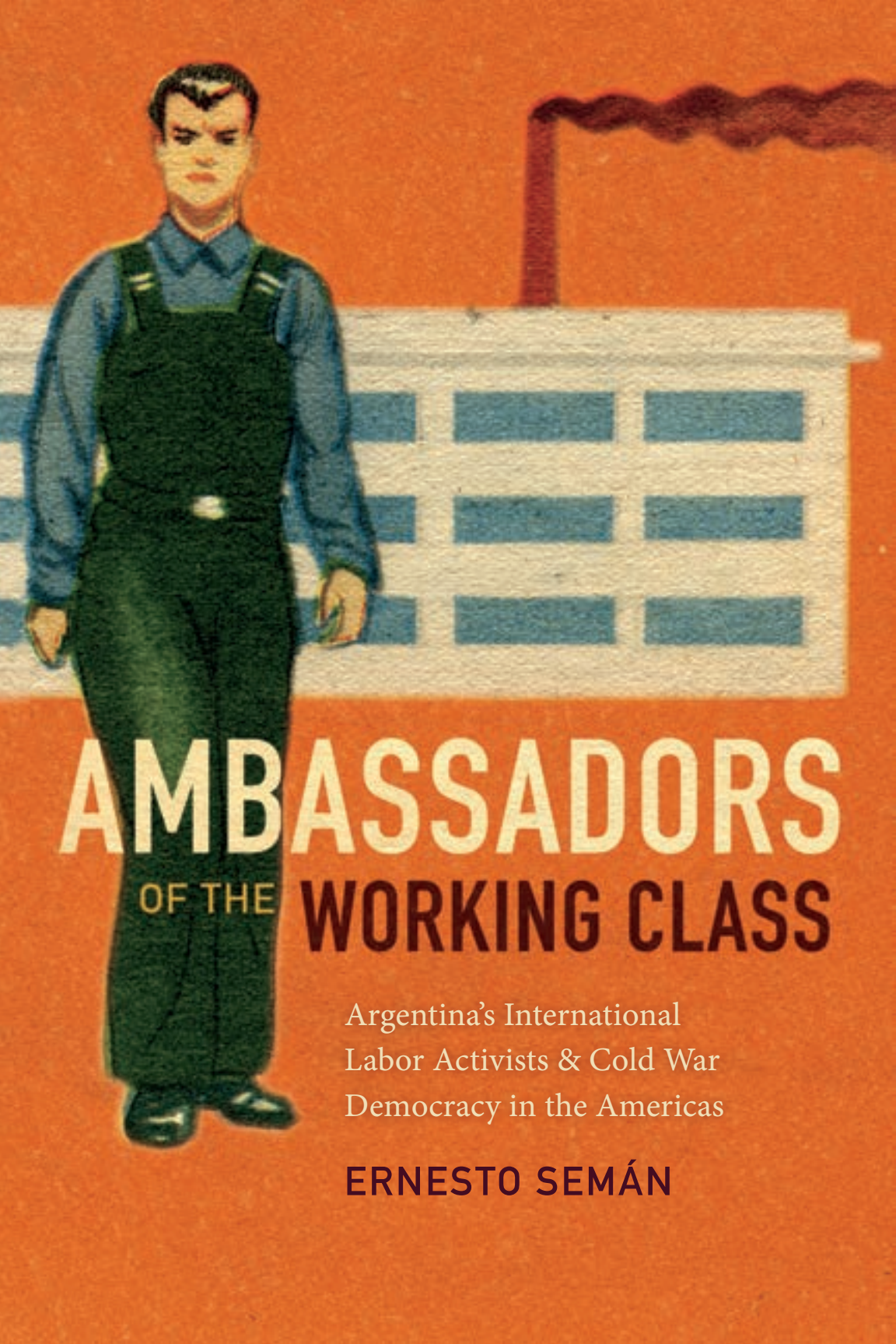

AMBASSADORS OF THE WORKING CLASS

Argentina's International Labor Activists & Cold War Democracy in the Americas

ERNESTO SEMÁN

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Duke University Press—Durham and London—2017

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Cover designed by Matthew Tauch
Interior designed by Courtney Leigh Baker
Typeset in Minion Pro and Din by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Semán, Ernesto, [date] author.
Title: Ambassadors of the working class : Argentina's international labor activists and Cold War democracy in the Americas / Ernesto Semán.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017006738 (print) | LCCN 2017008444 (ebook) |
ISBN 9780822363859 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822369059 (pbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822372950 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: International labor activities—Argentina. | Labor union members—Argentina. | Diplomatic and consular service—Argentina. | Peronism.
Classification: LCC HD6475.A1 S46 2017 (print)
LCC HD6475.A1 (ebook) | DDC 322/.20982—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017006738

COVER ART: Illustration of a worker attaché from Luis Guillermo Bähler's *La nación Argentina: Justa, libre, soberana*. Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1950.

para Marambio, mi Castro,
y para Clarita

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The acknowledgments section of a book is a space to affirm the reality of common ownership, a truth obscured under the alienated emphasis on one individual, "the author." We (the author and everybody mentioned below) have been working together on this study for many years, before we knew it, before it became a project.

One day, while working as a journalist during the 1999 presidential campaign in Argentina, I met Leopoldo Bravo, the long-time caudillo of the province of San Juan, who was offering the support of his powerful provincial political structure to the future president. We were at his office, and he sat in an armchair, brown, comfortable, nondescript. Bravo searched in one of his pockets and pulled out a pen.

"A gift from Stalin," he said.

Bravo had been part of the team that opened the first Argentine embassy in the Soviet Union, in 1947. In 1953, as ambassador, he was among the last foreigners to meet Stalin before he fell ill and died. The pen, it turned out, was not a gift from Stalin, but one more myth Bravo had built around his days in the Soviet Union. The day we met, Bravo also told me stories about the group of Argentines that represented the country in Moscow, including very colorful tales about the worker attachés, labor activists sent by President Juan Perón who joined the Argentine delegation in Moscow and throughout the world. In the Soviet Union, Bravo told me, the attachés had tried to smuggle Spanish refugees out of the country, but were discovered by Soviet agents on their way to Prague—one of the most extraordinary incidents Bravo experienced in his time there.

The conversation (along with the presidential campaign and my own life) took a different path, but I remained captivated by those labor activists,

spread across the world, who nobody seemed to remember. Many years and several projects later, this book is the final result of that original spark.

Before that meeting with Bravo, I was fortunate to join conversations about populism and democracy under the guidance of a generous and brilliant group of Argentine intellectuals, who can collectively be represented by a reference to three institutions—the School of Sociology at the University of Buenos Aires, circa the late 1980s; the Club de Cultura Socialista; and the political journal *La Ciudad Futura*—and to the names José Aricó, Juan Carlos Portantiero, and Jorge Tula.

This book is, to a great extent, part of ongoing conversations with friends, two of them in particular: Greg Grandin and Mark Healey. I met Mark Healey in February 2001. We sat at Rocco in the Village and started to discuss politics, literature, and history. We have not stopped since then. Mark gently induced me to become a historian, and helped me to make the most of that step, including countless revisions and edits for this book. With him, I thought about the unique relation between Perón and labor activism, and the schism between them that is central for this study. I benefit from Mark's unwavering intellectual curiosity and even more so from his enormous friendship, as well as that of the entire Healey-Parera family. This book is one of the many adventures we plan to share.

Greg Grandin knew what I wanted to say better and earlier than I did. That was partly because of the patience with which he read hundreds of pages of my drafts, persisting until he found the version that could be interesting. But more important, he is able to absorb an almost infinite range of ideas and stories, and then draw them out of his mind in the form of an intellectual project. He has been a most generous mentor since we first met in 2007. The "feedback effect" of Peronism in U.S. domestic politics discussed in this book owes much to his insights and our conversations. His friendship, his welcoming home, and his family have made these years of work a pleasant journey.

Over these years, Barbara Weinstein has inspired me at every step of the way, personally and intellectually. Her subtle reflections about Latin American populism have enriched my understanding of the region's modern history and improved this work in many ways. To Barbara I also owe, among other things, the title of this book. Sinclair Thomson has opened for me more worlds than he can imagine. Years ago, he asked his students if we wanted to start a seminar on Latin American history by discussing the 1,299 pages of Trotksy's *History of the Russian Revolution*—a suggestion that shows the degree of dedication and creativity that he puts into training future scholars. As a whole, the history department at New York University is an island of intel-

lectual commitment within an institution that otherwise seeks to prioritize profit and influence to the detriment of critical thinking. On such an island, I benefited immensely from the work of Ada Ferrer, Linda Gordon, Manu Goswami, Molly Nolan, Marilyn Young, and Danny Walkowitz.

I worked all these years side by side with Carmen Soliz. We talked about every single page of our works, and then we talked about everything else. My daughter carries a broad smile on her face each time she sees her. I believe that my daughter's smile expresses, too, the love I feel for mi amiga. For many years, Jennifer Adair and I worked together in our individual projects. We learned a lot, and we enjoyed it. I benefited immensely from our conversations and her insights on Latin American and U.S. history. Dylan Yeats, his reports from the belly of the beast, his boundless love, and our interminable walks are a not-so-hidden force of this project.

Throughout the years, I discussed parts of this work with several colleagues. Javier Auyero's insights were immensely helpful in the last stage of writing this book; his suggestions improved crucial arguments. His work and our friendship over the decades, as well as the friendship of his father and his family, are a source of calm and inspiration. This book has also benefited from readings, suggestions, and comments from Barry Carr, Michelle Chase, Martín Sivak, Josh Frens-String, Max Paul Friedman, Margaret Power, Jorge Nállim, Patrick Iber, Christine Mathias, Leandro Morgenfeld, Aldo Marchesi, Christy Thornton, and Miguel Winograd.

Endless conversations about Peronism are a national sport in Argentina. Those that I have had in Buenos Aires with Gerardo Aboy Carlés, Carlos Altamirano, Gastón Chillier, Alberto D'Alotto, Martín Granovsky, Jorge Taiana, and Mario Wainfeld have materially informed this book.

Colleagues and officials at the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also made this project possible. Héctor Timerman has been enormously generous all these years, providing all kinds of support and granting me access to very valuable sources and documents. Some of the most revealing sources about the history of the worker attachés came from uncatalogued copies of reports found on the premises of Argentine embassies, in bookshelves, lockers, and desks that had not been touched in decades. Copies of dispatches describing six vibrant years of history in Bolivia, for example, were lost in a desk in the basement of the Argentine embassy. A retired worker approached the Argentine ambassador to Cuba in a small town far from Havana to give her a brochure that a worker attaché had distributed there more than half a century before. It would have been impossible to rescue these documents without the generosity and cooperation of the following people: Counsellor

Silvina Montenegro, in Bolivia; Ambassador Darío Alessandro and his wife, Marta Cichero, in Perú; Ambassador Juliana Marino, in Cuba; Ambassador Ernesto López, in Guatemala; and Ambassador María Cristina Perceval, with whom I worked for two years at the United Nations.

Several people provided me with invaluable help during the editing of this book. Rachel Nolan edited an early version of the manuscript. Her perceptive reading detected problems in arguments and sources throughout the book; always, she generously offered me a solution. Elizabeth DeBusk-Maslanka edited one version of the text, improving it throughout. This is a better book thanks to Isis Sadek, who did a wonderful job with the final revision of the manuscript. She detected problems, spotted "hispanismos," and suggested ways to refine the arguments. My special thanks to Gisela Fosado, at Duke University Press, for her trust in this project and for the kindness with which she guided me along the way. Also at Duke, Lydia Rappoport-Hankins and Danielle Houtz provided valuable editorial assistance.

I counted on the help and dedication of the people working at the following archives and libraries: in Argentina, CeDinCI, Archivo de la Cancillería Argentina, Archivo Internmedio del Archivo General de la Nación, and Archivo del Sindicalismo Argentino at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella; in the United States, the Tamiment and Bobst Libraries at New York University, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at Columbia University, the Kheel Center at the Catherwood Library at Cornell University, the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, the Boatwright Library at the University of Richmond, the U.S. National Archives, the Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, and the Eisenhower Presidential Library; in Colombia, the Archivo General de la Nación.

I am thankful to the many public libraries (and their workers) in which I wrote this book. In particular, the Biblioteca Nacional in Argentina and the Biblioteca Nacional in Chile, the Carroll Gardens branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library, the Cambridge Public Library, and the Henrico County Public Library, where I am writing these lines.

During the last two years, I have been working at the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership Studies. I cannot think of a better place to finish this book. Jepson, the university and, above all, my colleagues here, have been enormously generous. They provided me with the time and resources and friendship to make my life and work easier and more exciting.

Relatives of the attachés and protagonists of this study scattered around the world offered their time to share memories (and reports and pictures and mementos): Hugo Soriani (my infinite gratitude), Carlos Tomasini, Irene

Segovia, the Antueno family, Torcuato Di Tella, Pedro Conde Magdaleno (son) and Pedro Conde Magdaleno (grandson), Edelberto Torres Rivas, and Silvia Maestro.

Several people provided all kinds of support during these years, including friendship, advice, ideas, food, loans, housing, babysitting, a drink, encouragement: Mariano Siskind, Analía Ivanier and the two *galanes*, Valentín and Bruno, Claudio Benzecry, Daniel Fridman, Manuel Trancón, Jane Folpe, Michael Staunton, Susan Schneider, Gabriel Puricelli Yañez, Beatriz Taber (for being always there), Sylvia Molloy, Martín Plot (our conversations opened for me the appetite for analyzing U.S. politics through Latin American lenses that is central for this book), Diego Armus, Sergio Chejfec, Graciela Montaldo, Claudia Prado, Diego Panich, Guillermo Bodner, Pablo Semán (my brother, a guiding example of intellectual commitment), Charlotte Gartenberg, Hernán Iglesias Illa, Bat Ami Klejner (and Leo, Kayla, and Luca), Mariela Méndez and her family in Richmond, Jenny Pribble and her family in Richmond, María Esperanza Casullo and her family in Richmond, Felipe Muller (and the incredible Christmas of 2010), Tommy (for being there only when I needed it), Andrea Oñate, Eduardo Porretti, Eduardo Valdes, Guadalupe Gallo, and Alejandro Bonvechi.

I am fortunate to have Mariluz and Sime, my *suegros*, in my life. They have provided warmth and food and love during our stays in Chile. Their house feels like ours, only with the best *sopaipillas* in Latin America. And they have become the best *abuelos* that we could have wished for our daughter.

Elias Semán, my father, disappeared in 1978 during the military dictatorship in Argentina. According to witnesses, he spent his last days at the concentration camp El Vesubio wondering about his sons—and about the notes he was taking for a book on Argentine history. My mother, Susana Bodner, took care of both, sons and notes, and for the rest of her life sought the truth in a future of hope. I learned from them in the most courageous and joyful ways that history is about people's collective struggle for a better life and what we make out of what happened with those struggles.

Above all, Soledad Marambio, mi Castro—her life has changed mine. She deserves more than I can express in a few lines. We've built a family of books and people and love that I could not have even imagined before we met. And this is only the beginning. This work is dedicated to her and to our daughter, Clarita, history in the making, whose first toy was an Ikea doll with a hard hat we attached to it, christened "Monsieur Attaché."

INTRODUCTION. FROM THE FRINGES OF THE NATION TO THE WORLD

In 2009, as the United States entered the seventeenth month of its Great Recession, some 15 million American workers were jobless. With the burst of the housing bubble, the economy shrank by 3 percent in its fifth consecutive year of decline. People bought fewer cars, computers, and furniture. Factories were closing across the country. Comparisons to the Great Depression and the New Deal abounded, but there were a few more recent references by which people and policymakers could make sense of the crisis and possible ways out of it.[1] Then, on 30 April, the government announced the takeover of General Motors and Chrysler as part of an effort to protect them from shutdown and to prevent the cascade effect that such closures would have on economic activity and employment. That morning, the conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh presented this news to his audience with the following declaration: "In a few short minutes, the president of the United States, Barack Perón, will announce his Argentinean-like takeover of Chrysler."[2]

Most likely, Limbaugh's American audience were not familiar with Juan Perón or with what he did in Argentina in the 1940s. But in 2009, the name "Perón" still could stand for something liable to enrage Limbaugh's listeners about Obama's approach to the crisis. If Limbaugh's invocation made sense at least to him and his followers, it was largely because Perón's name conveyed a set of meanings and images: power for unions, industrial workers, wealth

redistribution, and government intervention in the economy, with the threat it posed to private property in the name of the common good.

Fast forward seven years. Against all odds, Donald Trump succeeded in challenging political elites during the presidential campaign. He had not yet won the election, but commentators already struggled to find historical examples to explain the appeal of his vociferous movement. On 11 August, the *Financial Times* ran an article titled: "Donald Trump Evokes Latin America's Old Style Strongmen." The article was illustrated with cartoons of Trump, Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez, and, yes, Perón. Many followed. "Is Donald Trump a Peronist?" "It's What Perón Sounded Like." This time, analysts' emphasis was not only placed on government intervention in the economy, but on the supposed political irrationality of the lower classes: under economic duress, blue-collar workers—allegedly unlike bankers or dentists—are prone to support demagogues who trick them into believing that there are easy shortcuts to their daily hardships.[3]

Where did those images associated with Perón come from? How did they arrive in the United States in 2009 or 2016? Many of them were born in the mid-1940s in remote places like León Segovia's house in the Chaco territory, a region in northern Argentina, eight hundred miles from Buenos Aires. On 9 December 1946, Segovia received a letter with a presidential seal and the signature of President Juan Perón. Segovia was a welder at Las Palmas, a sugar mill that belonged to an Irish couple until a traditional Argentine family bought both it and the entire town. Housing, food, drink, currency—everything was provided by the mill. Of criollo descent and indigenous features, Segovia did not even use the official Spanish language at home.[4] Although fluent in Spanish, he spoke mostly Guaraní—a language spoken by native inhabitants of the Chaco Forest—with his parents and friends. Three aspects of Segovia's life were deeply entangled with the larger national community: he was a member of his union, he had had run-ins with the National Gendarmerie, and he had voted for Colonel Juan Perón in the presidential elections. His decision to vote for Perón seemed an unlikely one, given that his socialist union had supported the republic in the Spanish Civil War and the Allies in World War II, while Perón was a nationalist who revered Spanish Falangism and belonged to a group of officers with Nazi sympathies.

In the official letter, President Perón notified Segovia that he had been selected as a student in the training course for diplomatic worker attachés.[5] It was a new position within the Argentine foreign service that Perón created a few weeks after taking office. Along with Segovia, approximately one hundred rank-and-file union members received similar letters. The General Confed-

eration of Labor (CGT) had selected its most valued activists to represent Argentina abroad. A few months later, leaving the country for the first time in their lives, Segovia and forty other labor activists traveled to embassies worldwide with the mission of spreading Perón's gospel of social revolution. Originating from the small towns of the countryside and the crowded working-class suburbs of Buenos Aires, the attachés were stationed in Washington, São Paulo, Moscow, Bogotá, and Paris, "as [Perón's] personal representatives beyond the national borders."[6] Over the following decade, five hundred labor activists became members of the Argentine foreign service.[7] Self-described as Perón's proud foot soldiers, they represent the largest presence of blue-collar workers in the foreign service of any country in history.[8]

Once abroad, the attachés wielded their own diplomatic position as proof of the swift changes occurring in Argentina under Perón. Nowhere else had workers accomplished so much, reaching positions in a realm usually reserved for elites. As part of their mission, they described the Argentine reality: hundreds of factories—many of them state-owned—were producing everything from steel to canned food. Unions held unprecedented bargaining power. They managed hotels for their workers at the most scenic vacation resorts. And hospitals and schools were free to all. The attachés showed that the daily caloric intake of an Argentine worker was among the highest in the world. And they emphatically attributed these advances to Perón and his wife, Eva Perón. In diplomatic dispatches, personal letters, and news articles, they reported back to Argentina about a European continent ravaged by the war. From Latin America, they described with ethnographic precision the meager wages of workers at an oil refinery in Peru and the kilometers that Guatemalan peasants at a plantation had to walk between their shacks and the first source of running water. From the United States, they chronicled layoffs at telephone companies, the end of rent regulation, which had benefited low-income workers during the New Deal, and the massive strikes in the automaker sector. The attachés made sure that the setbacks of unions and the efforts of the business sector to reverse workers' gains in the United States were widely publicized in Argentina and the rest of Latin America.

The attachés joined the democratic spring that swept Latin America after 1945. The contrast in the achievements of organized labor at home and the difficulties of workers abroad reinforced their belief in the exceptionality of the Peronist recipe. And this, in turn, provided a class ethos to a long-standing sense of predestination and to ambitions for regional leadership that ran deep in Argentine nationalism. They promoted Peronism as a path for the expansion of social citizenship for the emerging working class and denounced

U.S. foreign policy as an ally of local elites in obstructing that mission. With this basic toolkit of ideas, they allied with the leftist leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 in Colombia and made sure that indigenous people in Peru had a copy of Perón's Declaration of the Rights of Workers, which had been translated into Quechua by 1950. They funded an early venture abroad of a young Cuban law student, Fidel Castro, and befriended an equally young Argentine doctor, Ernesto Guevara. In 1954, a Peronist attaché sheltered members of the future leadership of the Guatemalan guerrilla in the Argentine embassy during the CIA-backed military coup.

The attachés confronted U.S. labor diplomats of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), who had deployed representatives throughout the world since the end of World War II. Particularly in Latin America, they had worked closely with the U.S. government, the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the business sector. Labor diplomats became part of the larger U.S. efforts to contain communism by gaining the support of workers in the region for the strengthening of liberal democracy.[9] The U.S. labor diplomats saw Peronism as a fascist threat and worked with U.S. officials in containing Perón's transnational aims. They shared with Peronism the idea that inequality was a major problem in Latin America. They also argued that democracy could not be achieved without social reform. But they claimed that workers should gain their rights without violent upheavals of social order, which could be used by demagogues (i.e., Perón) to create a totalitarian government that would curtail citizens' freedoms.[10] The Peronist specter captured the concerns of officials and elites in the Americas. By 1946, Argentina was already mentioned as one of the main threats to democratic liberalism in the document that became the blueprint for Cold War containment.[11] And two years later, a U.S. official stationed in Europe reflected, "The threat which gives us the worst case of cold shivers is that of a southern bloc dominated by Argentina."[12] Attachés like Segovia came to represent this menace to the extent that their actions were eventually described by Robert Alexander, the scholar with the greatest influence on U.S. officials working with organized labor in Latin America, as part of "the whole *Peronista* propaganda apparatus . . . against the United States [that] outdid even that of the Communists."[13] By the onset of the Cold War, the image of Peronism as a symbol of social change gone awry was engraved in such a powerful way that it survived the Cold War itself. Seven decades and five thousand miles later, the specter reemerged in the voice of a swooning Limbaugh during the first major social crisis of the twenty-first century.

Ambassadors of the Working Class is a transnational history of the hopes and fears stirred by populist politics in the Americas and of the competition between Peronist and U.S. labor diplomats for the conquest of the region's labor movement. At the core of the study is the question of how organized labor became crucial in defining democracy in the postwar Americas. It explores the way in which debates about the "labor question" influenced contemporary perceptions of social rights, individual freedom, national sovereignty, and the common good across the Americas. This study centrally shows how, against the background of the growth of urban working classes in Latin America, U.S. labor diplomats and promoters of economic and political liberalism placed emphasis on the primacy of private-property rights, individual freedom, negligible government intervention in the economy, and free trade, inevitably clashing with populist and nationalistic labor leaders who located social rights and a moral economy at the center of their democratic agenda. From this competition between liberal and populist projects emerged changing visions of democracy, which defined Latin American politics during the first years of the Cold War.[14]

This book tells the history of the Peronist worker attachés from their emergence in 1946 until a military dictatorship ousted Perón (and expelled the attachés from government) in 1955. During those years, the attachés joined a wide range of movements in the region, promoting social reform and presenting the centrality of workers' rights as the distinctive quality of Argentine democracy. The narrative ends toward 1959 with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the year in which we can locate the exhaustion of this form of populist politics. This book analyzes three different but connected aspects of the attachés' story: the domestic transformations in Peronist Argentina that they helped to set in motion; their efforts to create a regional movement in Latin America inspired by the Peronist success; and, finally, the confrontation of U.S. officials, labor diplomats, and elites against Peronism and its regional ambitions.

Fashioning an Identity for the Argentine Working Class

The backdrop of *Ambassadors of the Working Class* is the growing presence of workers in Argentine society during the first half of the twentieth century and the changes this presence produced after 1945 with the rise of Peronism. Few things were more disruptive of the national cultural milieu than the access of labor activists, most of them from anarchist and socialist background

and with no formal education, to the most aristocratic realm of public administration. Perón created the program of worker attachés only six weeks after taking office. With a stroke of a pen, workers invaded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the area dominated by patrician families who had used their diplomatic position to build the idea of exceptionality of the "Argentine race," as Argentine society was presented to the rest of the world.[15] In the diplomatic world, labor was a worldwide focus of attention since the 1910s, when the foreign offices of many European countries started to report on workers' living conditions overseas. But the program of worker attachés not only described workers lives and aimed to promote Peronism abroad; it also reshuffled domestic power relations. One need only compare the picture of the first cohort of worker attachés to any portrait of diplomats of the time to get a sense of the revulsive effects of Peronism in established ideas of power, hierarchies, and rights (see figure Intro.1). Dark-skinned faces, suits that did not fit them elegantly, lack of hats, an abundance of short dark moustaches in lieu of polished white beards, their youth—every detail indicated the ascent of a new class. Notably, the presence of only one woman (the unnamed administrative secretary of the program) suggested some continuity with old institutional traditions. Workers' access to greater economic resources and their growing participation in political power provided clear evidence of their arrival to a more inclusive society. The story of these attachés exposes the inextricable link between economic redistribution and the myriad of symbolic and institutional transformations that lay at the center of the democratization of Peronist Argentina.[16] The restricted role of women in the program also highlights the limits of that democratization. No more than twenty women received a worker attaché diploma, and just three of them went abroad as diplomats. The fact that Eva Perón took the program under her wing could have suggested a wider opportunity for Peronist women to engage in labor diplomacy. But as was also the case with the creation of the Partido Peronista Femenino, gendered power relations under Peronism exhibit the ambivalences of populist political dynamics. The movement led by Perón and Evita opened up new spaces for the political participation of women, while recreating patriarchal hierarchies that often demanded women be subordinate to the leading role of men.[17]

At the center of this history is labor activism. Rank-and-file union members and labor activists have been a fruitful area of study in the history of Peronism. The study of their actions has shifted the understanding of populist politics away from top-down approaches (with their emphasis on state control of labor, indoctrination, and personalism) and from bottom-up ones

FIGURE 1.1. The first cohort of worker attachés at the public school in Buenos Aires where the training courses took place during the first year of the program, October 1946. The distinguishable features and clothing of Argentine workers contrasts with the usual pictures of members of the Foreign Service, who were drawn from the national elites. Only one woman appears among the attachés—the administrative secretary of the program. Source: Personal papers of Eduardo de Antueno.

(with their emphasis on workers' agency and workers' lively productivity in public life).[18] Yet few studies have focused on workers' new roles in foreign affairs, even at a moment when the country's position in the postwar global order has been a main domestic concern.[19] This book examines the crucial function of these activists in the creation of a political identity among workers, taking "identity" as a less essentialist notion than "class consciousness," but stressing the construction of a shared subjectivity among workers as central to the existence of a working class.

Labor activism in Argentina, of course, predates 1945. But as a working-class political identity, Peronism has been the most powerful, effective, and lasting in history. Scholarly focus on labor activism tries to answer the simple

questions of how workers came to present their individual grievances as a collective cause and how that collective cause took a specific Peronist shape. As the labor historian David Montgomery put it in relation to the labor movement in the United States, a basic and very political step is workers' realization that while others in society could wield power and influence as individuals, workers' could obtain what they wanted only through collective action.[20] Conceiving of individual complaints, deprivations, and demands as part of a collective project is not the unmediated product of workers' material condition (nor is it, I should add, the simple effect of indoctrination). It is a project built by activists seeking to "foster a sense of unity and purposiveness among their fellow workers through the spoken and printed word, strikes, meetings . . . and to promote through those activities widely shared analyses of society and of paths to the 'emancipation of labor.'"[21] This realization, which has formed the heart of social history since the 1960s, is the key to this story, decentering an international history from its narrower narrative of diplomatic relations, restoring the realm of human experience in the study of working-class politics and of this rare space of labor history.[22]

Ambassadors of the Working Class focuses on these labor activists to analyze how the first years of Peronism were produced, lived, and decoded as a cultural conflict. Scholars have employed the term *cultural* to downplay the significance of those conflicts against "real" changes that would entail, in this case, the expropriation of means of production. On the contrary, the present reframing of this historical object as a cultural one is an effort to interpret the wider inputs that constitute it or to analyze it, as would have been said decades ago under the influence of Gramsci, within the historical bloc of a socioeconomic formation.[23] The analysis therefore comprises the economic transformations that affected Argentina, the relation between institutions and citizens and between government and organized labor, and domestic and international economic policies and constraints. Above all, it focuses on the traditions and cultures that informed (and were reimagined by) the supporters of and the opposition to Peronism. The opening to workers of spaces of power like the Cancillería, as the Foreign Ministry is known, is sufficient to understand the support that Peronism garnered. Yet considering how elites were able to preserve their space and privileges and, to a large extent, to contain the advance of the worker attachés, the vitriolic reaction against them can be understood as a concern about shattered hierarchies. Elites reacted to the arrival of Peronism by deploying a battery of characterizations that emphasized the cultural differences rather than the material interests affected. The detractors of Peronism described Perón's followers as *cabecitas negras*

and the arrival of the movement they created as a *zoological flood*; in the case of the attachés, they questioned the workers' ability to assume positions of power in society beyond the bounds of organized labor and their ability to acquire skills beyond the world of laborers. The fears that the presence of a worker with diplomatic status at an Argentine embassy triggered among elites should not be analyzed in relation to the actual impact of workers actions but to a new culture that this presence imposed. To understand these reactions as part of the cultural historical phenomenon implies a crucial assertion about the period: Peronism came to power at a moment of deep political crisis in the Americas. Raising the labor question after World War II challenged not only the distribution of wealth but also the very idea of the social order and hierarchies from which the distribution of wealth derives.[24]

Within this approach, *Ambassadors of the Working Class* explores the investment of labor activists, policymakers, and leaders within Peronism in creating a vision that made sense of the changes it was producing. The lack of a preceding ideological corpus, the efforts of indoctrination, the centrality of the leader, and the florid loquacity of Perón have led to an underestimation of any ideological corpus in Peronism. Nothing could be further from the reality of those early years. The case of the attachés shows that the realm of foreign affairs became a suitable venue to work out the contradictions among the competing worldviews gathered under Perón's leadership and to synthesize them into a relatively coherent whole. This worldview was not lacking conflicts as Perón's foreign policy evolved from a class-based nationalism with anti-imperialist tones to a conservative nationalism that joined the U.S. crusade against communism. But even those changes required extensive debates, were interpreted in conflicting ways, and were translated into different actions. This function of foreign affairs as a realm that absorbed contested ideas and produced a new synthesis was clearly expressed in the training courses for attachés.

This space was a unique laboratory in which attachés like Segovia—most of them former communist, socialist, and anarchist activists with international experience in the support of labor in the Spanish Republic—met a group of professors selected by Perón from his cohort of Argentine nationalists, Spanish Falangists, and Catholic *integralistas*. For weeks, leftist activists, rightist intellectuals, and Perón himself debated how Marxism and the teachings of the Church could coalesce into a new political vision. Later, attaché reports that contrasted the prosperity of Argentina with the labor setbacks in the United States and the daily deprivations under Stalin in the Soviet Union contributed to the domestic legitimacy of a Third Position as an alternative

to liberalism and communism. Finally, their actions in Latin America to seek a rapprochement with democratic and revolutionary movements pushing for social reform and their denunciation of U.S. foreign policy outlined a version of Peronism different from the one their leader promoted.[25]

The Leader, Revisited

One crucial aspect of Peronism revealed by the study of the attachés is the divergent strategies, ideas, and actions of Perón and of the labor activists who followed him, manifested in their notions of how to push for social change. *Ambassadors of the Working Class* reveals how activists configured spaces of action alternative both to their subordination to Perón and to a frontal rebellion against him. Within the constraints of nationalism, the attachés downplayed Perón's instructions and developed strategies that were different from, or plainly against, Perón's foreign policy; yet they always acted in the name of Perón, without questioning his authority. Their background in international labor solidarity, the relations they built with other activists, their own idea of Peronism, what they witnessed abroad, the forms of political affect built over time—all these factors contributed to mold their identity. By establishing alliances with communist forces, supporting labor struggles against regimes supported by Perón, or sheltering leftist activists from military repression backed by Argentina, they produced a form of Peronism different from that of their leader. The story of the attachés opens a window into the lively reality of those early years that goes beyond straight subordination of activists to Perón or their outspoken rebellion. The book proposes an alternative reading of Peronism as the history of the perpetual and always imperfect attempt by Perón to put the proverbial working-class genie back into the bottle. It shows not only that Perón might have been the first victim of the plebeian spirit of the movement he created, but also that the failure to entirely contain the "heretical challenge" of labor activists was, paradoxically, a central part of Peronism's long-term survival.[26]

Most studies devote their attention to the consequences of Perón's efforts to subordinate the labor movement, its dependency on the state, and how unions' blind loyalty to Perón limited their autonomy. While acknowledging the relevance of these elements in Peronism's demobilizing effects on organized labor, I rearrange these elements by also showing Perón's frustrated efforts to discipline its labor base. The book shows the activists efforts to pull their leader and the movement, against all odds, back to the inclusive policies of the early years, to its emancipatory rhetoric, to its symbology of hope.

In order to understand the potential and limitations of this strategy, it is important to note that this happened during a period in Argentine history when Peronism was perceived not only as the best option for labor, but as the only one. For unions in many Latin American countries (including Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, and Bolivia), nationalism was one more program in a menu of competing options for advancing workers' rights. Liberal, leftist, or ethnic identities were all means of expressing realistic alternatives of power, separately or in various combinations.[27] In Argentina, competition for the heart of the working class was limited at best. The rise of Peronism shattered the Left's base, and it would neither recover its strength nor present a viable alternative to Peronism for decades.[28] In order to confront Peronism, liberal and moderate parties opted for alliances with conservative sectors and economic elites, all groups that became increasingly reactionary in their social views as the Cold War settled in. By the early 1950s, when Perón showed a manifest interest in social containment, he managed to foreclose other political options on the Left. So, lacking any other available options, it seemed reasonable for workers and activists to try to make the best out of the movement they had already helped to create.

Within these constraints, Peronist nationalism provided a very productive "language of contention" for the fashioning of an Argentine working-class identity.[29] As such, it would be absurd not to see its enormous (and at times tragic) shortcomings. Perón's actions also reoriented labor activism onto demobilizing paths. Activists did not act in a historical vacuum, and the program of worker attachés suffered the consequences of Perón's conservative policies in terms of decreasing resources, conflicting signals, and plain rejection by their leader. There is no spoiler to this story if we anticipate that the main goal of the attachés, the creation of a regional labor movement inspired by Peronism, never materialized. The focus on the agency of labor activism does not disregard these factors. Instead, it seeks to illuminate crucial aspects of mass politics that explain Peronism's appeal during the postwar and its enduring legacies in Latin America. Over the last decade, scholars have focused on cases studies about Peronism, providing very precise reflections on aspects such as public policies, geographical differences, identity formation and policies in the rural sector, relation with local elites from the interior, and broader social transformations in leisure and consumption. The result is a complex and multifaceted picture of the movement and a very nuanced assessment of the impact of the first decade of Peronism. Yet the prevailing impression still is that the rise of Perón was a watershed in Argentine history. The transformations that it set in motion could be perceived in daily life as well as in the

country's social structure and political institutions. This book joins the work of these scholars by providing an account of the still unexplored case of the worker attachés.[30]

In this respect, the approach of *Ambassadors of the Working Class* to the relation between leader and followers is informed by two important scholarly interventions of the last two decades. One involves debates in the fields of sociology and anthropology about twentieth-century patron-client networks and clientelism. A growing body of works has illuminated the potential and limits of those exchanges, bringing to light the agency of clients in the face of patrons and powerbrokers, the vast symbolic economy involved in those exchanges, and the reproduction of hierarchies and inequalities within the egalitarian projects and practices.[31] The second is the recent historiography about Latin American *caudillismo* during the period of state formation in nineteenth-century Latin America. Earlier works about mass politics developed under the shadows of modernizing theories stressed how "strongmen" in Latin America were in a position to divert people's rational choices by offering paternalistic protection during their transition from traditional to modern, abstract social relations.[32] These approaches often obscured those leaderships' democratizing undercurrents. The renewed scholarly interest in *caudillista* politics has not taken for granted the motivations of followers, exploring instead symbolic and material exchanges, as well as the wide range of onsite opportunities that this relationship with the leaders offered for followers.[33]

Inevitably, questions about the depth of the changes operated by Peronism, the conflicts between state policies and labor activism, and the tensions between the expansion of social citizenship and Perón's conservative authoritarianism remit to the protean attributes of the category of "populism." Partly because it is not a "native category" that the protagonists themselves assumed as an identity, "populism," or more exactly "Latin American populism," has eluded concrete definition. Political changes in Europe and the United States such as the vote in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and the triumph of Trump in the U.S. presidential elections, both in 2016, precipitated extensive reflections about the appeal of populist discourses. This defective origin and its later expanded usage have also produced a rather taxing test in academic debates for the exact meaning of "populism" that few other categories would pass. Problematic notions such as "citizenship," "civil society," or "liberalism" are frequently employed with fewer qualms.[34] Yet, elusive as its meaning might be, "populism" has been nonetheless applied to de-

fine Peronism as a historical object, a radical expression of the "classic" cases of populism that include also Varguismo in Brazil and Cardenismo in Mexico.[35] The historian Tulio Halperín Donghi never used the category "populism," yet he provided the clearest description of a populism from below, in tension with its cultural attributes and the limits of its transformations. Analyzing the changes triggered since 1945, he did not hesitate to describe the rise of Peronism as a revolution: "Only those who believe that it was a blasphemy to doubt the existence of only one social revolution . . . could argue against the idea that Peronism was in fact one [social revolution]: under the aegis of the Peronist regime, all the relations between social groups were suddenly redefined, and one needed only to walk the streets or ride a streetcar to notice this."[36]

For the purpose of this work, I will use the term *populism* in three different and related forms. The first is as a *historical phenomenon* in relation to the movements that swept Latin American status quo in the 1930s and 1940s with the arrival of mass politics. Characterized by strong personalist leadership, authoritarian and yet highly effective in expanding economic and political citizenship for the working class, these movements produced what can be called a form of authoritarian democratization. They are usually exemplified with the national cases of Cardenismo in Mexico, Varguismo in Brazil, and Peronism in Argentina. Not surprisingly, they are named after the leaders who created them and present substantial differences between themselves. The second use of the term *populism* follows the *political language* of U.S. officials, journalists, and labor diplomats during the postwar in relation to Peronism in particular and to their concern about the dominant role of the leader and the perceived subjection of the labor movement to the government. The third is as a *category of analysis* of Cold War social sciences. Intellectuals throughout the Americas focused on these movements to reflect on the relationship between mass politics, modernization theories, and the individual. They contended that collective action and its expression in working-class politics in the form of unions posed a threat to freedom and rational political choice. Most contemporary uses of the term "populism" carry reverberations of these ideas.

Turning Transnational

The rallying cry "Workers of the World, Unite!" is an unmistakable sign of the transnational roots of the labor movement from its inception. This signal is even clearer in the case of labor activists who were also diplomats. The worker attachés offer a unique opportunity for a novel transnational

history of Peronism. *Ambassadors of the Working Class* examines the actions and ideas of the Argentine attachés, as well as those of Latin American and U.S. labor and political movements, that mutually shaped crucial notions about the place of workers in society. In particular, it discusses how answers to the question of labor and to the emergence of mass societies traveled beyond national borders. This movement of ideas fashioned a new hemispheric order, which manifested itself not only in national political bodies and the emerging inter-American system, but also in cultural preferences and notions of social rights as much as in individual, racial, and gendered hierarchies. It also contributed to a fluid understanding of common good and of how a democratic society should look. The attachés sought to expand a particular "Peronist" answer to these questions. While they promoted populist ideas and the figures of Perón and Evita, they were ultimately engaged in a much wider world of contested projects that informed their vision of what Peronism was. Thus, this book offers a history of the Western Hemisphere after 1945 that relocates populism as a central protagonist of the Cold War, a conflict that in the region is primarily defined by competing answers to the rise of labor.[37]

As a transnational history of Peronism, *Ambassadors of the Working Class* examines this movement beyond the constraints of its own nationalist rhetoric.[38] And in doing so, it unveils the hemispheric changes in which Peronism was involved. As Thomas Bender argues, "Nationalism and national identity are founded largely on a sense of shared memories." In advocating for a transnational approach to U.S. history in particular, he writes, "Thinking of the global dimensions of a national history, historians must step outside the national box—and return with new and richer explanations for national development."[39] I take this approach in order to understand not only the history of Argentine Peronism but also the inner dynamics of the Cold War, and to provide new arguments for an analysis of the swift transformations in postwar United States.

The first transnational dimension of this history is the fashioning of Peronist nationalism. This book shows how the class-based nationalism embraced by Argentine workers was, as a historical construct, a singular expression that captured various ideas, traveled across borders, and processed these ideas into a national form. The scope of these ideas is broader than what is usually considered, ranging from the social doctrine of the Church that informed social policies throughout the world to the relation between democracy and workers' rights in the U.S. New Deal and including modernizing theories prevalent in Latin America that adopted a racialized language to envision a way out of the perceived regional backwardness. The confrontation

with the United States was a central component of Peronist labor activism, of its strength at home, and of its potential abroad. Therefore, it is crucial to know what the attachés observed and reacted to when they talked about the United States. We should not assume that we can collapse the manifold rhetorics of criticism of the United States throughout history, or even across different political movements, into one thing without rigorous distinctions. It would imply that we believe that all historical protagonists have meant the same thing. It would suggest also that the "United States" they confronted has always been the same.

In exploring the actions of Argentine labor activism in Latin America, what emerges is a specific form of anti-Americanism. Peronism emulated the social reform and nationalism of the New Deal in order to denounce the imperialism of U.S. foreign policy and to criticize the inconsistency between the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt and postwar foreign and domestic realities. Perón and the attachés developed a form of class-based, anti-U.S. rhetoric aimed at producing an intermittent but scrupulous differentiation and periodization of U.S. history.

Perón and the attachés appropriated certain elements of the New Deal and stressed both the backlash of conservative and business sectors against the power of organized labor and the complicity of union leaders and the government after 1945. In doing so, Peronists repeatedly positioned themselves as the legitimate heirs to the New Deal. Scholars have long analyzed how U.S. liberalism became a source of inspiration for progressive movements in Latin America, yet they have been noticeably shy in studying the strong connections between Peronism and the New Deal. In his fundamental work about Peronist labor activists, Daniel James briefly mentions this relation, yet there is no further elaboration about the connections between the two political visions.[40] This might have to do, to some extent, with the fact that the strength of Argentine nationalistic discourse, the anticommunist jargon of Peronism, and Perón's actual fascist inspiration made other factors less immediately visible.

The study of the activists' engagement in conjunction with what was happening abroad helps us to recast some basic notions about domestic transformation in Argentina. One of these ideas is the assumption that Perón's conservative shift toward a marked anticommunism and an emphasis on social order was a consequence of the obstacles to economic expansion that he faced on the domestic front.[41] A closer look at Argentina's engagement with hemispheric politics shows that the Peronist shift long preceded the economic downturn that became visible in 1949. It shows that Perón and Argentine officials started a visible move toward anticommunism and social contention

by early 1948, in connection with U.S. pressures across the region to sign on to a Cold War agenda. The hemispheric episode that catalyzed these transformations was the 1948 Pan-American Conference, which gave birth to the Organization of American States amid the popular riots for the killing of the leftist Colombian leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.

Another theory about the evolution of Peronist identity, prevalent among diplomatic historians, claims that Perón radicalized the anti-American rhetoric of his movement as a domestic distraction to make up for economic constraints.[42] The actions of the attachés sometimes seemed to justify this idea. A comprehensive view of Peronism within a regional context, though, offers a very different picture. The most salient feature of that picture is the asynchrony between beliefs, international constrains, domestic policies, and institutional changes. Perón created the program of the attachés in 1946 as an aggressive form of international labor activism with the purpose of consolidating an Argentine stance in the region by creating a regional anti-imperialist movement. Such an original program took time to materialize. The process of selection, training, deployment, and the minimal experience needed to be more assertive in their new diplomatic role meant that it was around 1948 before the attachés were ready to act. Only by this time, Perón was more than eager to dismantle the program. In 1948 and even more so in the following years, the attachés expressed an anti-Americanism that no longer corresponded to Perón's strategy and often ran against his specific orders and those of the Foreign Ministry. What happened between 1948 and 1955 was largely a permanent confrontation between the materialization of Perón's early creation and Argentina's realignment in the Cold War.

The second transnational dimension of *Ambassadors of the Working Class* refers, precisely, to the Cold War in Latin America. This book relocates Peronism, the disputes around the expansion of social rights, and the opposition to its labor-based policies and regional ambitions as crucial features of the conflict in the region. In the decade in which the Cold War took shape, Peronism animated one of the most robust forms yet of anti-Pan-Americanism at the sensitive moment when U.S. efforts at regional dominance were taking new and concrete forms in the consolidation of the postwar interstate system. Argentina's role as the main contender against a U.S.-inspired Pan-Americanism, which it had held since the late nineteenth century, loomed on the horizon in the form of a worldview that advanced the notion that a region's sovereignty was tied to a critique to materialism and individualism.[43] In 1945, this vision was much more than a diffuse historical specter. The Argentine economy emerged from World War II as the most powerful

and modern one in Latin America. The country exerted an enormous influence in the region, particularly among its Southern Cone neighbors. Perón aggressively sought bilateral agreements that reinforced Argentina's presence and obstructed the free-trade deal under which the United States sought to expand into Latin American markets. Talks about a Marshall Plan for Latin America funded with Argentine capital and Argentine agricultural production seemed realistic for many in the region.[44]

Peronist anti-Pan-Americanism also served as a powerful source of inspiration for social reform. And at the same time, Argentina's economic performance served as a platform for political expansion. When Perón launched his most forceful attempts at regional leadership in 1948, the Argentine working class enjoyed one of the best living standards in the world by most accounts. An extended net of public institutions provided housing, education, and healthcare for millions of workers. The state strongly enforced progressive labor regulations, some of which had been sanctioned decades earlier but were never fully enforced. In the hands of the Argentine government, which relied on large-scale and often repetitive, hyperbolic, and embellished propaganda, tales about these domestic changes were powerful weapons abroad.

But the fireworks and clichés of Peronist propaganda should not preclude us from seeing the deep connections it established with Latin American traditions at a special historical juncture. Movements and leaders from every corner of Latin America connected Peronism with rhetoric and policies. Workers and peasants had access to a Peronist version of the region's shortcomings and the responsibility that U.S. foreign policy bore for them. Activists and leaders often built contacts with Buenos Aires and explored common political strategies through the worker attachés. It is not surprising that most of the movements that expressed some forms of anti-Americanism in Latin America during the twentieth century related in different ways to Peronism. The attachés were instrumental in producing those encounters. In the emergence of the inter-American system in 1948, we can see both the extent of regional affinities around the expansion of populist projects and the mighty reaction of the United States and of local elites in Latin America to contain any form of social unrest.

The most important and contested idea of this period was that of social rights. The notion that rights did not apply exclusively to individual citizens was disruptive of long-standing beliefs in liberal democracy. For populist movements, some groups in economic disadvantage, such as "workers," had been historically marginalized and were entitled to specific benefits and protections as a class, so that its members could achieve collectively the same

influence in society that others were able to forge individually. In a region that was experiencing a broadly similar (if extremely uneven) postwar industrialization boom, Peronism gave new energy to a notion of national sovereignty that promoted the common good over an individualistic notion of citizenship. For decades, Argentine elites had grounded their anti-Pan-American rhetoric in the idea of national sovereignty, a tenet shared in Latin America since the emergence of nation states in the nineteenth century and within which the government's legitimacy was based on fulfilling certain social obligations. Peronist anti-Pan-Americanism was something else. Perón seemed to have turned the ideal into a reality at a moment in which many Latin American nations were experiencing the same postwar boom of industrialization and in which workers' mobilization in favor of a rapid expansion of their rights had produced cracks in the kind of dominating relation between elites and the rest of the society. For many in the region, the Peronist self-aggrandizing slogan of the Third Position was much more than propaganda. It also emerged as a robust attempt to finally overcome the fissures and contradictions of post-independence Latin America.[45]

Finally, the third transnational dimension of this history broaches the transformations in the United States during the postwar. *Ambassadors of the Working Class* argues that the rise of Peronism, its labor-based policy, and its mobilizational style were not only the target of the U.S. foreign policy but also the source of crucial inputs in a hemispheric cultural exchange. The images Peronism produced became part of a hemispheric cultural milieu in which U.S. intellectuals, scholars, and policymakers looked to the experiences of mass politics in Latin America to include them in domestic debates about the legacies of the New Deal and the rise of Cold War liberalism and conservative thinking. Of course, this argument is not an attempt to explain the many changes occurring in postwar United States through the rise of Peronism, a temptation that in this case would indicate the influence of our object of study on our own views. I seek to contribute to the understanding of these changes through a different light, joining the new historical writing that challenges the drastic separation between the United States and Latin America. This book disputes the idea that a transnational history of the Americas should focus only on the influence of the United States in Latin America and argue that there is a very productive field to explore in the opposite direction.

Scholars, U.S. diplomats, and union leaders portrayed Peronism as an extreme form of a Latin American take on the relation between individual freedom and workers' rights, between citizenship and equality, and between democracy and change. By 1946, U.S. labor diplomats liberally referred to

Peronism as "one brand of totalitarianism," along with fascism and communism. They did so while social scientists elaborated on similar concepts, and they did so in debates that overlapped with heated discussions about how domestic legacies of the New Deal threatened postwar democracy. Government intervention in the economy, the place of organized labor, and workers' rights were insistently singled out in these discussions. U.S. labor diplomats described these domestic legacies in a way that was remarkably similar to the "totalitarian" features that they assigned to Peronism. Critics feared that a strong labor movement could destroy free institutions by forcing increasingly violent struggles against other elements of society in order to obtain unsustainable benefits in the name of equality. Rejection of unions was conceived not as a bigoted stance but as a positive action in defense of workers. As Henry Ford had said a few decades earlier, "The safety of the people today . . . is that they are unorganized and therefore cannot be trapped."[46]

Scholars were crucial in producing this conceptualization of the totalitarian threat of Latin American nationalism. Diplomats and democratic allies of the United States in the region explained how Perón had blinded the uneducated masses by offering them immediate benefits from the state at the cost of political submission, comparing Peronism with similar projects in the rest of Latin America and in the United States.

The parallel evolution of the concern of U.S. officials about the dominance of organized labor in Argentina and the development of the conceptual toolkit of Cold War social sciences is remarkable. With different approaches, authors, such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Kenneth Organsky, and scholars working on early theories of modernization came to view Peronism alternately as a species of fascism or as a form of communist politics. Peronism offered them a platform for portraying communism and Nazism as two variants of the same problem, totalitarianism, based on how claims for equality and the advance of a collective identity suppressed individual freedom. Even as the decades passed, the study of Peronism was like an exercise in time travel that allowed the observer to see in it the genesis of these movements as an escape from personal responsibilities or as a longing for a traditional kinship lost in the transition from patriarchal social relations to industrial societies. "Extremist movements," Lipset wrote in reference to Peronism, "appeal to the disgruntled and the psychologically homeless," as well as to "the socially isolated" and "the economically insecure."[47] Once this framework was established, the threat of a too-powerful labor movement became apparent in its demands for immediate action, its acceptance of simplistic explanations, its escape from personal responsibilities, its favor of collective claims, its support for authoritarian

leaders. As a category of analysis, "Peronism" came to represent for scholars and policymakers a form of mass politics with a dangerous edge. It was joined with communism and fascism in debates about the dangers that would linger in the United States if the New Deal legacies of strong organized labor and an interventionist government were not revised. Peronism offered for social scientists what Eldon Kenworthy argued any global theory requires: "the little known case which, bent to the requirements of theory, imparts an aura of universality" to some very locally grounded concerns.[48]

The roots of events that occurred during this period are the need for social reforms associated with the rise of the new urban working classes, the inability of elites to either contain or repress the democratic expansion coming from below, and the consequent need of a new ruling class in an age of mass politics. Most U.S. officials and labor diplomats shared the concerns about the need for social reforms in the region and were harsh critics of local elites. Yet they tried to square the circle by demanding a new social order without a violent rearrangement of the positions in society. U.S. diplomats who questioned the rise of Perón reaffirmed that the country urgently needed social change, but lamented that it took the form of populist politics. This quandary trapped U.S. liberals in an impossible situation. Divested of the ideological connotations of communism and its frontal attack on private property and of the tragic features of ethnic cleaning and massive repression that connoted the totalitarian experiences of Nazism and Stalinism, Peronism offered the naked truth of social reform and its violent impact on the status quo. Discussions about Peronism advanced the questions that guided U.S. liberalism in its domestic and foreign policies in the following decades: how to redistribute resources without exerting some form of coercion over those who possess those resources, and how to incorporate massive groups of workers in politics without affecting established hierarchies. If people like Segovia will now have a say in foreign affairs, how do we maintain the status quo that preceded and prevented his arrival?

In parallel, social reform came under a more frontal attack from an alternative point of view as scholars developed an assault against the very idea of social reform. By the time of Peronism's ascent, the Austrian philosopher Friedrich A. Hayek developed an incipient criticism to the notion of "social justice," precisely the main slogan that identified organized labor in Argentina under Perón, and about which Hayek would later expand in the 1960s and 1970s. *The Road to Serfdom* was published in 1944. In it Hayek warned about the advocacy for "community consumption" and a "planned economy" exemplified in the case of the Labor Party in the United Kingdom. He stressed

the lack of any real single social goal: a strongman with the blank mandate to decide in the name of the common good what that goal is would only hurt the freedom of the individual and start the society's slide into authoritarianism.[49] The influence of Hayek's work was vast in Latin America—*The Road to Serfdom* was widely discussed in Argentina at the time of its publication—and it also informed the views of U.S. policymakers dealing with Peronism. By 1947, Spruille Braden, the U.S. ambassador who introduced Peronism to American audiences, declared that liberals should declare a fight "against all forms of statism, among which I include socialism of such governments as that of the Labor Party" and complained about U.S. "government interference and participation in what should be the exclusive field of private enterprise."[50]

This book shows the direct ways in which the confrontation of Peronism and the perceived excessive power of labor informed these two alternatives in U.S. politics. Cold War liberals argued in favor of social reforms as a way to prevent the rise of movements like Peronism. A few years later, during the early 1960s, U.S. officials involved in the early relation with Peronism became promoters of the War on Poverty in the United States and of the Alliance for Progress in Latin America, the two major U.S. attempts at development and reform in the region and at home. At the same time, early reflections about Peronism informed those who actively sought to suppress any challenge to the social order. Even by the 1960s, some scholars and policymakers involved in the containment of Peronism or in its conceptualization joined the incipient forms of the neoconservative movement. With Peronism as a specter, they warned U.S. audiences about the risks that changes such as those derived from urban poverty or those promoted by the civil-rights movement posed for the final outcome of the Cold War.

FINALLY, THIS BOOK IS not the history that Segovia and the worker attachés wanted to make. The dream of an international Peronist movement never became a reality. Perón was ousted in 1955, and in general, populist projects in Latin America were exhausted by the end of the decade, even if they lived a generous afterlife. The attachés fought against an array of forces that ranged from their own leader to the fearsome deployments of the United States during the Cold War. By 1952, the Agrupación de Trabajadores Latinoamericanos Sindicalizados (ATLAS), the labor-based regional organization they had envisioned, was a weak bureaucratic instrument with no impact on workers' lives, a testament more to the attachés' project's shortcoming than to its achievements. Yet to simply assess their defeat would be to miss the opportunity that

their history offers as an access to the inception of the Cold War in the region. In their rise and fall, the attachés offer a testimony that helps us to understand the strength and resilience of one of the most powerful political identities in twentieth-century Latin America. Within their defeat, the attachés' history offers a singular, panoramic view of the Cold War from below, of how the conflict was lived and produced. Activists who did not make it to the big history, whose lives have been mostly forgotten and their actions dismissed, contributed to the fashioning of a political process that affected daily lives, neighborhoods, salaries, songs, books, and life and death decisions across the entire hemisphere. In many cases, the attachés' contributions also set in place broader connections between leaders, movements, and policies that later symbolized Latin American changes during the postwar. When seen from that perspective, the Cold War, including its history of Peronism, evolves in nonlinear ways, contradicting in thousands of ordinary events the grand narratives that the regional periodizations take for granted. Here, too, as Walter Benjamin puts it, the "street insurgence of the anecdote" that the attachés epitomized from the fringes of politics conspired against "the spirit of the period" expressed by the United States' growing intervention in the region and by Perón's foreign policy in ways that would have a long-term impact in Latin America.[51] Against the current and beyond defeat, the attachés' lives expose the meaningful connection of Peronism with the political movements that shaped the region's life in the decades to come.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 About the economy of the United States during the 2000s and the conceptual struggles to define the Great Recession, see Eichengreen, *Hall of Mirrors.*

2 *Rush Limbaugh Show*, radio program, 30 April 2009, 9:56 A.M.

3 John Paul Rathbone, "Donald Trump Evokes Latin America's Old Style Strongmen," *Financial Times*, 11 August 2016; Alejandro Corbacho and Jorge Streb, "Is Donald Trump a Peronist?," *Latin America Goes Global*, 3 November 2016; David Post, "On Donald Trump and the Rule of Law," *Washington Post*, 29 May 2016.

4 The term *criollo*, like *mestizos*, refers to those described as a mix of indigenous, Spanish, and, in some cases, African origins. In Latin America, *criollo* was the basis for *mestizaje* and the myth of a harmonic assimilation. In Argentina, the basic racial representation asserted that there were no ethnic or racial differences in the country and that Argentina's inhabitants were homogeneously white, laying the foundation for the "myth of the white nation." The rise of Peronism exposed the problems of this representation, giving visibility to a diverse population. See Oscar Chamosa's essay "Criollo and Peronist: The Argentine Folklore Movement during the First Peronism, 1943–1955," 113–14.

5 Interview with Irene and Elizabeth Segovia (daughters of León Segovia), Buenos Aires, 28 July 2012. Perón to León Segovia, 6 December 1946, scrapbook, personal papers of León Segovia.

6 "Perón to First Cohort of Worker Attachés: Speech," Teatro Colón, 19 December 1946, Perón, *Obras Completas*, book 10, vol. 2, 145.

7 As discussed later in this volume, the military dictatorship that ousted Perón in 1955 destroyed parts of the records about the worker attachés, including any systematic record of the labor activists who went through the program. Yet it is possible to establish a precise number by compiling and comparing five main records: the numbers provided in 1964 by the sociologist José Luis de Imaz in his book about Argentines elites (or lack of them), *Those Who Rule*; the lists of worker attachés stationed abroad confiscated at the Presidential Office after the

1955 military coup and available at the archives of the Ministry of Interior; the register of individual appointments and promotions in the yearly balance at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at the Instituto del Servicio Exterior de la Nación (ISEN); the detailed record found among the personal papers of the worker attaché César Tronconi, with the attachés' respective addresses and telephone numbers; and the only article written about the attachés in an Argentine historical journal, written by the local historian Claudio Panella, "Los agregados obreros: Una experiencia inédita de la diplomacia argentina."

8 Chapter 3 discusses the characteristics of the program and of many other similar initiatives. But it is worth mentioning that during the 10 years in which the program existed, 506 labor activists received the diploma of worker attaché by the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some of them served abroad, while some others worked in Buenos Aires at the División Organización Internacional del Trabajo (DOIT) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

9 There is a vast bibliography about the role of U.S. labor diplomats in gathering support for liberal democracy and supporting the noncommunist left across the region. Among others, see Waters and van Goethem, *American Labor's Global Ambassadors*; Kofas, *The Struggle for Legitimacy*; Scipes, *AFL-CIO Secret War against Developing Countries*; Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, chap. 3; Busch, *The Political Role of International Trades Unions*; Iber, "Who Will Impose Democracy?" Several works focus on the role of U.S. labor diplomats in specific countries. They are analyzed in different chapters of this book.

10 For the larger transformations in postwar U.S. liberalism and the connections between domestic and foreign concerns, see Kleinman, *A World of Hope, a World of Fear*.

11 George Kennan, the Long Telegram, 22 February 1946, box 163, folder 45, Public Policy Papers, George F. Kennan Papers 1871–2005, Mudd Manuscript Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University (hereafter GKP). The Long Telegram, discussed later in the book, states that the "strong possibilities of opposition to Western centers of power" came from "such widely separated points as Germany, Argentina, Middle Eastern countries, etc." Kennan sent the telegram, a blueprint for Cold War Containment, from Moscow to Washington just two days before Perón won the presidential elections.

12 Dorn, *Peronist and New Dealers*, 113.

13 Alexander, "Labor and Inter-American Relations," 51.

14 Walcher, "Reforming Latin American Labor"; for a discussion of the historical evolution of Latin American notions of national sovereignty and social rights, Grandin, "The Liberal Traditions in the Americas."

15 There is abundant bibliography about the idea of Argentine exceptionality and its projection abroad. Lanús, *Aquel apogeo*; Escudé, *La Argentina vs. las grandes potencias*; Yankelevich, *La diplomacia imaginaria*.

16 Scholars have long discussed the material and symbolic exchanges among Perón, the state, and workers in order to explain the rise (and endurance) of

Peronism. Among the classic and more influential works discussed since the rise of Peronism, see Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición*; Portantiero and Murmis, *Estudios sobre los orígenes del peronismo*; Auyero, *Poor People's Politics*.

17 For a meticulous study of the Partido Peronista Femenino, see Barry, *Evita Capitana*. Bianchi and Sanchis offered a comprehensive selection of women's memories in their collection of oral interviews, *El Partido Peronista Femenino*.

18 Labor activism has been the center of several studies about Peronism, the most influential being Daniel James's classic history of activism after Perón's ousting. James, *Resistance and Integration*.

19 Though not focused exclusively on the relation between labor activism and foreign affairs, one central contribution to this mostly unexplored field is Raanan Rein's insightful biography of Juan Atilio Bramuglia, Perón's first foreign minister. Rein, *Juan Atilio Bramuglia.* See also Panella, "Los agregados obreros," 42; Zanatta, "Perón y el espejismo del bloque latino," 7.

20 Most of these studies on social history take up from E. P. Thompson's groundbreaking work *The Origins of the English Working Class*. Thompson and others wrote in the context of a post-Stalinist strong revision of approaches that emphasized the economic causes of class consciousness. His work and those of others at the time questioned a philosophy of history intrinsic to the process of class formation.

21 Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*, 7–9.

22 In the late 1980s, historian Barbara Weinstein discussed the transformations produced by the (then) "new Latin American labor history," arguing that rather than discarding structuralist approaches, what labor historians had done was "to make clear that 'structures' cannot be incorporated in any way that is autonomous from the realm of human experience." For Weinstein, "by privileging experience over structure, they are returning Latin American labor studies to the field of history." This book is greatly influenced by this shift in labor studies (and Weinstein's interpretation of it) produced by the works of, among others, Daniel James, Peter Winn, John French and Charles Bergquist. Weinstein, "The New Latin American Labor History," 26.

23 I follow here Karush and Chamosa's discussion about Peronism as an object of cultural inquiry, in the introduction of *The New Cultural History of Peronism*. For a general discussion of Gramsci's ideas and influence in Latin America, see Aricó, *La cola del diablo*. For Gramsci's legacy in Argentina, see Burgos, *Los Gramscianos argentinos*.

24 For an interesting discussion of the political, non-economic concerns of Friedrick Hayek's work, see Corey Robin, "Nietzsche's Marginal Children: On Friedrich Hayek," *Nation*, 13 May 2013.

25 The Tercera Posición, a key tenet of the Peronist idea of an alternative to communism and liberalism, both domestically and in Argentina, was officially announced in 1947. More than a geopolitical stance, the Tercera Posición recovered the social teachings of the Catholic Church from the encyclicals *Quadragesimo*

Anno and *Rerum Novarum*, calling for a regulation of the excesses of capital and labor in defense of the common good. The French religious philosopher Jacques Maritain used the expression "Third Position" in the 1920s. See Dunaway, *Jacques Maritain*.

26 James, *Resistance and Integration*, 34.

27 In the cases of Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile, for example, the competing alternatives for organized labor were always more diverse than in Argentina until 1955. For an overview, see Godio, *Historia del movimiento obrero latinoamericano*. In studying land demands by communal indigenous leaders to the 1952 Bolivian revolutionary government, Carmen Soliz persuasively argues that Bolivian nationalism, as embraced by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) was also flexible enough as to contain and represent different agendas within its revolutionary rhetoric. Soliz, "'Land to Its Original Owners.'"

28 Mackinnon, *Los años formativos del Partido Peronista*.

29 I follow here, and develop later in this volume, William Roseberry's notion of "language of contention." Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention."

30 Among the most significant contributions of these new studies are Healey, *The Ruins of the New Argentina*; Chamosa, *The Argentine Folklore Movement*; Salomón, *El Peronismo en clave rural y local*; Elena, *Dignifying Argentina*; Milanesio, *Workers Go Shopping in Argentina*; Pastoriza, *La conquista de las vacaciones*.

31 In addition to Auyero's *Poor People's Politics*, see also, more recently, Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, and Brusco, *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism*; Hilgers, *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*.

32 As an example of this historical approach during the twentieth century, see Chapman, "The Age of the Caudillos."

33 See de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo*; Chasteen, *Heroes on Horseback*.

34 From different fields and perspectives, Gino Germani, Ernesto Laclau, and Alan Knight, among others, have produced since the 1950s some of the most influential contributions to the debates about populism in Latin America, its conceptual framework as well as its historical experience. Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición*; Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*; Knight, "Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico." For a more recent discussion about the conceptual tensions between democracy, liberalism, and populism, see Gerardo Aboy, "Tensiones entre populismo y democracia liberal," presentation at the Eighth Latin American Congress on Political Science, organized by the Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, 22–24 July 2015. More recently, María Esperanza Casullo and Flavia Friedenberg have laid out a theoretical framework for understanding populism in Latin America, defining populist parties as "constructed around the authority and appeal of a charismatic leader, have a much weaker and fluctuating ideological program [than programmatic parties], use clientelism and patronage to obtain votes, and can rely on a personalized mechanism for recruitment that is largely based on the leader's vertical connec-

tions." Casullo and Friedenberg, "Populist and Programmatic Parties in Latin American Party Systems."

35 Knight, "Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico."

36 Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista*, 26.

37 I acknowledge the influence of several recent works well beyond labor studies that, implicitly or explicitly, engage with transnational approaches to produce national and regional histories, some of them in relation to aspects of the Cold War in Latin America. Among the most important are Fink, *Workers across the Americas*; Tinsman, *Buying into the Regime*; Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom*.

38 Transnational history is (again) on the rise in studies about Latin America in general and labor history in particlar. We only need to see the list of the several panels about transnational history in the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) to confirm it. Some of them explored a point that is central to this book: a transnational understanding of Latin American nationalism and of left- and right-wing anti-Pan-Americanism. In particular, Herran Avila, "Nationalism, Hispanismo and Anti-Pan-Americanism in Colombia 1934–54," presentation to the panel "Transnational Perspectives on the Making of Twentieth-Century Latin American Nationalisms," American Historical Association, Denver, 6 January 2017.

39 Bender, *A Nation among Nations*, 7.

40 James, *Resistance and Integration*, 38–39.

41 See, for example, Rapoport and Spiguel, *Relaciones tumultuosas*, 287–93.

42 See, for example, Zanatta, *La internacional justicialista*, 179.

43 On the expression of anti-Pan-Americanism in Argentine foreign policy throughout history and its impact in the Western Hemisphere, see Morgenfeld, *Vecinos en conflicto*. For a study of anti-Americanism (in general and in Latin America), see Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism*, chap. 4.

44 "Un Plan Marshall para América Latina," *Democracia*, 20 February 1948, A1.

45 Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*; Grandin, "The Liberal Traditions in the Americas"; for an in-depth discussion about the origins of Latin America as a political identity created in confrontation against the expansion of the United States, see Gobat, "The Invention of Latin America."

46 Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 180.

47 Lipset, *Political Man*, 147–72. On modernization theories and the Cold War, see Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, particularly the relationship between modernization theories and U.S. foreign policy, 155–201.

48 Kenworthy, *The Function of the Little-Known Case in Theory Formation*.

49 Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 194–200. Between 1973 and 1979, Hayek publishes the trilogy *Law, Legislation and Liberty.* The subtitle of the second volume is self-explanatory: *The Mirage of Social Justice*. Hayek argued that it was impossible to establish any rational criteria that would provide us with an idea of how much any individual should have of anything. He compared it, mockingly, with the notion of "just price" during the Middle Ages. For a study of Hayek's criticism to social justice, see Plant, "Hayek on Social Justice: A Critique"; Lukes, "Social

Justice: The Hayekian Challenge." For a discussion about the differences between the need of some "safety nets" in society and the notion of "social justice," see Caldwell, "Hayek and Socialism," 1870. Thanks to Sandra Peart for pointing me to sources and readings about Hayek.

50 Spruille Braden, letter to Roderic Crandal, 17 June 1947, box 22, Correspondence General, 1945–1947, Argentina, Spruille Braden Papers 1903–1977, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library (hereafter SBP).

51 Benjamin, "Painting, Jugendstil, Novelty." Here Benjamin elaborates about Anatole France's criticism of historical discourses.

CHAPTER ONE. In Search of Social Reform

1 The term *oligarchy* has been widely used in politics not only by the Left but also by liberal groups and parties that present themselves as modernizing forces. The term connotes a classification of the dominant economic groups as almost unable to build a hegemonic political project in opposition to modern elites. For a recent discussion of the concept of "oligarchy" in political sciences and its difference from "elites" and its implications for democratic systems, see Winters, *Oligarchy*, 1–39 and 208–74. For an interesting reflection on uses of the word *oligarchy* during the emergence and consolidation of liberal republics in Latin America in the case of Brazil, see Woodard, *A Place in Politics*.

2 Torres, *La Década Infame*. Torres was an early acquaintance of Perón and helped him to write the GOU proclamation.

3 Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in Argentina*, 19.

4 Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, 12.

5 With different degrees and in very different political forms, a similar process of industrialization also took place in other countries in Latin America, including Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia. See Bethell and Roxborough, "The Postwar Conjuncture in Latin America."

6 Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil*, 51.

7 Gerchunoff and Llach, *El ciclo de la ilusión y el desencanto*, 111, 114, and 119. Unless noted, the economic indicators about the 1930–1945 period are taken from this comprehensive study.

8 Rock, *Argentina*, 225. The agreement, of course, was also part of a larger dispute between the United Kingdom and the United States for foreign markets, and it aimed at limiting Argentina from spending the money obtained from British markets in U.S. goods. See Rapoport and Spiguel, *Historia política, económica y social de la Argentina 1880–2000*, chaps. 2 and 3. For a general context of the economic policies in the region during the period, see the introduction to Knight and Drinot, *The Great Depression in Latin America*.

9 The very representation of Roca for Argentina in the agreement did not help to gain domestic public support for it. His father, Julio Roca, was the general who led the Campaña del Desierto, the last and successful attempt to subdue through killing and forced displacements the mainly indigenous resistance to the