 1932), 10.
  - 22 *La Prensa* (March 3, 1931), 1; (February 8, 1932), 7; (February 13, 1932), 11; (September 2, 1932), 12.
  - 23 For the debates of these bills, see *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Senadores* [hereafter DSS], 1 (1936), 630-710; DSS, 3 (1936), 24-707.
  - 24 *La Prensa* (August 9, 1936), 5; (January 3, 1937), 3; (September 3, 1937), 10; (September 4, 1937), 9; (September 6, 1937), 5; (September 7, 1937), 11.
  - 25 *La Prensa* (May 2, 1936), 6; (August 23, 1936), 10. *La Prensa's* support for the Popular Front was limited to the defense of constitutional and electoral freedoms, as it explicitly opposed its most radical and leftist groups and influences such as that of Communists. See *La Prensa* (August 8, 1936), 11.
  - 26 *La Prensa* (August 1, 1936), 6; (August 2, 1936), 10; (August 17, 1936), 9; (September 2, 1936), 12.
  - 27 Mark Falcoff, "Argentina," in *The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939. American Hemispheric Perspectives*, eds. Mark Falcoff and Frederick Pike (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 329; Silvina Montenegro, *La Guerra Civil Española y la Política Argentina*



- (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2002), 39-42; Mónica Quijada, *Aires de República, Aires de Cruzada: la Guerra Civil Española en la Argentina* (Barcelona: Sendai, 1991), 23-65, 209-226; Ernesto Goldar, *Los Argentinos y la Guerra Civil Española* (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1996), 54-55; Enrique Pereyra, "La Guerra Civil Española en Argentina," *Todo es Historia* 110 (1976), 11.
- 28 *La Prensa* (March 21, 1931), 9; DSS, 2 (1934), 301-302.
- 29 Zanatta, *Del Estado Liberal*. The strong influence of the Church on conservative nationalist groups can be also consulted in the large bibliography on nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s mentioned in footnote 6.
- 30 *La Prensa* (March 26, 1931), 13; (February 7, 1932), 9.
- 31 *La Prensa* (June 13, 1931), 9.
- 32 *La Prensa* (September 22, 1932), 11; (September 23, 1932), 10; (September 24, 1932), 10. For *La Prensa's* coverage of the International Eucharistic Congress, see the issues from October 10 to October 15, 1934.
- 33 *La Prensa* (June 25, 1931), 9; (September 7, 1932), 8; (September 10, 1932), 8.
- 34 *La Prensa* (April 28, 1933), 7; (May 3, 1933), 8; Ruiz Jiménez, *Estados Unidos*, 263.
- 35 *La Prensa* (November 29, 1933), 8; (November 30, 1933), 11-12.
- 36 For the laws and the congressional debates, see *Leyes Nacionales-1935* (Buenos Aires: La Facultad, 1935), 408-527; DSS, 3 (1934), 588-783, *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados* (DSD), 9 (1934), 38-319.
- 37 *La Prensa* (January 27, 1935), 8; (January 31, 1935), 11-12; (January 26, 1935), 8.
- 38 *La Prensa* (January 28, 1935), 6; (February 2, 1935), 7.
- 39 *La Prensa* (December 27, 1936), 4.
- 40 *La Prensa* (February 14, 1932), 8.
- 41 *La Prensa* (September 6, 1932), 8. For the bills, see DSD, 5 (1932), 126-128, 225-261.
- 42 On the *Concordancia's* fractured nature and internal struggles, see Béjar, *Régimen*.
- 43 Ruiz Jiménez, *Estados Unidos*, 26.
- 44 The Radical and Socialist defense of classical economic liberalism must be understood in the context of the political campaign against the government and the internal and ideological divisions within both parties. See Jorge Nállim, "Between Free Trade and Economic Liberalism: Radicals, Socialists and the Politics of Economic Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1943," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 33: 65 (2008), 137-172; Persello, *Partido*, 222-231; Juan Carlos Portantiero, "El Debate en la Socialdemocracia Europea y el Partido Socialista en la Década de 1930," in Camarero and Herrera, *Partido Socialista*, 299-320; María Cristina Torti, "Crisis, Capitalismo Organizado y Socialismo," in *Representaciones Inconclusas. Las Clases, los Actores y los Discursos de la Memoria, 1912-1946*, eds. Waldo Ansaldi, A. Pucciarelli, José C. Villarruel (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1995), 199-222; Mariana Luzzi, "'El Viraje de la Ola.' Las Primeras Discusiones sobre la Intervención del Estado en el Socialismo Argentino," *I Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas* (Buenos Aires: CEDINCI, 2000), 21-31.
- 45 Béjar, *Régimen*, 96-107.
- 46 For an analysis of pro-Allies liberal circles in 1940-1946, see Bisso, *Acción Argentina and Antifascismo*, 73-97; Nállim, "Del Antifascismo" and *The Crisis*, 182-225; McGee Deutsch, "Argentine Women," Leonardo Senkman, "El Nacionalismo y el Campo Liberal

- Argentinos ante el Neutralismo: 1939-1943,” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 6: 1 (1995), 23-49; Rodolfo Fitte and E. F. Sánchez Zinny, *Génesis de un Sentimiento Democrático* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta López, 1944); Marcela García Sebastiani, *Los Antiperonistas en la Argentina Peronista. Radicales y Socialistas en la Política Argentina Entre 1943 y 1951* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005), 34-76.
- 47 *La Prensa* (May 25, 1940), 5; (December 18, 1940), 5; (December 10, 1942), 7.
- 48 *La Prensa* (January 7, 1941), 8; (January 10, 1941), 10; (February 14, 1941), 7.
- 49 *La Prensa* (October 10, 1941), 11; (October 11, 1941), 11; (October 12, 1941), 11; (October 13, 1941), 10.
- 50 *La Prensa* (December 8, 1941), 7, 8; (December 9, 1941), 7.
- 51 *La Prensa* (September 2, 1940), 10; (December 12, 1940), 12; (February 2, 1941), 11; (February 13, 1941), 11; (June 7, 1941), 11; (June 8, 1941), 11; (June 19, 1941), 11-13; (June 20, 1941), 11.
- 52 *La Prensa* (May 2, 1941), 11; (June 18, 1941), 11; (October 21, 1942), 4; (June 6, 1941), 11.
- 53 *La Prensa* (January 16, 1941), 8; (May 24, 1941), 10; (October 19, 1942), 5. On *Acción Argentina* and the first Democratic Union, see Bisso, *Acción Argentina*, 156-159, García Sebastiani, *Antiperonistas* and “Elecciones y Partidos Políticos en la Argentina. La Formación de la Unión Democrática,” in *Partidos Políticos y Elecciones en América Latina y la Península Ibérica, 1830-1930*. Vol. 2, ed. Carlos Malamud (Madrid: Instituto Universitario Ortega y Gasset, 1995), 65-100.
- 54 *La Prensa* (January 5, 1940), 13; (February 23, 1940), 7; (March, 8, 1940), 10.
- 55 For the bill and debates in the Senate, see DSS, 2 (1940), 373-489. On the plan, see Gisela Cramer, “Argentine Riddle: the Pinedo Plan and the Political Economy of the Early War Years,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30: 3 (October 1998), 519-550; Juan José Llach, “El Plan Pinedo de 1940. Su Significado Histórico y los Orígenes de la Economía Política del Peronismo,” *Desarrollo Económico* 23: 92 (1984), 513-555; Horacio Pereyra, “Pinedo y el Plan Económico de 1940,” in Ansaldi et al., *Representaciones*, 257-288.
- 56 *La Prensa* (November 21, 1940), 11; (November 25, 1940), 6. Note the reference to the decrees of November 1933, implemented by Pinedo as Justo’s Minister of Finance.
- 57 *La Prensa* (November 16, 1940), 10; (December 2, 1940), 11.
- 58 *La Prensa* (December 18, 1940), 7, 11; (January 14, 1941), 12.
- 59 *La Prensa* (October 17, 1942), 8; (March, 3, 1943), 6.
- 60 *La Prensa* (January 2, 1943), 4.
- 61 For the Radical and Socialist official positions regarding the Plan Pinedo, see the Radical magazine *Hechos e Ideas* 38-39 (1941), 282-292, 297-298, 301-313.
- 62 For *Argentina Libre*, see Carlos Sánchez Viamonte, “La Personalidad Humana,” *Argentina Libre* (July 18, 1940), Alejandro Shaw, “Economía Política y Social,” *Argentina Libre* (October 10, 1940), 1, 3. For *Acción Argentina*, see Fitte and Sánchez Zinny, *Génesis*, 268, 279-80, 440-443. See also the bibliography cited in footnote 44.
- 63 Sidicaro, *Política*, 159-64 and “Los Conflictos Entre el Estado y los Sectores Económicos Predominantes en la Crisis del Régimen Conservador, 1930-43,” in Ansaldi et al., *Representaciones*, 320-334.

- 64 On the coup and the tensions and divisions in the military regime, see Robert Potash's classic study, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1928-45*. Yrigoyen To Perón (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 178-200 and *Perón y el GOU: los Documentos de Una Logia Secreta* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1984). For the influence of the Catholic Church and the participation of rightist and nationalist groups in the army and the military regime in 1943-1946, see Zanatta, *Perón y el Mito de la Nación Católica. Iglesia y Ejército en los Orígenes del Peronismo, 1943-1946* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999); Lvovich, *Nacionalismo*, 521-550; Cristián Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo. La Argentina en la Crisis Ideológica Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1987), 281; Roberto Ferrero, "La Guerra y el Interior," *Todo es Historia* 148 (1979), 66-68.
- 65 *La Prensa* (September 5, 1943), 6; (October 2, 1943), 6. (October 11, 1943), 6; (October 15, 1943), 6; (October 21, 1943), 8.
- 66 *La Prensa* (December 17, 1943), 6; (December 21, 1943), 6; (December 23, 1943), 8.
- 67 *La Prensa* (November 1, 1943), 4; (January 16, 1944), 3; (February 17, 1944), 4.
- 68 *Diario La Prensa, Por Defender*, 82.
- 69 For the historiographical and theoretical debates on Peronism, see Lila Caimari, "La Era Peronista, 1943-1955," in Academia Nacional de la Historia, *Nueva Historia*. T. 7, 321-323; Buchrucker, "Interpretations of Peronism. Old Frameworks and New Perspectives," and Mariano Plotkin, "The Changing Perceptions of Peronism. A Review Essay," both in *Peronism and Argentina*, ed. James Brennan, (SR Books: Delaware, 1998), 3-28, 29-54; Dario Macor and César Teach, eds., *La Invención del Peronismo en el Interior del País* (Universidad Nacional del Litoral: Santa Fe, 2003), 5-33. The specific events regarding the rise of Peronism are addressed in Potash *Army and Politics*, 238-82; Alain Rouquié, *Poder Militar y Sociedad Política en Argentina, 1943-1973* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1981); Juan Carlos Torre, *La Vieja Guardia Sindical y Perón. Sobre los Orígenes del Peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1990); Halperín Donghi, *La Democracia de Masas* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000), 135-55; Joseph Page, *Perón, a Biography* (New York: Random House, 1983).
- 70 Sirvén provides additional information on *La Prensa*'s increasing anti-Peronism throughout 1945 in *Perón*, 39-57.
- 71 *La Prensa* (August 24, 1944), 4-5, 11-12; (August 25, 1944), 9-11; (May 3, 1945), 7-9; (May 4, 1945), 14; (May 8, 1945), 7-8; (May 9, 1945), 1.
- 72 *La Prensa* (May 8, 1945), 5.
- 73 *La Prensa*, (May 11, 1945), 8; (May 12, 1945), 7, 9; (May 28, 1945), 4; (May 29, 1945), 10; (August 1, 1945), 12.
- 74 *La Prensa* (September 19, 1945), 5, 8; (September 19, 1945), 1, 8-12; (September 19, 1945), 3.
- 75 Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza-Capital Federal, *Cien Años*, 122-124; *La Prensa* (January 4, 1946), 9.
- 76 *La Prensa* (July 26, 1943), 3; (July 12, 1943), 3; (August 8, 1943), 3.
- 77 *La Prensa* (September 2, 1943), 3; (September 3), 4; (September 4, 1943), 5; (April 18, 1944), 1; (April 7, 1944), 5.
- 78 *La Prensa* (October 5, 1943), 4; (July 1, 1944), 5.
- 79 *La Prensa* (July 9, 1943), 4.

- 80 *La Prensa* (July 21, 1943), 7; (August 14, 1943), 5.  
81 *La Prensa* (December 25, 1943), 2.  
82 *La Prensa* (October 25, 1943), 6.  
83 *La Prensa* (June 16, 1945), 7; (June 17, 1945), 8; Torre, *Vieja Guardia*, 108.  
84 Torre, *Vieja Guardia*, 167-169; *La Prensa* (December 21, 1945), 5, 9-10.  
85 *La Prensa* (December 22, 1945), 6.  
86 *La Prensa* (January 14, 1946), 4; (December 29, 1945), 7; (January 5, 1946), 11; (January 11, 1946), 8; (January 13, 1946), 6.  
87 *La Prensa* (December 9, 1945), 8, 9-10, 12-14.  
88 *La Prensa* (December 9, 1945), 4.  
89 Sidicaro, *Política*, 179-197.