The *Eigen-Sinn* of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina (1950-1984) and under the Nazis (1933-1945)[1]

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vorgelegt von

Diego Marinozzi

Dissertationsgebiet: Geschichte

BetreuerInnen: Prof. Dr. Thomas Fischer und Prof. Dr. Friedrich Kießling

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1. Introduction

What is the substantial historiographical contribution of a comparison between National Socialism and the last military dictatorship in Argentina? In other words: What is the sense of comparing these two complete different regimes? This dissertation can be resumed in these two questions. It is the result of a project which was conceived and formulated in Argentina during 2012 and 2013, based on the following conviction: the Argentinean military dictatorship (1976-1983) was a genocide whose atrocities could be compared with the Shoah. More than just a historiographical debate, this comparison with Germany has been a central element of the public opinion which conditioned the social science's community in Argentina for the last decades. When I started this dissertation my objective was, therefore, to study in depth these similarities between both authoritarian regimes, focussing the attention on the persecution to a religious group which in Argentina has barely been investigated: Jehovah's Witnesses.[2]

Thomas Kaplan has pointed out that

"By the early 1990s the old ideological metanarratives had collapsed and the entire global order needed to be placed on a new basis. In the face of these new uncertainties, the Holocaust seemed imbued with "unquestioned moral value" on which the vast majority of the international community's member states, especially in Europe and North America, could reach consensus. As Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider have suggested, it was precisely the inability to visualize the Holocaust and the limits of representation that enabled its creation as a model of good and evil and a universal moral standard beyond the realm of the nation-state. For these purposes, collective memories of the Holocaust had to be remade once again. (…) These narrative constructions strikingly de-territorialized and de-contextualized the Holocaust."[3]

The appropriation that we, in Argentina, made of the Holocaust in order to analyze our past shaped this dissertation. On the contrary to Argentina, where my project seemed to be original and logical, in Germany, I faced a complete different reality. After suffering two dictatorships during the 20th century and being the battlefield of the *Historikerstreit* and the debates on Totalitarianism, Germany

[2] Maioli, Esteban, (2017), *La asociación de los Testigos de Jehová en la Argentina. Una exploración acerca de las modalidades de expansión, principales creencias y prácticas sociales asociadas*, XVI Jornadas Interescuelas/ Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia Facultad de Humanidades. Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata; Cersósimo, Facundo, (2015), *El proceso fue liberal. Los tradicionalistas católicos argentinos y el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1983)*, Tesis doctoral, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires; Marinozzi,Diego, (2011), *Dios o Patria. Los Testigos de Jehová y la Dictadura Militar 1976-1983*, UNR Editora.

[3] Kaplan, "The Universalisation of the Holocaust as a Moral Standard" in Kaplan, Thomas Pengelow, Jürgen Matthäus, Mark Hornburg (eds.), (2019), *Beyond "ordinary men": Christopher R. Browning and Holocaust historiography*, 168,169

became a kind of "world champion" on comparing dictatorships. In this country there are, for example, libraries full with researches about similarities between the SED and Nazi regimes. My project, therefore, was just another comparison among thousand, a comparison which made no much sense. Understanding and internalizing that in Germany, my comparison between a peripheral dictatorship and Nazism was irrelevant, introduced a problem which was not easy to be resolved. In Germany, it was necessary to explain the kind of comparison I was trying to do, something that in Argentina was unquestionable. What was the substantial contribution of such a comparison? If even the comparison between Stalin and Hitler was questionable, how could a South American dictatorship be compared with Nazism? Such questions destroyed the initial concept of this research.

The only element which remained from my initial plan was the research question: What were the political, social and cultural causes of the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina and Germany? At a subsequent time, one of the many discussions with colleagues during those years helped me to find a new perspective to revive the project. It was just a matter of realizing that even when a comparison is based on similarities, the potential of comparing relies on finding and underlining the differences. It was necessary to turn upside down what we were doing in Argentina and instead of keep looking only for similarities between *El Tigre* Acosta (one of the principal perpetrators) and Eichmann or *La ESMA* (a clandestine center of detention) and Auschwitz, we had to draw our attention even more on the differences. It was also necessary to compare both phenomena according to an empirical historical fact. The persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses in both countries was the historical fact which could open such a door.

It was, then, easy to realize that the reflexions on the nature of the Argentinean military dictatorship were made on the 1970s and 1980s.[4] The relevance of the concept State Terrorism was, in consequence, the result of the political struggles for *Memory, Truth and Justice*, which started in those years. The comparison with National Socialism and the conceptualization of the dictatorial repression as a genocide were central elements of this struggle. Memory Studies and Oral History had subordinated the historians to the commands of other disciplines, whose main goal was not to understand but to judge this past. However, the financial and infrastructural support of Kirchnerism made possible for the historians to free themselves from this subordination and start to look in Argentina for the essence and the specificity of the historiographical discipline.

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[4] Emilio MIgnone, Augusto Conte Mac Donell, (1980), *La estrategia represiva de la dictadura militar. La doctrina del paralelismo global*, Buenos Aires Colihue, 2006 (first edition 1980); Eduardo Luis Duhalde, (1984), *El estado terrorista argentino*, Buenos Aires, Colihue, 2013 (first edition 1984), and *Nunca Más*, CONADEP.

The temporal and spacial distance alienated this dissertation from the circumstances in which it was conceived. This alienation was necessary to find a new perspective based on the following thesis: State Terrorism, the concept and ideological ace of the victims, has to be discussed as a native category.[5] Criticizing this concept has always been the favorite task of the perpetrators who considered the same historical phenomenon as a war, "a dirty war," that they had won. Therefore, discussing about the historiographical value of State Terrorism as concept implies a cumbersome moral problem. Undertaking this task in Argentina would be automatically considered taking the side of the perpetrators. Nevertheless, far away of justifying the atrocities committed by these criminals, an alienation from the Argentinean dichotomy victim-perpetrator was mandatory to realize what was the role of historians in this debate. It was a requisite to criticize and reconceptualize this native category as a historian does, using the instruments of historiography. It was also needed to modify the sequence at the moment of comparing both phenomena. A chronological comparison, starting with the German case first, and then analyzing Argentina, insinuated a chronological connection between both cases, as if the root causes of what happened in Argentina had to be looked for in Germany. Presenting a backwards sequence which starts in Argentina and give a secondary place to Germany, on the contrary, helps to see that the historical causes of the dictatorship, something that have already been pointed out by Federico Finchelstein, have to be looked for in the Argentinean history itself,[6] and the comparison with Germany has to be reduced to function as a kind of historiographical mirror which helps to understand what were the specific characteristics of the Argentinean case.

Detlev Peukert pointed out that a historian differentiated himself from a sociologist, an anthropologist or other social scientists, in how he conceptualizes and defines the social phenomena. A historian does it throughout a periodization. According to Peukert, "defining a phenomenon means demarcating the start and the end of a process."[7] Writing the history of the ban to Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina from a comparative perspective pursues the following aim: the vindication of the historians' know-how by suggesting an alternative periodization for Argentina by rethinking the concept: State Terrorism.

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[5] Garaño, Santiago, (2019), "Notas sobre el concepto de Estado Terrorista" in *Questión. Revista Especializada en Periodismo y Comunicación*, Vol. 1, N° 61, Enero-Marzo 2019, La Plata.

[6] Finchelstein, Federico, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*.

[7] Peukert, Detlev, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne,* 13.

As time goes by I realized that, by comparing both historical processes, I was not only analyzing the Argentinean case, but also reconsidering and rewriting about the German experience. Moreover the process of comparing opened questions and focused the attention on aspects of the German case which are no longer considered by the German historiography. As Jürgen Kocka stated: "Asymmetric comparison is often the only way to open oneself to comparison at all, even in its asymmetric form, comparison can lead to questions that cannot otherwise be posed and to answers that cannot otherwise be given."[8] Therefore, writing about Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina was also writing about the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. At the same time, it was also an analysis and conceptualization of this religious community. Is this dissertation, then, about Jehovah's Witnesses, the Argentinean military dictatorship or the Nazi regime? I think the best way to answer to this questions is by replacing the "or" with an "and." This dissertation is about Jehovah's Witnesses, about the Argentinean military dictatorship *and* about the Nazi regime.

A. Eigen-Sinn

In the reference research about the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, Detlef Garbe pointed out that

"in resistance historiography there is no category for the non-conformist, resistance-oriented, non subversive but also radical attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses, who indeed resisted the NS regime with conscientious determination, even in the face of death, and yet were not active "resistance fighters."[9]

Jehovah's Witnesses draw the attention of German historians for the first time in the context of resistance studies. The conceptualization made by Martin Broszat and the Munich Institute for Contemporary History was in this regard specially relevant. According to Garbe, this institute

"definitely eliminates the unfounded picture of the Third Reich as a monolithic system of absolute power and replaces it with the analysis of a state order that was implemented as a result of a continuous conflict between the ruling powers and society. (…) In contrast to the moral-political concept of resistance, which focuses on subjective actions, the concept of *Resistenz* does not center on the intentions, motives and objectives of the people involved. It focuses exclusively on the actual results of their actions. Therefore, Martin Broszat, defines the concept of *Resistenz* as

[8] Kocka, "Asymmetrical historical comparison", 49.

[9] Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom*, 7.

"effective, defense, restriction, eradication of the NS rule and its demands, regardless of their motives, reasons, and forces involved."[10]

It was "under the aspect of rationality and a suitable purpose-method-relation,"[11] that Martin Broszat "classified the behavior of the Jehovah's Witnesses as futile martyrdom."[12]

Garbe remarked an important deficiency on the definition made by Broszat

"Considering the empirical evidence from the standpoint of an outsider, it would be certainly be justified to assess the Bible Students activities as "futile" with regard to their effectiveness as overall success. Such an assessment judges the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses on the premise that the resistance of oppositional forces has the objective of damaging, in the broadest sense, the NS regime and changing the political situation. It also judges these activities as premises that could be used to describe the "intended", actually achieved interference with NS rule."[13]

Following Garbe, the mistake committed by Broszat was to consider "the empirical evidence from the standpoint of an outsider," a perspective which does not help to understand a social behavior whose "primary concerns involved an endeavor to remain steadfast in faith, to endure the trials imposed upon them and consequently, present themselves as true witnesses of their God, Jehovah."[14] Therefore, Garbe's standpoint was that "the resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses is a religious phenomena that cannot be subsumed under the patterns of political actions and does not comply with national calculations of protecting one's interests."[15]

There is a lack of a conceptualization base on the subjectivity of Jehovah's Witnesses as the central theme of analysis. Without such a conceptualization, it is no possible to grasp the social behavior of this religious group and, therefore, we ended up comparing them with other groups which are more familiar to us. Michael Kater is one of the best example of searching for an explanation to the social behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses by looking for similarities between this group and the NS regime. In a similarity of structures between Jehovah's Witnesses and the NS regime, Kater found the reason why Jehovah's Witnesses were so intensive persecuted in Germany.

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[10] Ibidem, 504.

[11] Ibidem, 508.

[12] Ibidem.

[13] Ibidem, 509.

[14] Ibidem, 525.

[15] Ibidem, 527.

"The deeper reason for the serious animosity between National Socialism and the Bible Student teachings can be found in the similarities in structure of both ideologies. Just as the National Socialist ideology, so were also the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses dominated not by a democratically but an authoritarian policy. Both systems were totalitarian in that they strictly integrated national comrades as well as fellow believers into the respective authoritarian structure and requested them to give up their own personal identity for the objectives of the system. While the National Socialists accepted the "Führer State," the "Earnest Bible Students"submitted to the "Theocracy," in which not the Führer, but Jehovah, was the dictatorial ruler. Since both groups claimed exclusiveness, this inevitably had to result in conflicts. A Bible Student who had devoted himself to Jehovah was in no way able to carry out the duties that the National Socialist State demanded of him as a national comrade."[16]

Explaining what happened by finding similitudes between Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious or political groups is, however, a way of replicating the same procedure of the perpetrators who decided to ban and persecuted them because of their similitudes with "subversives," Communists or Jews.

Hetzer, who was among the historians who alluded to the similitudes between Nazism and Jehovah's Witnesses, pointed out the center of the conflict on "a mutual magic philosophy or ideology."

"Hetzer supplements this structural comparison by examining the ideological basis and history of ideas within each doctrine. In his comparison of National Socialism and Bible Student teachings, Hetzer refers to the existence of a "mutual magic philosophy" and of "mutual roots in illiberal, even cultural-critical, and life-reforming ideas" from the period following World War I. Consequently, it was the "similarities between the predictions of the "Third Reich" and those of the "Golden Age" that prompted the mutual rejection."[17]

Instead of using concepts like resistance which analyze the behavior from the outside, in this dissertation I am going to use the concept coined by Alf Lüdkte, *Eigen-Sinn*. This term is usually translated with the English term stubbornness. I decided, however, to use the German term due to certain ambiguity and subtext that the vocable has in this language. The Meyer's encyclopedia from 1888 gave the following definition of the term *Eigen-Sinn*: "the stubborn insistence on an opinion or an aim despite the fact that obvious reasons have proven it to be wrong or misguided, for no other reason than because it is one's own."[18] As we may see in this definition, the concept has a negative connotation, a fact that we can see in the everyday spoken German due to "its almost

[16] Ibidem, 513,514.

[17] Ibidem, 516.

[18] Lindenberger, Thomas, (2015), Eigen-Sinn, Domination and No Resistance, Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 3.8.2015, URL: http://docupedia.de/zg/Lindenberger_eigensinn_v1_en_2015Versions: 1.0 1.0

universally negative connotations derived from the context of dealing with obstreperous children".[1] *Eigen-Sinn* is a word that started to be used in writing German during the 18th century. The term was used by scholars, priests and teachers to describe acts of boorishness and roughness. It was a synonym of "simple-mindedness, arrogance, bad habit, filth, lack of judgement, impatience and innocence."[20]

The term *Eigen-Sinn* communicates needs that differentiated themselves from interests in the fact that they do not express logical and well-directed objectives, like class interests. *Eigen-Sinn* is the manifestation of "desires, wishes and fears."[21] The difference between resistance and this term is not clear and fluctuating. Moreover, *Eigen-Sinn* manifested itself throughout different kind of behaviors, for example, laborers can express their *Eigen-Sinn* at the working place by sitting around, talking or daydreaming. It could be any form of disobeying or ignoring the working process, the established order or the commands at the working place. *Eigen-Sinn* is a concept that demands an alienation from the observer's perspective in order to center the attention on the agency, focusing on how the agents "in trying to be themselves [*bei sich sein*] while at the same time trying to be with the others [*bei den anderen sein*], individuals ignored the type of calculations that were aiming at the bigger picture."[22]

The utilization of *Eigen-Sinn* as central concept in this dissertation has a methodical implication. The selection of this term implies an interest on "real, existing individuals and their perspectives."[23] As we have seen in the conceptual considerations, the use *Eigen-Sinn* as analytical term "brings to mind a limitation and cognitive barrier"[24] of the observer. The term forces the historian to assume his limitations at the moment of understanding what he is observing. Such an intellectual respect for those who are observed can be found in historians like Edward Palmer Thompson who in his *Making of the English Working Class*, stated

> "it is easy, in retrospect, to see this spirit as naive or "utopian." But there is nothing in it which entitles us to regard it with academic superiority. The poor were desperately poor, and the prospects of a community in which they might not only blend intellectual culture with the athletic pursuits of Greece and Rome, but also eat, were attractive."[25]

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[19] Ibidem.

[20] Lüdke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeiterfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschimus*, 17.

[21] Ibidem, 130.

[22] Ibidem, 128.

[23] Lindenberger, Thomas, op. cit.

[24] Ibidem.

[25] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 803.

Avoiding an "academic superiority" was the methodological approach which helped Edward Palmer Thompson to find the potential of Marxism at the time of analyzing the complexity of ideological elements and their social functions in a particular historical moment. Thompson was very conscious of the words written by Marx in *Das Kapital*: "capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things."[26] Class is, therefore, "a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness."[27] Even more important, "the notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship" and as a relationship, class "muss always be embodied in real people and in a real context. (…) We can not have love without lovers, nor deference without squires and labourers."[28] This approach permitted Thompson to see in "the imagery of Babylon and the Egyptian exile and the Celestial City and the contest with Satan," central elements in the ideology of Independents, Presbyterians, Quarkers and Baptists, much more than just "pure freaks and fanatical aberrations."[29] These ideas, fantasies, dreams and aspirations "were valid in terms of their own experience"[30] and central at the moment of think about class, because "class is defined by men as they live their own history."[31] Thompson was able to see the important role played by dissent religious groups in the formation of the working class as "responsible for a growth in the self-confidence and capacity for organization of working people." Due to these religious communities and based on these ideas, humble men learned to read, to speak, and to be organized. They became "local preachers and class leaders."[32]

Alf Lüdtke pointed out that in *the German Ideology* Marx left an opened question when he made reference to the *mode of life*.

"The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life,

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[26] MEW 23, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 793.

[27] Thompson, *Making of the Working Class*, 9.

[28] Ibidem

[29] Ibidem, 49.

[30] Ibidem, 12,13.

[31] Ibidem, 11.

[32] Ibidem, 40, 42.

so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production."[33]

What kind of relationship can we establish between *mode of production* and *mode of life*? In order to solve this problem, Lüdtke underlined the difference between *interest* and *need*.[34] The interests are related to the whole structure. They are connected to the "real foundation" or the "economic structure of society." That is the reason why it is so important for the Marxian perspective that the classes become conscious of their own interests. On the contrary, the needs are more related to the agency than to the social structure. Needs are extremely diverse and varied. Speaking specifically about the working class, the needs do not always correspond with the interests. As a matter of fact, correspondences between needs and interests are rare. Therefore, inquiring about the needs of the working class means questioning about unclear, vague and ambiguous behaviors. In order to make the needs and the mode of life of the working class understandable, it is mandatory to avoid, in Lüdtke's words, focusing only on the class interests of a homogeneous proletariat, and start to pay attention to the needs of the working class throughout understanding their *Eigen-Sinn*.[35] The perspectives of the agents play an important role in this dissertation not only in the analysis of Jehovah's Witnesses but also at the time of conceptualizing both regimes: Nazism and the Argentinean dictatorship. I am conscious that it is not possible to understand a historical process by just concentrating the attention on the agents' perspectives. However, it was relevant for me in this research, the appeal made by Timothy Mason to Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon:* "Men do make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, not under conditions of their own choosing, but rather under circumstances which they find before them, under given and imposed conditions." According to Mason, in the dichotomy Intentionalists/ Functionalists, the risk of Intentionalist perspectives is to ignore or misunderstand the "given and imposed conditions" while on the other side, the risk is to pay too little attention to the fact that "men do make their own history." Therefore the need of a materialist history centered in the dialectic relation between the dynamic elements of human agency and the more static social structures.[36] The analysis must be focused on the human relations. The structures, categories, ideologies, social roles or functions are embodied in the relations established by "real people in a

[33] MEW 3, 21.

[34] Lüdke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeiterfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschimus*, 43.

[35] Ibidem, 20.

[36] Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class*, 226,227,230.

real context." These relations are not static but fluent. They are constantly moving and changing and that is why its main characteristic is its historical essence.

"We cannot have love without lovers, nor deference without squires and laborers. And class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity or their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interest are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born–or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not."[37]

Eigen-Sinn is, therefore, a concept that allow us to recover "the sign of how men felt and hoped, loved and hated, and how they preserved certain values in the very texture of their language."[38]

B. Fascism and Dictatorship

In *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* and *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, George Mosse stated:

"Manners and morals, as well as sexual norms, are part of the historical process; in fact, they changed markedly during this very age. We must appreciate the relativity of such values in order to understand how they came to be allied with nationalism. What one regards as normal or abnormal behavior, sexual or otherwise, is a product of historical development, not universal law. (…) The cultural codes and the structural normative patterns of a society are revealed in the way it identifies the foreigners.""[39]

When we study the repressive attitudes to a certain group, Jews, homosexuals or Jehovah's Witnesses, such research "tells us just as much about the codes and norms as about those who are relegated to the periphery by the culture and the law."[40] Here it is the historiographical potential, the gap that can reveal us aspects of the regimes that otherwise would remain hidden. Posing the question about the political, social and cultural causes of the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina and Germany has, therefore, as objective, a better understanding of the perpetrators.

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[37] Thompson, *op. cit.* 9, 10.

[38] Ibidem, 49.

[39] Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 3.

[40] Winter, "De l'histoire intellectuelle a l'histoire culturelle", 180.

The classical book of Wippermann and Burleigh, *The Racial State*, is a clear example of how the study of the victims could modify the conception we have on the perpetrators. By including in the analysis, "the persecution and murder of Roma and Sinti, the sterilization of the "hereditary ill" and of racially defined groups such as the offspring of French African troops and German mothers and the "euthanasia" murder of the mentally and physically handicapped as well as the Nazi persecution of "asocial" and homosexuals,"[41] Wippermann and Burleigh reshaped the concept of Nazism which in those years was based almost exclusively on the persecution to Jews. "The "Final Solution" to the Jewish question was presented as just one, albeit the most pressing, of a set of "answers" to the overarching question, namely, how to cleanse society of undesirable elements and create a racial utopia."[42]

For Argentina, on the other hand, the usually used concepts at the time of interpreting the last military dictatorship are: State Terrorism, systematic plan of repression and genocide.[43] A central point of this dissertation is to question these concepts and their limits by stating that these interpretations are based on just one aspect of the regime: the clandestine side of the repression, which according to Duhalde was the element that allow to define 1976 as the beginning of a new form of state characterized by permanent and constant terror against the citizens in order to disarticulate the society.[44] We need a concept that allow us to understand not only the repression but also the aftermath, not only 1976-1978 but 1976-1983. Moreover, we need a conceptualization which allows to reintegrate the regime to the Argentinean history. Here are the reasons why, I decided to use a classical definition of dictatorship in this dissertation:

"The term dictatorship comes from Roman constitutional law, where it referred to the temporary rule of a dictator granted powers above the law for the sake of defending the republic. The aim of dictatorship in Rome was preserving or restoring the republican constitution by means of a state of emergency."[45]

By selecting this term, I would try to discuss the idea that 1976 introduced a new state and underline the continuities between the dictatorship headed by Videla and the Argentinean history. At

[41] Pends, Roseman, Wetzell, *Beyond the racial state,* 2.

[42] Ibidem.

[43] Aguila, Gabriela, (2013), "La represión en la historia reciente Argentina: perspectivas de abordaje, conceptualizationes y matrices explicativas" in *Contenciosa*, Año 1, nro. 1, segundo semestre 2013 and Alonso, Luciano, (2013), "La definición de las ofensas en el movimiento por los derechos humanos en Argentina y la calificación de "genocidio", in *Contenciosa*, Año 1, nro. 1, segundo semestre 2013.

[44] Aguila, "La represión en la historia reciente Argentina", 5.

[45] Behrends, Jan, Diktatur: Moderne Gewaltherrschaft zwischen Leviathan und Behemoth, Version: 2.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 20.12.2016

this point, I would like to mention the concept Liberal Dictatorship coined by José Luis Romero: "The liberal dictatorship, whose interior contradiction seems to be justified by the fact that in order to apply the liberal principles is necessary to have a strong power, even dictatorial, to avoid chaotic situations."[46] If we take into consideration the perspective of the perpetrators and the development of the regime, it is clear that the republican values were present and that their objective was, more than the introduction of revolutionary modifications in the society, the reestablishment of order. As a matter of fact, the name of the regime given by the perpetrators was *National Reorganization Process,* which tried to be a remake of the *National Organization Process* headed by Julio Argentino Roca, among others, in the second half of the 19th century.

C. Sources

The dissertation takes as principal source the files, dossiers and documents of the *Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (DIPBA), an archive that was opened in 2003. The *Central de Inteligencia de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* was created in 1956 and one year later it was opened its *Sección Archivo y Fichero*. It was part of a decision taken by the dictatorship of 1955 that one year later, in 1956, created the *Secretaría de Informaciones Antidemocráticas* which coordinated the information produced by different organizations like *SIDE*, *Servicio de Informaciones del Ejército* (*SIE*), *Servicio de Informaciones Navales* (*SIN*), *Servicio de Informaciones Aeronáuticas* (*SIA*) and the different provincial and federal police departments.[47] In the origin of this archive and the information that was collected, we have to consider, according to María Eugenia Marengo, the political function of "the ban to Peronism and the redefinition of the security forces in the context of the Cold War."[48] The relevance of the dossiers and documents dedicated to Jehovah's Witnesses are central in this research if we take into consideration the commentary of Marengo who studied the treatment given to the Communists in this archive. She stated that, "the archive had the function of forming the subversive delinquents."[49]

In the investigations that have been made according to the sources of this archive that was opened in 2003, we have to mention the works of Sergio Pujol, Patricia Flier, Federico Lorenz,

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[46] Romero, José Luis, (1981), *Situaciones e ideologías en Latinoamérica,* 162.

[47] Marengo, *Lo aparente como real*, 11,13,20.

[48] Ibidem, 69

[49] Ibidem, 178.

María Laura Guembe, Emmanuel Kahan and the already mentioned María Eugenia Marengo. According to these studies, the control and surveillance of the police were not only focused on the political left. They also payed attention to social pattern related with the culture of rock, trade-unions and organizations of women. Those who took part in the war of Malvinas were also objective of investigation as Federico Lorenz and María Laura Guembe have shown. In the case of Emmanuel Kahan, he focused his attention on the documents related to the Jewish community in Argentina. These documents were also used in a previous investigation about the Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina that was published in 2011.[50] However, in this previous text these documents did not have the relevance that they have in the present dissertation. The importance of these documents relies now on how they constructed an image of the Jehovah's Witnesses that was influenced by the right sectors of the Catholic Church but not only. There is autonomous constructive process in these documents about the Jehovah's Witnesses, why they were considered among the "subversive elements" and in what sense they were a menace to the nation.[51]

This was not the only interpretation about this religious organization. The Church, and specially the Military Vicariate, shared the diagnosis about the danger represented by activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the national territory. However, the theoretical and doctrinal justification of this differed from the one made by the DIPBA. The same can be said about the meaning of the "marginal right" about the subject, meaning that we can find in publications like *Cabildo*. These differences respond to the different functions played by these institutions. Such differences were not considered in the previous investigation but they are a constitutive part of this dissertation. That is the reason why the documents of the DIPBA, the Military Vicariate and publications of rightist organizations have such a relevance. The purpose of working with these sources is to reconstruct the image of Jehovah's Witnesses that the different agencies constructed and that leaded or allow us to explain the ban and the "subversive elements" in the Jehovah's Witnesses.

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[50] Marinozzi, Diego, *Dios o Patria. Los Testigos de Jehová y la Dictadura Militar*, UNR Editora.

[51] See Kahan, Emmanuel, "¿Qué represión, qué memoria? El "archivo de la represión" de la DIPBA: problemas y perspectivas" in *Revista Question* N°16, Facultad de Periodismo y Comunicación Social, UNLP, 2007; Funes, Patricia, "Desarchivar lo archivado. Hermenéutica y censure sobre las ciencias sociales latinoamericanas" in *Iconos. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, N°30, Flacso-Ecuador, 2008, "El archivo de inteligencia de la Policía de la province de Buenos Aires: medio siglo de represión," in *Revista Puentes*, Buenos Aires, Año 4, número 11, Comisión Provincial por la Memoria, La Plata, 2004 and "De lo secreto a lo público. El epicentro de la violencia" en *Revista Puentes, Dossier Documentos*, La Plata, número 19, Comisión Provincial por la Memoria, 2006; Pujol, Sergio, *Rock y Dictadura*, Buenos Aires, Emecé, 2005, Flier, Patricia, "El archive de la DIPBA: un hallazgo clave para una history de los imaginarios represivos en Argentina," in *IMAGO AMERICAE, Revista de estudios del imaginario*, Año 1, N 1, Centro Extremeño de Estudios y cooperación con Iberoamérica, Universidad de Guadalajara, Universidad de Florencia y Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2006, Lorenz, Federico and Guembe, María Laura, Cruces. Idas y vueltas de Malvinas, Buenos Aires, Edhasa, 2007;

This process will be put in a comparative tension with the way, how Nazism constructed also a negative image of the Jehovah's Witnesses. In this sense, the collection of documents located in the *Bundesarchiv,* Berlin, provided us the primary sources that allow us to analyze the dossiers with which the Gestapo constructed the Jehovah's Witnesses as "ideological enemies."

However the analysis is not limited to the perpetrators, the perspective of Jehovah's Witnesses is also to be in the center of the focus. The resistance and the very particular social patterns of Jehovah's Witnesses must also be explained. In order to do that, it is necessary to understand the ideological elements that played an important role in this resistance. The dissertation does not pretend to make detailed or a theological explanation of Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine, however it considered necessary to introduce these elements in order to explain the behavior and the ways with which they resisted the regime in Argentina and in Germany. The sources generated by Jehovah's Witnesses play then an important role. *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, the official journals of the organization, were very useful at the moment of reconstructing how it was worldwide informed what was happening in Argentina during the 1970s. Both journals played also a determining role at the time of organizing the denunciating the politics of the dictatorship in different countries.

The books written by Russell, specially the series *Studies in the Scriptures*, located in the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, were fundamental for the chapters that deal with the doctrinal basis of this religious organization. The *Yearbooks of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, specially the ones of 1972, 1974 and 2001 were also a big help at the time of considering the statistics and the "official" interpretation of the facts. In the Yearbook of 1972, we find the story of Jehovah's Witnesses activities in Argentina since 1920 until a couple years before the putsch took place. Two years later, the Yearbook of 1974, exposed the story of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany and how they resisted Nazism. This book played a determining role specially for the Jehovah's Witnesses that were imprisoned due to their refusal to be drafted in Argentina. All these materials are in the last years available online in the official website of Jehovah's Witnesses (*jw.org*).

Another important databank that has been very useful in the reconstruction of the Jehovah's Witnesses who were imprisoned in Argentina is the website *o-conciencia.org*. Since a couple years, the conscientious objectors who were imprisoned have started to have annual meetings. Throughout a net generated in *Whatsapp*, after the first meeting, they decided to gather documents, informations, experiences and photos that they put in this website. However, the main source at the moment of reconstructing the experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in the military prisons in Argentina is the autobiographic book *Luz de Lampara* written by Luis Jardiel. Jardiel was

imprisoned in 1981, one year before the war for the islands of the South Atlantic, a moment when we find the highest population of Jehovah's Witnesses in prisons. In order to compare the perspective of the agencies, it was consulted the sources related to the story of Jehovah's Witnesses in different concentration camps in Germany.

A second group of sources that allowed to reconstitute the experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses were several biographies or autobiographies written by them and that were not yet analyzed in previous academic researches. The same can be said of the oral archive located in the website of the United States Holocaust Museum that contains 285 interviews made to the members of this religious community. The archives located at the Dachau and Sachsenhausen memorial site and the archive of Mauthausen located at Vienna were pretty useful at the time of sketching the personal tracks of Jehovah's Witnesses that were confined there.

2. Native Category

Luis Félix Miguel was imprisoned in different places during four years for being a conscience objector. He decided to present himself to the draft and explain to the militaries his refusal to be incorporated in the armed forces. When he was asked why he did not want to wear the uniform, he responded: "I declare myself a conscience objector. I'm a Jehovah's Witness." The reply was: "Where do you think you are?! You are in the Army!!... And it's the Army who will tell you what to do!!... Not you to the Army!! We make the rules!! Not civilians like you!!." He was then taken to the dungeons at the Gate House of the Military's Institutes Command.[52] Reflecting on the time he spent in the dungeon, Luis said:

"I did not know that it would be in this gloomy pit that I would find myself, my real self, and the Creator of the universe. How much I needed the Almighty. His hope. His love… On one of the two walls of the dungeon, illuminated by the dim light of the external passage I was able to read an inscription on the plaster, hewn in the wall by a former prisoner of another time: 'Forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing'…"[53]

Being in the dungeon Luis met Golovko. It was March 1980:

"Are you a Jew?" A voice told me at my back, and when I turned I saw the face of the same officer that sent me to the dungeons, he was staring at me with a stern look and no blinking through the smoke of a cigarette. I looked at him no understanding.

- "Are you a Jew?"
- "Who, me?"
- "Yes, you."
- "No, not at all. You didn't see my surname on the guard book? Don't you know that I'm a Christian Objector?"
- "The surnames could tell fabrications, when the decree of expulsion from Spain, many astute Jews changed their surname. And not only in the Iberian Peninsula, in all Europe had they used that subterfuge."
- "As far, as know lieutenant, I am not a Jew."
- "I don't have any doubt."
- "Pardon?"
- "You are a Jew".[54]

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[52] Jardiel, *Prisoners of the Hope*, 12, 13.

[53] Ibidem, 15.

[54] Ibidem, 16, 17.

The family of Jacobo Timerman "escaped the Spanish occupation of the Netherlands, and the Inquisition, and wouled up in a small town of Vinnytsia Oblast in the Ukraine, called Bar. In the foreword to his book *Prisoner without a name, cell without a number* the story continues:

"The Timermans were prominent in the community and fought for Jewish rights. (…) When the Cossack chief Chmielnitski passed through Bar in 1648-49, he of course massacred all the Jews he could capture. The community recovered, however, and assumed that something as brutal as the existence of Cossack murderers could only be God's final test before the coming of the Messiah. So staunch was their conviction that in 1717 they constructed their Great Synagogue, receiving permission beforehand from the bishop. (…) In 1941, when the Nazis entered Bar, they set that synagogue on fire, burning many Jews to death. All the other Jews of Bar plus other from the environs, including the Timermans, who had survived the sufferings - which according to their rabbis had been imposed by God to herald the Messiah's arrival - were killed by the Nazis in October of 1942. Some twelve thousand within a couple of days. My father, happily, had left Bar for Argentina in 1928. In 1977, in Argentina, the same ideological conviction that impelled Chmielnitski and the Nazis reverberated in the questions posed by my interrogators inside the army's clandestine prisons. And in their methods of torture as well."[55]

In 2007 *Fondo de Cultura Ecónomica* published the book of Daniel Feierstein entitled *Genocide as social practice. Reorganizing society under the Nazis and Argentina's military juntas*. Talking about the objective of the work, Feierstein stated:

"The selection of these two cases is not casual. It constitutes a sequence which allow to understand a characteristic of the genocidal social practices: a way to observe and analyze the destruction of human groups which has not been enough studied in the academic research on the genocidal social practices in different historical experiences. The objective of this introduction is to explain and justify the legitimacy of such an approach. An approach that tries, firstly, to observe the genocide as a method of destruction and reorganization of social relationships and secondly, to establish a comparative sequence between the Nazi genocide and the genocide which took place before and during the last military dictatorship in Argentina, whose given name was Process of National Reorganization." [56]

At the end of the introduction and after laying the theoretical and bibliographical foundation of the book, Feierstein remarked:

" It is not possible to conceal the fact that I come from a Jewish family who left Poland before the arrival of the Nazis and I spend my childhood in an Argentina shaped by green Ford Falcons taking its victims to the entrance of the concentration camps. In Argentina it is difficult to talk about the Nazi genocide without thinking in our own recent historical experience."[57]

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[55] Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name. Cell without a Number,* preface.

[56] Feierstein, *Genocide as Social Practice. Reorganizing Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas,* 14.

[57] Ibidem, 28.

These three cases illustrate the symbolic relevance that the history of Nazism has in Argentina. Michael Rothberg remarked that "far from blocking other historical memories from view in a competitive struggle for recognition, the emergence of Holocaust memory on a global scale has contributed to the articulation of other histories - some of them predating the Nazi genocide, such as slavery, and other taking place later, such as the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62) or the genocide in Bosnia during the 1990's."[58] Rothberg used the term multidirectional memory to describe this aspect of the Holocaust memory at a global scale. "Memory is the past made present. The notion of a "making present" has two important corollaries: first, that memory is a contemporary phenomenon, something that, while concerned with the past, happens in the present; and second, that memory is a form of a work, working through, labor, or action."[59]

How should we describe the last military dictatorship in Argentina? This question is still present in the debates among the social sciences and specially in the Argentinean historiography. Among the terms used to conceptualize this phenomenon, State Terrorism is one of the most commonly used. The term was born as part of the struggle of the civil rights organizations, being Eduardo Luis Duhalde who coined the term in his book *El Estado Terrorista*. According to Duhalde, even though Argentina had been suffering military regimes since 1930, the last military dictatorship (1976-1983) differed from the previous one by introducing a rupturing element: terror. Santiago Garano remarked that the Argentinean scholars appropriated this term from the civil rights organizations without making any critical analysis.[60] In consequence State Terrorism became a "native category" in the Argentinean academy and society.

State of Exception and genocide were central elements in the characterization made by Duhalde. Two concepts which were and still are automatically related to Nazism. If we consider the "terrorist" dictatorship as a complete new phenomenon in Argentinean history, it will be easier to understand the analogy with the Nazism made by Luis Miguel, Jacobo Timerman and Daniel Feierstein. This comparison was an element of this native category. Consequently it was logical and natural to see the past becoming present, to see the Nazism in the Argentinean militaries. This chapter will describe the historicity of this analogy.

The Argentinean *Historia Reciente* has the particularity of being practically centered in two main subjects: the political violence of the 1970s and the last military dictatorship. As a matter of

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[58] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 6.

[59] Ibidem, 3,4.

[60] Garaño, "Notas sobre el concepto de estado terrorista" in *Question* Vol. 1, N° 61, enero-marzo 2019.

fact, this historiographical field has since the beginning been shaped by the activism of the civil right organizations and the denunciation of the crimes committed by the military regime. It is in this context that the crimes committed by Nazism during the World War II have been until today a reference experience to compare the crimes committed in Argentina. For several social scientists, we are talking about two regimes that implemented a systematic plan in order to eliminate a part of the population which differentiated from each other only in their ideological motivations. The basic idea is that the elimination of political activists in Argentina differs from the elimination of millions of people in Europe, just in the fact that while the European genocide was based on a racial justification, the South American one was founded on political ideas. The traumatic experiences of the military regime's main victims, the disappeared, were handled and processed with the help and the lessons taken from the traumatic experiences of the Jews in Central Europe. The central element of the repression, the clandestine centers of detention, was assimilated to the concentration camps because both institutions were dedicated to the elimination of people and constituted, following Hanna Arendt, the essence of this kind of regimes named "Totalitarian."[61]

The debates on the possibility of applying the concept Fascism to Latin American date from the 1970s. We can start summing up briefly some of the writings produced by those who suffered under the repression of the military regime, most of them exiles, and who tried to understand the reason of their defeat and the nature of their enemy. The discussions at that time were around the term Fascism as a way to clarify the nature of the military governments. It was not just an Argentinean debate. Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and other countries of the region suffered similar regimes, so the discussion took place in the whole region. Ruy Mauro Marini compared the government of Pinochet in Chile to the one established in Brazil in 1964, saying that both were a "military fascism," a particular form of Fascism under the control of national and foreign capital found whose support was given by a specific sector of the middle class: the militaries.[62]

This problem was widely analyzed in 1976, in the first number of the magazine *Nueva Política* entitled "Fascism in America." The theoretical essays gathered in this issue had an explicit political goal exposed in a short text written by Julio Cortazar entitled *Los lobos del hombre*: "We have to defeat the present Fascism as political movement and that is the reason why we must start overthrowing the Chilean Junta and so many other detestable dictatorships."[63] Juan Bosch typified Fascism as a regime characterized by three elements: an intense nationalism, the emotional resource

[61] See Arendt, Hanna, (1948), *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

[62] Marini, *Dos estrategias en el process chileno*, 43.

[63] Cortazar, "Los lobos de los hombres" en *Nueva Política*, 21.

of honor throughout war and the reactionary character of the petite bourgeoisie. In an abnormal and strange way, such characteristics could be seen in the Chile of Pinochet.[64] The association between the dictatorships in South America and the government of the United States was not absent in the discussion. Leopoldo Zea, for example, referred to it as a dependent Fascism which was basically an American Fascism.[65]

Alain Rouquie, in his classical book *El estado militar en América latina,* considered that such analyzes were a huge mistake committed by the Chilean Communist Party. These regimes could be defined as authoritarian but not as totalitarian for the simple reason that they did not try to mobilize the citizens, they did not want to have a mass support nor want to create a political party. To the contrary, they tried to depoliticize the society.[66] Atilio Boron shared the critique to fascism's interpretations, saying that they did not take into consideration the historical context that allowed the emergence of the fascist regimes in Europe. They just reduced the concept, a central concept in the Marxist political theory, to a formal abstraction which is used indiscriminately without taking into consideration the historical conditions. The dictatorships in Latin America responded on the other hand to a new phase of capital accumulation which determined its nature. Moreover, contrary to fascism, the military regimes did not have the backing of the crowd and did not try to introduce great reforms in the social structure restricting its actions to the sphere of the repression. There is indeed a newness in these regimes; it is the first time that the military institutions functioned as a political party that represents the great monopoly bourgeoisie.[67]

In the 1990's Pilar Calveiro published an important essay that went deep into this interpretative line. She was a former activist of *Montoneros* locked up in different clandestine detention centers like *Mansión Seré* and the *Escuela de Mécanica de la Armada* in 1977. Almost twenty years later, in 1998, she published *Poder y Desaparición. Los campos de concentración en Argentina.* Based on her own experience but also including the life stories of other people who were in the same situation, Calveiro attempted to analyze and understand the social function of the detention centers which were named *campos de concentración* (concentration camps). "Here we are God" was a quite used sentence used by the perpetrators to describe the control they had over life and death. How was it possible? How can we explain the fact that human being had perpetrated the atrocities described in the book? "I believe that they (the militaries) were part of a machinery

[64] Bosch, "Hablando de fascismo" en *Nueva Política*, 49, 50, 51.

[65] Zea, "Fascismo dependiente en latinoamerica" en *Nueva Política*, 151.

[66] Rouquie, *El estado militar en América latina*, 300.

[67] See Boron, "El fascismo como categoría histórica."

created by them with a mechanism that bureaucratized death, made it a routine and naturalized it", stated the author.[68]

Pilar Calveiro stated, in her essay about the "concentration camps" in Argentina, that these places had the purpose of transforming the whole society. Their function was not only to torture and kill people, but to introduce a radical transformation in society. In order to demonstrate her thesis she employed one of the figurative image of the perpetrators: they called "operating room" to the "concentration camps." In Calveiro's interpretation, this image reflected what kind of process the Argentinean society was going through. Basically, the militaries "operated" the whole society. More or less, the hegemonic paradigm in the interpretation of the military regime was based on this idea exposed by Pilar Calveiro: the repressive plan and its methodology were the key to understand the dictatorship. The relevance of other terms, like Genocide or State Terrorism, was also based on the centrality of this idea.

The repressive plan and the so called concentration camps were the key to understand the historical process. They were a kind of Weberian ideal type

"An ideal type is formed by the one-sided exaggeration (*Steigerung*) of one or several viewpoints and by the combination of a great many single phenomenon (*Einzelerscheinungen*) existing diffusely and discretely, more or less present and occasionally absent, which are compatible with those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints, into an internally consistent thought-picture (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity this thought-picture can not be found empirically anywhere in reality, it is a utopia."[69]

This *Steigerung* of the repressive system employed by the militaries led almost automatically to the analogy with the NS Regime. She even used the term "concentration camp."

"The starting point for appreciating Weber's approach is to accept one of its basic premises, namely that before human consciousness acts upon the world to derive the meaning and values which form the fabric of experiential reality, it consists of a meaningless infinity of phenomena. to perceive or know anything at all the mind needs a filter capable of drastically editing this infinity, much in the way a camera needs a lens before it will photograph anything recognizable. The question or the task is, how to make the "meaningless infinity" recognizable? From this perspective to write history is a superhuman task. the most elementary history book is "to give an account of episodes which involve the interaction of hundreds, thousands or even millions of lives (…) and "impersonal" forces which affected them."[70]

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[68] Pilar Calveiro, *Poder y desaparición. Los campos de concentración en Argentina*, 11, 34, 54.

[69] Burger, *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation,* 127,128.

[70] Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism,* 9.

The result of this *Steigerung* of the repressive plan as the key to understand the historical process is to transform the "concentration camps" in, using a concept of Marcel Mauss, a Total Social Fact. Like the *Kula* which served Malinowski to reconstruct the functional structure of a whole culture, the Clandestine Detention Center is this "just one aspect or combination of practices, norms and values" that helped to construct an "holistic knowledge" of the Dictatorship.[71]

Quite a similar theoretical achievement was made by Hannah Arendt in the 1950s. She stated that "the concentration camps embodied the spirit of Nazism like no other institution in the Third Reich."[72] An interpretation that can also be found in Wolfgang Sofsky's work. Nikolaus Wachsmann criticized this approach saying

"absolute power, beyond rationality or ideology. If the camps are the most clear manifestation of such a modern power, than other regimes that used or committed similar atrocities can be examined and comprehend from this paradigm. However, such approaches have the big difficulty that they turn the camps into timeless and abstract entities obscuring the dynamic nature of these institutions."[73]

We can find nuances in the Argentinian researchers who decided to adopt this approach. Daniel Rafecas, for example, has also mentioned that a constant in the "concentration camp's universe" was a "radical transformation of the perception of those held in them: invariably, they lose their status as citizens, people, human beings, to become objects as non-persons."[74] However, he pointed out some differences between the German concentration camps and the clandestine center of detention and torture:

"Formed in the special case of Argentina with elements borrowed from the Nazi concentration camp, intermingled with the characteristic features of the *pozo* (den) or *aguantadero* (safe house) of the common criminal. This genetic crossbreeding is what distinguishable from the concentration camp characteristic of the Nazi regime. Thus, for example, the permanent *tabicamiento* (blindfolding) so as to prevent recognition of their captors or the absolute prohibition of speech, which did not exist in the concentration camp. Another distinguishing element is their visibility. The clandestine detention and torture centre was secret and endeavored to remain concealed and invisible to the social environment; the concentration camp, by contrast, was highly visible, was placed at the centre of the criminal justice system and served the social function of intimidation towards those non-deviant elements and was thus indispensable to the stability and reproduction of the police state."[75]

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[71] Guber, *Etnografia*, 31.

[72] Arendt, Origins, 438 quoted in Wachsmann, *KL*, 5.

[73] Wachsmann, KL, 6, 16.

[74] Rafecas, "The reopening of judicial proceedings", 172.

[75] Ibidem, 171.

The centers in Argentina were, according to Rafecas, a hybrid. Besides the similitudes that he found with the German experiences, he pointed out some differences in the subjective sphere, the fact that the prisoners could not speak or see, and in the structural sphere also. Unlike German concentration camps, the Argentinean repressive system was clandestine. It was not in the center of the criminal justice system.

Pablo Scatizza is one of the historians who started to criticize or at least has started to question the concept of "concentration camps" employed in the Argentinean context. The critique of Scatizza was made from a regional perspective. The use of this concept is based on the model established by the ESMA which can be defined as the paradigm of the "concentration camps" in Argentina. Other studies that have employed the concept were based on the "camps" of *La Mansión Seré*, *El Atlético*, *El Banco*, *El Olimpo*, *Campo de Mayo* and *La Perla* (Córdoba). Based on his study on a particular region, Scatizza has pointed out that not all the places known as Clandestine Detention Centers had the same characteristic of these "concentration camps." There was a diversity that has to be taken into consideration. Not every Center was established as a place where "the mental and physical annihilation was practiced in a systematic total form," which seems to be the determining characteristic of the concentration camps.

Along with the use of the category concentration camps as a Total Social Fact, the comparability among the Argentinean and German cases has been also reinforced with the Anti-Semitic character of the regime. The "Anti-Semitic side" of the Argentinian dictatorship started to be underlined with the kidnapping of Jacobo Timerman, director of the newspaper *La Opinión*, who was arrested and kidnapped by a death squad linked to the clandestine detention center of ESMA. The repercussions of this kidnapping were the origin of an interpretative paradigm that finally led to the comparison of the military regime with the Nazism. The kidnapping of Timerman revealed that there was a clandestine "special treatment against Jews."[76] In his investigation about the subject, Emmanuel Kahan has found interesting that "in general terms, all the researches were made in order to confirm what was stated in *Prisoner without a name, cell without a number*, the book written by Timerman.[77]

As it has been already mentioned, for Jacobo Timerman, the similitude between the German and the Argentinean experiences were obvious. "The military government that took power in Argentina in March 1976 arrived with an all-embracing arsenal of Nazi ideology as part of its

[76] Kahan, *Recuerdos que mienten un poco*, 133.

[77] ibidem, 15.

structure," he stated. This Nazi ideology could be clearly seen in the treatment given to a particular kind of victims, the Jews. "Security forces could repress Jews simply because they were Jews." To the question if it was possible or if a Holocaust was taking place in Argentina, Timerman could not provide with an answer, "no one would have been able to answer such a question affirmatively in 1937 in Germany." But he was sure that there was a quite similitude in the circumstances. "A profound political crisis, an economic crisis with an annual 170 percent rate of inflation that has lasted for several years, impotence on the part of political parties to come up with a minimally coherent response, the incapacity of the Jewish community to face straightforwardly its own reality and a totalitarian mentality among the majority sectors of the population, with a serious tendency towards messianic beliefs." Even when it was true that no gas chamber was operating in Argentina during the 1970s, the core of Antisemitism was still very present when "between 1974 and 1978, the violation of girls in a clandestine prisons had a peculiar characteristic: Jewish girls were violated twice as often as non-Jewish girls."[78] The historical situation that Timerman was living lead him to establish a direct connection with his familiar past. The difference between both experiences was remarked by Timerman with the following statement: "The extreme Left and the extreme Right reached Argentina via the same criminal route, devoid of German precision but spiced with Latin American eroticism."[79] The *Nunca Mas* consolidated this interpretation based on the "especial treatment received by the Jewish victims." This kind of victims had to suffer a plus due to their identity. Even the mere fact of "being Jew" could determinate the future of the prisoner.[80]

On December 13, 1983, the president Raúl Alfonsín ordered "the prosecution of seven guerrilla leaders and the members of the first three military juntas that governed during the dictatorship."[81] By the same time, a "commission of notables" was designated in order to collect the ton of denunciations and make a systematic research. The members of this commission were Ernesto Sábato, Eduardo Rabossi, Gregorio Klimovsky, Hilario Fernández Long, Ricardo Colombres, Jaime De Nevares, Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú, René Favaloro, Carlos Gattinoni and Graciela Fernandez Meijide. The investigation was organized taking the different Clandestine Detention Centers as the point of reference. The results of the investigation appeared for the first time in the form of a documentary. In representation of the Commission, named CONADEP, Sábato stated in the film that the deeds performed during the dictatorship were "monstrous crimes, crimes

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[78] Timerman, *Prisoner without a name,* 69,70.

[79] ibidem, 19.

[80] Kahan, op. cit., 253.

[81] Crenzel, *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances*, 36.

against humanity. It is not a political problem, as is often held; it is an ethical and religious problem. Personally, I believe it was Satan reigning over the Earth."[82] The documentary had a general positive reception "with the exception of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, who objected to the film "for keeping silent on the name of the perpetrators" and on the victims' condition "of political opponents of the dictatorship."[83] Crenzel pointed out the importance of the result of this research by saying that

"CONADEP's investigation had highly significant political and legal effects: it produced a new knowledge of the actual scope of the disappearances in Argentina; created an unprecedented body of evidence to use in the prosecution of the perpetrators; and put an end to Alfonsín's strategy of having the military juntas prosecuted by their peers, while at the same time ushering in the jurisdiction of civilian courts. Its report, *Nunca Más*, would expose a new public truth about the disappearances, and would become the new interpretative and narrative approach for judging, thinking about, and evoking the then immediate past."[84]

The report registered 8,960 disappearances and the quantity of 340 Clandestine Detention Centers. The victims were described basically as "human beings whose rights had been grossly violated." Anybody could be a victim. The target group was characterized by its heterogeneity

"From people seeking to change society through a revolution to sensitive adolescents who went out to shantytowns to help the less fortunate. Anyone could become a victim: trade union leaders fighting for better wages; youngsters who were members of student unions; journalists who did not enthusiastically support the regime; psychologists and sociologists, simply because they belonged to suspicious professions; young pacifists; nuns and priests who had taken the teachings of Christ to underprivileged neighborhoods. And the friends of any of these people, and the friends of their friends, plus others who were turned in purely out of personal revenge, or whose names had been given under torture by other victims. The majority of them were innocent of terrorist acts or even of belonging to guerrilla combat units, as guerrilla members tended to put up a fight, so that they either died in shootouts or committed suicide before they could be captured, with few of them still alive by the time they were in the hands of the repressive forces."[85]

Understanding the construction of the victims made by the *Nunca Más* is central at the time of analyzing the interpretations of the dictatorship.

"In this way, CONADEP confronts the crime of disappearance, restoring the *humanity* of the disappeared by presenting their names, ages, gender, and occupational activities. This restitution takes on the shape of an *abstract humanization*

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[82] ibidem, 61,62.

[83] ibidem, 64.

[84] ibidem, 75.

[85] quoted in Crenzel, op. cit., 79, 80.

that presents their generic lives, blurring their condition as concrete historical beings and their political lives, which are precisely features that evoke the confrontations that tore Argentine society apart. Thus the report performs simultaneously two operations: by presenting the disappeared as subjects of law it gives a *new political significance* to their identity that contrasts the perspective of the dictatorship; and, at the same time, it renders them *apolitical* by positing them as innocent victims and excluding their activism. In doing so, it also restricts the definition of subject of law by proposing the absence of any connections to politics and violence as a precondition for being a subject of law. Stripped of any factional attributes and of the savagery of the political animal–so foreign and threatening to post-dictatorial common sense–the disappeared are presented in a domesticated and familiar light, which makes it easier for rears to relate to the victims based on a series of shared values."[86]

With this conception of victim came along the idea of *Genocide* and *Crimes against Humanity*.

In this reconstruction of how the genocide as concept gained its hegemony in the interpretation of the dictatorship, we have to mention the presentation of the lawsuit presented by prosecutor Carlos Castresana to the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón. The Antisemitic characteristic of the clandestine repression functioned in this report as the gap that allowed to speak and justify the categorization of the repression as a genocide. The repression had a racial connotation because it was directed against a "racial enemy," the Jews.[87]

The *Juicios de Madrid,* in which not only the Argentinian but also the Chilean cases were considered, took place at the end of the 1990s. Based on this legal procedure, Baltasar Garzón ordered an international warrant arrest for Augusto Pinochet. In 1999, the Co.So.Fam (*Comisión de Solidaridad con Familiares de Presos y Desaparecidos en la Argentina*) presented to judge Baltasar Garzón the report *La violación de los derechos humanos de argentinos judíos bajo el régimen militar (1976-1983) i*n the *Central Court of Criminal Proceedings Number 5* of the *Audiencia Nacional* (National Court). This report had the practical aim to frame the repressive behavior of the dictatorship in the international law and in the Spanish positive law. It concluded that the anti-Semitic character of the militaries constituted the repression into a genocide. As the matter of fact, it was the biggest bloodbath of Jewish people after the Second World War. The only difference relied on its clandestine fulfillment. As opposed to German Antisemitism where the persecution of the regime was public, in Argentina it had a more private and secret nature. Even when there was no document that explicitly mention the persecution of Jews, "the social and political praxis" revealed the "pure anti-Semitic culture" of the armed forces. As a matter of fact, this Antisemitism constituted a specific characteristic that differentiated this regime from the other military regimes of the region. The report contended with the explanation that the Jewish victims were persecuted

[86] ibidem, 82.

[87] Kahan, op. cit., 262.

basically due to their political and social activities. It tried to demonstrate that these victims were persecuted and murdered for the only reason that they were Jews. And even when the regime took public measures against those organizations that expressed an anti-Semitic ideology and even gave importance to the Jewish association, the clandestine repressive actions put in evidence this Antisemitism side. In this point there was no difference between *duros* and *moderados*. Not only Menéndez, Saint Jean, Suaréz Mason and Camps but all those who took part in the clandestine repression were accused of being anti-Semitic, of being genocides.[88] Kahan has already pointed that the argument of the absence of political activism among the Jewish disappeared prisoners was the leitmotif where the analogy with Nazism was based.[89]

Motivated by this report, the DAIA's *Centro de Estudios Sociales* in Argentina, decided also to make a research about the Jewish disappeared prisoners. The analogy with Nazism was reaffirmed by this investigation group constituted by Adrián Jmelnizky, Daniel Feierstein, Marisa Braylan and Miguel Galante. This report established a methodological parallel between both regimes:

"It is interesting to compare the genocidal methodology displayed by the Nazism with the genocidal methodology in Argentina: in both cases, they looked for the concealment of the bodies, the denial of victim's names, the depersonalization during the time of detention, the search for the dehumanization and degradation of the victims, the effort to break their last physical, psychical and moral resistances as a requirement for the destruction." [90]

On November 2, 1999, Baltazar Garzón made public his indictment on the subject. It was pointed out that "the term "religious group" was appropriate to classify the victims, bearing in mind the ideological nature of religious belief and also the Argentine military's explicit aim of establishing a "Western and Christian" order."[91] The religious factor gained the same or even more importance than the political one. Baltazar Garzón based this affirmation in the fact that the regime legitimized itself as a crusade. The engagement of the Catholic Church in the repression being part of the clandestine detention center's staff was also an important factor to take into consideration. He also came to confirm the "special treatment" received by the "Jewish-Argentine population and its symbolic nature." Regarding the racial side of the dictatorship, he stated that, "racist thinking is

[88] Co. So Fam., *La violación de los derechos humanos*, 41,79, 80-82, 87.

[89] Kahan, *op. cit*. 263.

[90] *CES-DAIA*, 200, quoted by Kahan, "Esto no es un Holocausto" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 330.

[91] Feierstein, *op. cit.*, 19.

essentially political in nature. “Racial groups” are imaginary constructions that always refer in fact to “political groups.” Baltasar Garzón started proceeding for crimes of “terrorist and genocide” against ninety-eight Argentine military members. It was only possible to judge Lieutenant Commander Adolfo Scilingo, who went voluntary to Spain in order to testify. In the sentence, the Madrid’s Central Criminal Court declared that he was convicted for “crimes against humanity” and not for genocide.[92]

Daniel Feierstein, who was part of the investigation group formed by DAIA, tried in the coming years to theorize and conceptualized the Argentine regime as a genocide. In some manner he resumed the definitions made by Baltasar Garzón questioning the sentence of “crimes against humanity.” From his perspective, “reducing genocide to crimes against humanity” has as consequence “the real danger that we may lose sight of the ways in which the social practices of genocide systematically destroy identity.”[93] The influence of the reflections made by Feierstein would be far away from being just a merely theoretical exercise and in 2006 and 2007 were the base for the sentences against Miguel Etchecolatz and Christian Von Wernich. The Federal Oral Criminal Tribunal N° 1 for La Plata sentenced both for “crimes against humanity committed in the frame of a genocide.”

In his conception and definition of genocide, Feierstein concentrated his analysis in the sociological and symbolical effects. “The effects of genocide do not end but only begin with the deaths of the victims,” he stated. In fact, his definition of genocide was based on seeing it as a “technology of power.”

“In the pages that follow, I will encourage you to consider genocide not only as a latent potential of modernity but as a specific technology of power. A technology of power is a form of social engineering that creates, destroys, or reorganizes relationships within a given society. it influences the ways in which different social groups construct their identity, the identity of others, thus shaping the way that groups can relate to themselves and to one another.”[94]

Seeing the genocide as a technology of power to transform the society, Feierstein states that genocides are compared with revolutions in the fact that they were the two sociological devices employed during the XX century in the transformation of societies.[95]

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[92] ibidem, 19.

[93] ibidem, 25.

[94] ibidem, 1.

[95] ibidem, 37.

Feierstein recognizes and makes explicit the place from where he is talking about at the time of comparing the Argentine dictatorship with Nazism

"I am aware as an Argentine Jewish historian and sociologist that my choice of narrative strategy is as subjective and politically motivated as any other. Indeed, my childhood in an Argentina crisscrossed by unmarked Ford Falcons transporting prisoners to concentration camps and my heritage as a descendant of a Jewish family who emigrated from Poland before the Nazi invasion haunt these pages and are never far below their surface. Having said that and without claiming that my approach is better or more comprehensive than any other, I do believe it produces a legitimate picture of the social practices of genocide during the second half of the twentieth century."[96]

The objective of the regime was basically, according to Feierstein, the elimination of the autonomy in the individuals. The "Process of National Reorganization," the same as Nazism, was a "reorganizing genocide" that aimed to eliminate "the subversives." Subversion, for Feierstein, was not understood "as attempt to overthrow structures, including the state. However, the Argentine military's use of the term, although ambiguous, frequently meant something more like "showing political autonomy."[97]

Feierstein employed the Nazism in order to construct an ideal type of genocide as a social practice, "a model that can be applied to other genocides carried out by modern states."[98] He bases his ideal type in the Biopower concept of Michel Foucault which is "one of the key technologies of power of the modern nation-state." Biopower can be understood as a technology that emerged in the XIX century with the purpose of "defending the life and health of populations" and that it is "exercised at the collective level through regulatory control, and at the individual level through discipline and punishment."[99] Feierstein proposed a six-stage model starting "when the nazis managed to limit expressions of autonomy." The first step in the process consisted in the construction of a "negative otherness," a moment when the violence is exerted in a symbolical and verbal level and when a clear "us" and "them" is limited. The second moment is a "qualitative leap from symbolic to physical violence," a stage Name harassment. The next stages that lead to the extermination are the isolation, systematic weakening and extermination.[100]

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[96] ibidem, 7.

[97] ibidem, 35.

[98] ibidem, 104.

[99] ibidem, 106.

[100] ibidem, 110-120.

An interesting point in Feierstein's ideal type of genocide is that the process is not concluded with the physical extermination of the victims. He introduces the symbolic level of the extermination in his analysis.

"On the other hand, the victims of genocidal social practices are deliberately and repeatedly homogenized as "innocent." The dominant discourse at he moment when genocide is implemented tends to depict victims as culpable in innumerable ways, transforming them into agents of the devil responsible for the majority of social evils. Paradoxically, however, once the genocide has been accomplished, and to the extent that the social consensus on which the perpetrators depended has been eroded, the hegemonic gaze may move toward an emphasis on the "innocence" of the victims, proceeding hand-in-hand with the demonization of the perpetrators and their relegation to the realm of "Irrationalität." In some societies, this process is accelerated by military defeat (as with the Nazis in Germany or the Hutu extremists in Rwanda), or by political defeat (as with the military dictatorships in Latin America). In other cases, the process occurs more slowly, as with Turkey or Indochina. And in still other cases, when a consensus remains as to the legitimacy of the genocide in the society in which it occurred, the process of "constructing innocence" may take Generation or even centuries–as with the annihilation of the indigenous populations of the modern states of the Americas. However it occurs, this mode of constructing "innocent" victims ends up being even more effective than blaming them for their own destruction. It dilutes genocide as much as it appears to condemn it. It meshes easily with the image of mad, perverse, pathological, and evil murderers that emerges from the ways the perpetrators themselves legitimize genocide." [101]

The "constructing of innocence" is then the last stage of the genocide social practices. It is its symbolic realization. We have already seem that Emilio Crenzel has pointed out this treatment made by CONADEP dealing with the victims as "human beings whose rights had been grossly violated" giving so to the victims a "new political significance to their identity." This new political significance based on their innocence is where Feierstein sees the symbolic objectification of genocide. It is the moment when the genocidal social practice reaches reformulation of the social practices. The victims, treated as innocent victims, are dispossessed of their identity, of their social and symbolic significance. Feierstein takes the example of the Jewish collectivities in Central and Eastern Europe in the XIX and early XX centuries.

"A powerful symbol of this is the massive Jewish participation in numerous oppositional and contestatory movements (whether revolutionary or reformist), from the Spartacists to the communists, anarchists, Bundists (the Jewish Workers Party), and socialists, in Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. These include such specific cases as the "Jewish Soviet" in Hungary under the Béla Kun government, the Jewish socialist prime minister León Blum in France, and the vital Jewish participation at the leadership level of various Russian and Polish revolutionary movements. The most important dimension, however, is not the Jews' numerically large participation in such contestatory movements, but their link with a deeper, more global element, linked to the scant support that Jewish nationalism (Zionism) and non-Jewish European nationalisms aroused among Jewish populations, until the Nazis appeared on the scene. Because

[101] ibidem, 122.

of the persecutions suffered by Jews in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania, and because of their marginalization in Germany and France, Jewish communities continued to view themselves as "diasporic" in nature, founded on multiple identities, capable of transcending their Jewish cultural component; their assimilation within the national territories the inhabited, whether German, Polish, Russian, or French; their greater or lesser religious convictions (many Jewish groups were atheists, other were reformists, others Orthodox, but all considered themselves Jewish beyond their specific religious or nonreligious identification); and their political identity (which was highly varied, though in general forsaking a nationalist tendency for a diverse range of internationalist and diasporic currents of thought)."[102]

It was in this "readiness to embrace multiple identities, in their recognition of the multiplicity, complexity, and dynamism of identity formation" where Feierstein finds the reason why the Jews were a risk to the Nazis.

"This was problematic and "subversive" for a model of identity, such as the Nazis, which sought to subordinate all such identifications to those of the organic *Volk* of a well-defined national territory. In a philosophical sense, Jewish identity was constructed "in time," while modern European identities were constructed "in space." [103]

In 2006 we find a turning point with the trials of the former policeman Miguel Etchecolatz and the catholic priest Christian Von Wernich. In the legal basis written by the federal judge Carlos Rozanski the word genocide is used to set the context of the crimes committed by the accused. The acts were committed "in the time frame of the genocide that took place in Argentina between 1976 and 1983."[104] Luciano Alonso had made an interesting research tracking down the evolution in the path how the word genocide was employed in Argentina since the 1970s. The use of this term during the 1960s and 1970s had the war of Vietnam and the colonial wars as its reference. The genocide was the extermination of a people that was fighting for its liberation. Such was the frame that allowed to characterized the dictatorship of Pinochet as fascist one or even the period 1973-1976 in Argentina. The term was not used in the 1980s in connection with the Trial of the Juntas or in the CONADEP report. It would be at the end of 1990s, with the intervention of the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón, that the word would start to regain relevance. Anyway, the references made by Rozanski were influenced by the work of Daniel Feierstein whose writings respond to the interests of the academic sphere related to the Genocide Studies which emerged during the 1990s as a response to what was happening in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia.

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[102] ibidem, 124.

[103] ibidem, 124.

[104] Aguila, "La represión en la historia reciente Argentina", 9.

As an active member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Feierstein's book can be included in series of comparative investigations which included the Armenian genocide, the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia and the Rwanda genocide.[105] We cannot ignore the importance of the work of Feierstein not just in the academic domain but also in the Argentine justice. In 2006, the federal judge Carlos Rozanski used this investigation to justify his sentence against Christian Von Wernich saying that "the acts were committed "in the time frame of the genocide that took place in Argentina between 1976 and 1983."[106]

The Anti-Semitic character of the dictatorship has been criticized in the last years, specially throughout the investigations of Emmanuel Kahan and Daniel Lvovich. Kahan has questioned himself: "What was the difference between the accusations as "fucking Jew" and "fucking whore" or "fucking nigger" or "fucking Indian" or "fucking guerrilla" by the members of the death squads during the torture sessions? Or where was the difference between saying "Heil Hitler" and the systematic violation of women or the misappropriation of babies in the clandestine detention centers?"[107] In other words, was there a special treatment to the Jewish prisoners or the treatment that they received were so cruel just as the other prisoners?

According to Feierstein's interpretation, there was a genocide's saga during the 20th century, starting with the Shoah, followed in the 1950s and 1960s with the independence wars of Indochina, Algeria and Vietnam and at last with the dictatorships in several countries of South America. In the introduction, Feierstein stated clearly his own subjective interests in this comparison as a Jew and an Argentinean who tried to show if it is possible to trace social parallels between both experiences.

The uncritical acceptance of using the term concentration camps in the Argentinean historical context and the relevance of the Anti-Semitic elements of the dictatorship were central elements in how we understand the regime, something which is implied in the State Terrorism's concept. Santiago Garaño's critique to the use of this concept can be useful at the time of opening alternative perspective to the study of the dictatorship. He suggested that State Terrorism has to be taken as a native category and quoting Bronislaw Malinowski, Garaño stated that such categories have not to be taken with the different legal, moral and social implications that they have for the researcher, but in the complete specific sense of the studied society because they expressed a particular social relation. In the Argentinean case, State Terrorism is a powerful political local

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[105] Daniel Feierstein, *El genocidio como práctica social. Entre el nazismo y la experiencia argentina*.

[106] Aguila, "La represión en la historia reciente Argentina", 9.

[107] Kahan, "Esto no es un holocausto," 346.

concept because the meaning is related to local contexts connected with specific historical processes that also constitute institutions, practices, memories and actors.[108]

It is at this point where the comparison with the National Socialism may have a relevance, at the moment of deconstructing or rethinking these "native categories." If the premise that the concentration camps are the key to understand this historical process, then we need to reconsider the social function displayed by these places.

Santiago Garano started to think on the term State Terrorism as a native category when being in academic congress some Brazilian scholars asked an Argentinean research about the meaning of the concept State Terrorism. The inability to give a direct and fast answer to the question about the meaning of this word was a sign for Garano that what the Brazilian scholars were doing was transforming the familiar into exoticism.

In recent years historians have been pointing out that it is necessary to revise the way how the second half of the XX century is periodized. The classical periodization between 1930 and 1983 is marked by the alternation of dictatorships and democratic governments. The implicit idea is that the democratic and authoritarian regimes were complete different and it does not allow to see the continuities along the time.[109] Pontoriero suggests that one of the main continuity between 1955 and 1976 was the State of Exception.[110] This institutional circumstance was reflected in the society by the perception of living in a war. Perception which was not an exclusivity of the militaries. Pontoriero suggests that to incorporate the imaginary of war is necessary if we want to understand the political culture of military and civilian actors after 1955.[111]

As we may see, the comparison between the last military dictatorship and the NS Regime does not need to be explained. On the contrary, as Feierstein stated, it is quite difficult to talk about the NS Regime without thinking in the Argentinean recent past. It was in this cultural context where the present comparison between the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in both places was conceived. However it is the aim of the present comparison to question this predisposition of seeing similitudes between both experiences. A predisposition which is in part a direct consequence of hegemony of the native category: State Terrorism. This chapter has tried to described the decades of theoretical research and political activism that are behind this category. Nevertheless the experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses will be analyzed from an empirical historiographical

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[108] Garaño, "Notas sobre el concepto de estado terrorista" in *Question* Vol. 1, N° 61, enero-marzo 2019.

[109] Franco, Bohoslavsky, "Elementos para una historia de las violencias estatales en la Argentina en el siglo XX"

[110] Pontoriero, *La represión militar en Argentina (1955-1976),* Introduction.

[111] Ibidem.

perspective trying to confront the theoretical knowledge produced by sociologists, law and political scientists.

3. From Perón to Videla

Luis started to study the Bible with the Jehovah's Witnesses in June of 1975. Luis Beghe used to visit him. He found Luis by making the door to door preaching. The *Awake!* of April 22, 1975, convinced Luis to start studying the Bible. In the page 21 of this magazine, which was the first to be published in Argentina, there was an explanation of human history that ended in the thousand years kingdom of Jesus Christ. The establishment of this kingdom on earth had to put an end to the actual "system of things", a term which made allusion to the human society ruled by human governments. The logical question of Luis was: "When comes the end"? Luis Beghe responded: "wait until October 1975." Worldwide several Jehovah's Witnesses were waiting that in October 1975, Jesus Christ would establish his kingdom on earth.[112]

For the archive of the Police Department of Buenos Aires Province, the story of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina begin in 1925.

"The preaching of the "good news" of God's Kingdom started in Argentina in the second decade of this century. The first official cadre to be assigned to our country was Juan Muñiz, from Spain, in the year 1925. He started with the distribution of biblical literature in Buenos Aires and the establishment of a branch office in Argentina in 1926. He was the first responsible of the dissemination of the biblical trues that started to be spread in the city of Buenos Aires, later in different German colonies and finally in different provinces, thank to the railroad lines."[113]

According to the version of Jehovah's Witnesses, the first missionary who introduced their teachings in Argentina was not Juan Muniz but George Young from Canada. "Within months, 1,480 books and 300,000 copies of other biblical publications were distributed in 25 principal towns and cities of Argentina. Before continuing his missionary tour in other countries of South America, Young remarked: "The smile of God's approval upon the effort to spread the message of the kingdom has been very manifest."[114] One year later, Juan Muñiz was assigned from the central of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York to Argentina in order to organize the missionary work in this country.

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[112] Interview to Luis Miguel on January 4th, 2024.

[113] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo 837. Departamento General de Inteligencia, Legajo Roca N°15, Asunto: Actividad de los Testigos de Jehová en la calle 117 N°1698, La Plata. Octubre de 1982.

[114] *2001 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 151.

Juan Muñiz was born on October 29, 1885, in Asturias, Spain. At the age of nineteen years old, in the factory where he worked, decided to enter in the Socialist Party. He said:

"But it was not long before I recognized that it was a lost cause. I was amazed at the ignorance of the workers, their constant fights among themselves and their vile language. Not only did I perceive contradictions in their meetings, but I saw hypocrisy in their leaders. So in 1909 I decided to leave the party. I determined to go to the United States to live in order to get away from politics and religion."[115]

He emigrated then to the United States in 1916 and there he met the Bible Students.[116] He returned later to Spain in order to preach the teachings that he discovered in America. Due to the several problems that he had to face in Spain, Joseph Rutherford, Watchtower Society's President, suggested him to move to South America. Muñiz "was a remarkably capable speaker. It is said that he could captivate an audience for hours, using only the Bible, without notes or outline."[117] He organized the preaching activities not only in Argentina, but also in Paraguay and Uruguay. As it states in the DIPBA's Archives, Muñiz decided to concentrate his attention in the German colonies of the territory and asked for support. Carlos Ott was sent to Argentina in order to undertake this task. According to the official story of Jehovah's Witnesses

"He left Germany in 1925, arriving some time later in Uruguay. There he concentrated his efforts for the next eight years. Being conscious of the need to reach as many people as possible, Brother Ott made good use of radio station even agreeing to transmit recorded discourses free of charge. From this small beginning, the work expanded to all 19 departments (provinces) of Uruguay."[118]

Nicolás Argyrós was also a kind of missionary who started to preach to the Greek speaking population in Argentina in 1930s and once he learnt Spanish decided to travel around 14 of the 22 Argentinean provinces in order to preach. Juan Rebacz and a friend, both Polish, concentrated their efforts in the southern part of Argentina. Armando Menazzi, a mechanic from the central province of Córdoba, became a Jehovah's Witnesses in the 1930s. He "sold his auto-repair shop, bought an old bus and converted it into a camper, making it possible for then or more publishers to travel

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[115] *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1964, 761.

[116] The official name of Jehovah's Witnesses was Bible Students until 1931. That is the reason why they will be named in the years until 1931 as Bible Students and as Jehovah's Witnesses from 1931 on.

[117] *The Wachtower*, February 15, 1986, 27.

[118] ibidem, 28.

together and spread the good news. Their trips took them to at least ten provinces in northern Argentina."[119]

To the efforts of this handful of Jehovah's Witnesses to cover the vast territory of Argentina during the 1930s, we have to add the arrival of trained missionary cadres from Gilead School during the 1940s. Gilead School was part of a series of reforms introduced by Nathan Knorr, who took over the presidency of Jehovah's Witnesses after Joseph Rutherford's death on January 8, 1942.[1] The purpose of this School was to train missionaries during twenty weeks, who were later sent to different countries around the world.[121] On February 28, 1945, Nathan Knorr and Frederick Franz landed in Buenos Aires. At that time, "there were a total of 19 companies or congregations in the country and 320 publishers."[122] Nathan Knorr "encouraged brothers from Argentina to take up the pioneer work and to set for themselves the goal of attending the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead."[123] Gwaenydd Hughes, who was in Paraguay, and Ofelia Estrada from Argentina were invited by Knorr to be instructed at this School and returned to Argentina in 1946.[124] On December 14, 1946, the association *La Torre del Vigia y Asociación de Tratados Bíblicos* was established and on March 9, 1949, the decree N°6069 recognized the legal status of this association that represented Jehovah's Witnesses in the country.[125] Two years later missionaries from other countries also arrived. Among them were Charles and Lorene Eisenhower, Viola Eisenhower, Helen Nichols, Helen Wilson, Roberta Miller, Sophie Soviak, Edith Morgan, Ethel Tischhauser and Mary Helmbrecht. In 1940 there were 20 pioneers (full-time and half-time cadres dedicated to activism), with the arrival of the missionaries this number increased to 382 in 1960.[126] According to the report of the DIPBA, the first convention of Jehovah's Witnesses took place in 1945 with an attendance of 500 persons and a second one in 1949 where 750 persons assisted.[127]

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[119] *2001 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 153.

[120] *Jehovah's Witnesses. Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 89,90.

[121] Ibidem, 96.

[122] *1972 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 74.

[123] *2001 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 154.

[124] *1972 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 77.

[125] Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, Resolución N° 351, 26 de Mayo de 1950, Buenos Aires.

[126] Ibidem.

[127] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo N° 837. Departamento General de Inteligencia, Legajo Roca N°15, Asunto: Actividad de los Testigos de Jehová en la calle 117 N°1698, La Plata. Octubre de 1982.

In 1949 Nathan Knorr returned to Argentina. This time, he was arrested in Buenos Aires while he was giving a talk. The whole meeting's attendance was arrested and taken to a large courtyard.

"Some 200 of the brothers, including Brothers Knorr, Hughes and Muñiz, were taken to the police station. Helen Nichols mentions, "This was my first time in jail, and Brother Knorr's too!" Most of the brothers were taken to the police station in the wagon, thirty at a time."[128]

According to the report of the DIPBA, it was at this time when Jehovah's Witnesses started to be visible in the country. In 1949 the government of Juan Domingo Perón passed a bill requiring that all religious groups had to be registered in the Department of Cults of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the DIPBA files, "May 26, 1950, was the first official precedent of the sect in Argentina. It was the time when their application was refused by the Department of Cults."[1] According to the advisory service provided by the *Ministerio de Guerra*, *Jefatura de Control de Estado*, *Coordinación Federal* and the colonel legal adviser Dr. Juan Alberto Lagalaye: Jehovah Witnesses were "against the consecrated principles of the Magna Carta, diffusing doctrines against the Armed Forces and the respect that should be given to the national symbols."[130] Two months later, Juan Domingo Perón removed the legal status of the *La Torre del Vigia y Asociación de Tratados Bíblicos*. According to Jehovah's Witnesses:

"the decree prohibited public meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses as well as their preaching activity. However, the Watch Tower Society's branch office was not closed. (…) The congregations were organized into small groups of 8 to 12 publishers. For the first few years of the ban, meeting places were changed regularly. The brothers found inconspicuous places to meet—be it a milking shed, a structure with a thatched roof, a farm kitchen, even under a tree. The important thing was to meet together."[131]

In 1953 Nathan Knorr made his third visit to Argentina. This time he was accompanied by Milton Henschel. Knorr entered throughout Chile and Henschel throughout Paraguay. They organized small assemblies along the way to Buenos Aires where they met together. A total of 2,505

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[128] *1972 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 83.

[129] DIPBA, Mesa D.E., Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo N° 258. Asunto: Testigos de Jehová, La Plata, Agosto 1982.

[130] Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, Resolución N° 351, 26 de Mayo de 1950, Buenos Aires.

[131] *2001 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 155,156.

assisted to the assemblies that were celebrated in 56 locations.[132] Charles Eisenhower, a missionary who had arrived in 1948, was appointed as "branch servant." Eisenhower was born in 1933 in the state Pennsylvania. After an active participation pioneer in different part of Texas was called to the first class of Gilead School. His first assignment was Cuba, where he stayed until the number of members increased to 5,000. After five years and once this aim was arrived, Nathan Knorr reassigned Eisenhower to Argentina, where he arrived at the end of 1948.[133] Charles Einsehower, as "branch servant," would be the main responsible of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina for the future decades.

Eisenhower, Muñiz, Ott, Argyros, Hughes and Menazzi were among the names that constituted the fundament of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina. All of them left their countries or homes in order to advocate their lives to activism. This beginning took place at a particular moment of Argentinean history. In 1930 José Félix Uriburu headed the first of a saga of military putsches that marked Argentinean history for the next fifty years. The first active years of small Jehovah's Witnesses groups coincided with the "infamous decade," a time marked by the Great Depression, an import substitution industrialization and a rural exodus. This period ended with a new military putsch in 1943, which allowed, a couple years later, Juan Domingo Perón to seize the power. Due to the difficult conditions in Europe during the Second World War, the central of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York decided to concentrate their missionary efforts in Latin America. This fact explains not only why all these missionary cadres from Gilead school were sent to the country but also why Nathan Knorr visited the region so regularly.

During the first Peronism, Jehovah's Witnesses started to be visible and to be treated as a menace to the national *ethos,* as we can see in the first state measure against them in 1950. The end of the first Peronism in 1955 did not mean any change to Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina. They continued with their activities, gaining new members, organizing meetings, publishing and distributing their literature. The conceptualization of Jehovah's Witnesses as subversive elements was the result of a long process. This process could be explained by the development of Argentinian history in the years after 1955, but not only. It is necessary an explanation that takes into consideration the complexity and nuances of the process. In other words, it is also important to consider the story of Jehovah's Witnesses in this context. Firstly, we have to concentrate our attention in the Argentinean history after the arrival of the *Libertadora*, the putsch of 1955 that

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[132] Ibidem, 156.

[133] *The Watchtower* May 1, 1958, 269-271.

removed Perón from the power. The relevance of this year to our inquiry is related to the origin of two institutions: the *Central de Inteligencia* of Buenos Aires Province and the military vicariate. From a structural perspective, Juan Carlos Portantiero saw in the *"Libertadora"* the political manifestation of a structural change in the social-economic level. The crisis of the Import-Substitution-Industrialization model in the middle of the 1950s opened up a new economic phase with the appearance of actors at the level of classes that in the following years would look for its social and political representation. "A phase of no correspondence between a new economic domination and a new political hegemony"[134] started in 1955. The political protagonists in this kind of periods respond to residual social forces and groups that respond to the problems of the previous phase. From this perspective, the military putsch of 1955 can be seen as "a last organic attempt by the traditional agrarian bourgeoisie to maintain the hegemonic role among ruling class."[135]

1955, hundred years after the Battle of Caseros, was considered by an important part of the population as the year when the country was once again "freed from a tyranny." Just like in the XIX century Juan Manuel de Rosas and his regime were defeated so the country was able to follow the path of liberalism, the putsch headed by general Lonardi against Juan Domingo Perón in September 1955 had as objective, the return of the country to its liberal and constitutive tradition. The Lonardi's moderate politics of just a restoration of democracy without Perón and a return to the constitutional normality expressed in the words *ni vencedores, ni vencidos* was soon replaced by the revanchist core of the armed forces represented by Isaac Rojas and general Pedro Aramburu.

Helen Nichols is an example that allow us to see how Jehovah's Witnesses experienced 1955:

"We could not be out at night to make back-calls nor to conduct book studies. From the roof we could hear the fighting just at the edge of the city, some five or ten blocks away. During the day, we went out to witness and when I spotted a policeman on the street I would walk up to him and tell him why our group of five or six was going from door to door. With that he would know that we had nothing to do with the revolution, and so we were not bothered."[136]

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[134] Portantiero, "Clases dominantes y crisis política en la Argentina actual", 77.

[135] Ibidem, 88.

[136] *1972 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 104.

The main concern of Jehovah's Witnesses after the fall of Perón was resumed in the question: "Can we have assemblies and meet together in Kingdom Halls?"[137]

According to Portantiero, the new social actor in the struggle for a hegemonic role in Argentina made its appearance a couple years after 1955, during the Developmentalism program of Arturo Frondizi's presidency. It was, the monopolist, foreign and associated with the imperialism, capital. Developmentalism outlined the importance of an industrialization of the country. The doctrine was based on the diagnosis that the main problem of countries like Argentina was its dependence on the exportation of the primary sector of economy, agriculture and mining. It was necessary to develop the industrial sectors and, in order to do that, the fundamental characteristic of Frondizi's government was the investments of foreign capitals. These capitals were concentrated in specific areas like oil production. In a very short period of time, the country reached a goal that was unthinkable in the previous years: self-sufficiency. A second highlight in the economics of those years took place in the petrochemical, iron and steel industry, whose major example was Somisa. Finally, there was a boom in the automobile industry that triplicated its production in just three years with the opening of ten new manufacturing plants. Kaiser, General Motors and Ford were the heading companies in an area that was able to increment its production in 80 percent during the period 1958-1961. The wave of investments was also encouraged by the Kennedy's administration. The Alliance for Progress, created in 1961, responded to the political changes that the region had experimented with the Cuban experience. In order to fight against Communism, it was necessary to eradicate poverty which was its breeding ground. Capital investments in the countries of the region would help to develop its productive forces generating an increment in the occupation and lifting the population out of poverty.[138]

Developmentalism was also the scenario where two new social forces emerged: the Establishment and the trade union bureaucracy. Frondizi failed in his attempt to unify the different sectors of the bourgeoisie, the national capital, the agrarian bourgeoisie and the monopolist capital. The way to hegemony of this last one implied to sacrifice part of the interests of the other sectors. Frondizi was unable to satisfy the establishment, the representative of the monopolist capital, and he was also incapable to satisfy the trade union bureaucracy, the Armed Forces and the political parties.

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[137]Ibidem, 105.

[138] Gerchunoff, Llach, *El ciclo de la ilusión y el desencanto*, 249, 252, 258, 271, 254.

After 1955, Jehovah's Witnesses continued with their underground activities. They were encouraged to keep using the "Kingdom Halls" but no identification sign had to be put at those places. In 1956, small underground assemblies were celebrated at different places. In the city of La Plata the attendance was of 300.[139] The Perón's decree of 1950

"prohibited public meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses as well as their preaching activity. However, the Watch Tower Society's branch office was not closed. (…) The authorities allowed the Witnesses to continue their activity without any great difficulty. Nevertheless, government officials often enforced the ban by canceling an assembly or by closing a Kingdom Hall. At times, the Witnesses also faced arrests and harassment when they had meetings in private homes or when they shared in their public ministry."[140]

In December 1957 it was planned a national convention to be held at *Les Ambassadeurs* hall in Buenos Aires. Four Jehovah's Witnesses were in this occasion "detained by the police, fined and given a suspended sentence of one year. (…) They were accused of holding an illegal meeting because they hadn't obtained due police permission."[141] The case was taken to the justice because it was considered a violation to the civil rights guarantee in the Argentinean constitution. On March 14, 1958, the judge failed in favor of the four Jehovah's Witnesses. They were "freed, exonerated, and eight articles of the Public Meetings Edict were pronounced illegal."[142]

With the arrival of Frondizi to the presidency, the Jehovah's Witnesses saw an opportunity to regain their legal status. They prepared a seven-page letter with a résumé of the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses, which was sent to "all legislators, editors and deputies, as well as judges, in Argentina."[143] One year later, with the help of Jehovah's Witnesses of the region, 322,636 signatures were obtained and Charles Eisenhower requested an audience with Frondizi, request that was denied. The next action was a worldwide campaign where "more than 7,000 letters from all over the world" were sent to the Argentinean government" asking for religious liberty and freedom of worship for Jehovah's Witnesses.[144] According to Eisenhower, in one of his visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cults:

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[139] *2001 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 157.

[140] Ibidem, 155, 156.

[141] *1972 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 109.

[142] Ibidem, 110.

[143] Ibidem

[144] Ibidem

"We requested that he consider our case since religious freedom is guaranteed by the Argentine constitution. On one of these occasions he took us to a room where there were several bookcases filled with these thousands of letters that had poured in from all over the world asking for freedom of religion for Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina. The comments of this individual were that 'it was impossible to open and read all of the letters, but he was really amazed that someone would write from as far away as the Fiji Islands regarding freedom of worship in Argentina. Although the government's view remained negative, the answer being decree 416, in 1959, which upheld the former 1950 decree 351, a very fine witness was given to those in power in Argentina."[145]

During the government of José María Guido, successor of Frondizi, we can see the first attempt of an alliance between a bureaucracy formed by technocrats and advisers of the foreign capital, the Establishment, and the armed forces. This attempt could not succeed due to a scarcity of force and maturity. As a matter of fact, the politics of the ministry of economy, Federico Pinedo, could be seen as one of the last offensive of the traditional oligarchy in 1962. The traditional political parties, representatives of the national capital and the agrarian bourgeoisie, still had enough muscle to reappear and they came back to the power in 1963, when Arturo Illia assumed as president of the nation.[146]

After this first attempt, the new political-military elite formed by the Establishment and the armed forces would finally succeed to reach the power in 1966 and would try to establish an ambitious program of modernization of the country that was baptized "Argentinean Revolution." The visible faces of the monopolist capital were Juan Carlos Ongania, the head of the putsch that dismissed Arturo Illia from the presidency, and Adalbert Krieger Vasena, minister of economy between 1966 and 1969. Trying to follow the path of Brazil, where the military putsch of 1964 consolidated a regime that responded to the interests of an industrial-military oligarchy, the putsch of 1966 came to resolve the organic crisis in the social-political level.[147] The monopolist capital increased its predominance in the economic level, "the visible face of the new period of foreign investments were the buying of Argentinean enterprises."[148] Besides the automobile industry, the foreign capital had also an important presence in two more areas: tobacco's industry and banking sector.

Guillermo O'Donnell defined both, the Brazilian and Argentinean, military regimes with the term: bureaucratic authoritarian states. The main characteristic that distinguished them from other authoritarian regimes was its social base: the large bourgeoisie. This kind of regimes were different

[145] Ibidem, 111.

[146] Portantiero, op. cit. 89.

[147] Ibidem, 85.

[148] Gerchunoff, Llach, op. cit., 328.

from the traditional forms of political domination in the region which were always based on the oligarchy and the transnational capital concentrated in the primary economic activities. They were also different to the populist regimes, like Peronism, that were supported by a nationalist and anti-oligarchic combination based on new industrial factions, a middle class in expansion and a popular class incorporated in politics. They were different from fascist regimes whose base was a bourgeoisie much more national and were also alike a political party. The political subject of these new regimes in Latin America were the armed forces. The bureaucratic authoritarian states were looking for the reestablishment of the order in society and the normalization of the economy throughout an exclusion from politics of popular sectors that were previously activated. Reestablishment of the order was the response of the "Argentinean revolution" to the question: What is to be done with the people? Citizenship, democracy and political parties were suppressed. This exclusion can also being seen in the economy field where the capital accumulation pattern benefits the huge oligopolistic units of private capital. They used a nationalist, rationalist and technocratic rhetoric that served to legitimize politics directed to the transnational interests and depoliticize the treatment of social problems.[149]

The regime came to solve the problem that Argentinean society were dealing with since 1955. "Inflation, scarce economic development, high social divisiveness, corruption, sectorial selfishness, subversion, "Argentineans' skepticism," "lack of spiritual cohesion" and "lack of representation" of the civil organizations. In three times, the economical, social and political, the *Onganiato* wanted to "modernize" and "take up again the destiny" of the nation.[150]

Unlike the "Brazilian miracle," the economical success of the Bureaucratic Authoritarian State, the Onganiato failed in accomplishing its aims. Both regimes had to face with social difficulties and the resistance of different social actors. In 1968, those who were affected by the political economy of the regime in Brazil increased its fight with student and workers mobilizations, the consolidation of a civil opposition to the regime and the appearance of the guerrilla. The response of the regime was an increment of the authoritarian measures to fight against the opposition which allowed a consolidation of the model.[151] In Argentina, there was no consolidation of this model, the opposite forces still had the sufficient strength to obstruct the plan of the large bourgeoisie and its representatives, the Establishment and the armed forces. The spearhead of this

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[149] O'Donnell, *El estado burocrático autoritario*, 57-59.

[150] Ibidem, 88.

[151] Portantiero, op. cit., 106, 107.

counteroffensive of the working class were, according to Krieger Vasena, "the best remunerated workers of the country," those of industrial belt of Córdoba.

According to Juan Carlos Portantiero, the *Cordobazo* was a new phase of Argentina's history, the social structure entered in a "revolutionary situation" produced by an "organic crisis."[1] The manifestation of this crisis in the ideological and cultural level was the emphasis of the here and now. Horacio Tarcus defined this manifestation with the term "absolute present." A term that makes allusion to "an orgiastic excitation climate" of a "radical immediacy" from "here and now."

> It is an attitude characterized by a tense expectation. It is always ready waiting for the proper moment […] "It only waits the critical conjuncture of the events and that the concatenation of the circumstances coincide with the ecstatic concern of his soul." The human redemption is only possible throughout a catastrophic and revolutionary act. The distance between the existing order and the new order, between Topia and Utopia, disappeared. The historic époques are understood according to the proximity of the final day like epochs primed with meaning.[153]

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin analyzed the concept of aura in connection with the works of art. He gave particular attention to the *Hier und Jetzt des Kunstwerks,* "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be." The relevance of the here and now, *Hier und Jetzt*. is a characteristic of this understanding of time as an "absolute present." Benjamin defined in this essay the term aura as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be."[154]

In May 29, 1969, the city of Córdoba saw one of the most important mobilization in Argentinean history. Around 10:00 a.m., the mobilized workers came out from the factories of IKA-Renault, Transax, Thompson Ramco, ILASA, División Planta Matrices (Pedriel), Fiat and other metallurgical enterprises. During their march, more and more people came together to support the protest. Due to a first confrontation with the police, Máximo Mena, a worker of IKA-Renault, was murdered and it unleashed a generalized reaction. Cars, stores and administrative places were burned by the protesters so the police lost the control of the situation. At the evening, the centre of the protest moved to the student neighborhoods of *Alberdi* and *Clinicas*. The army had to take participation with the incorporation of snipers to stop the riot. A day after, the city of Cordoba was a city controlled by the protesters. The balance was: several properties destroyed, 12 dead and 93

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[152] Portantiero, op. cit., 83.

[153] Tarcus, "La secta política. Ensayo acerca de la pervivencia de lo sagrado en la modernidad".

[154] Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, 13, 19-25.

wounded people. These days remained in history as the *Cordobazo.*[155] Remembering those days, Luis, one of the students who participated in the riot, stated:

"the *Cordobazo* became in a romance figure which was present in all the facts, it determined a very strong mystic (…) which lead to a bloody holocaust in the student sectors who went to die and also to kill, it is true. It started to be the romance idea of class conscience. In our individual consciousness of those who were living the process, it settled down: here is what the people want (…) I believe that the *Cordobazo* speeded up that, it settle up urgent periods, it was possible to delay the process no longer and they took the risk, they looked incredible things, to actions where everything was at risk not only in a personal level but also in the organizational one and there the group could disappeared… there was an emergency, a hurry (…).[156]

The best remunerated workers of the country, who in other countries were assimilated to the economic, social and political order, were in Argentina the avant-garde of a working class that with the *Cordobazo* started a process of mobilization and radicalization.[157]

1969 has also to be understood in the cultural context of a reaction against a "traditionalist block" during the 1950s and 1960s that was manifested in different cultural changes, manifested in a global scale, like the appearance of rock and roll, the youth culture and the sexual liberation. The Liberation Theology was an attempt that tried to transform this cultural pressure in a breakdown formula. Altamirano stated: "the convergence between Catholic militancy, Marxism and revolutionary Peronism, was tremendously explosive."[158] Decades of repression exerted through a violence that came from above produced a radical reaction, "a violence from under."[159]

The *Cordobazo* was a product of a social more than a political crisis with a general state of mobilization in the popular classes. Using a definition of Lenin, Portantiero categorized the historical process opened in 1969 as a "revolutionary situation" where "the masses are pushed to an independent social action." It was a pre-political stage of the social movement that looked for a political expression while the ruling classes looked for the way to control this mobilization.[160]

Exactly one year after the *Cordobazo*, *Montoneros* appeared on the scene by kidnapping and executing Pedro Eugenio Aramburu. One of the main figures in the putsch that removed the first

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[155] Gordillo, "Protesta, rebelión y movilización", 352-355.

[156] Ibidem, 349.

[157] Basualdo, Victoria; Jasinski, Alejandro, "La represión a los trabajadores y el movimiento sindical, 1974-1983, in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 248.

[158] Terán, *Nuestros años sesenta*, 122, 151-171, quoted in Campos, *Cristianismo y revolución: el origen de Montoneros, violencia, política y religión en los 60,* 61.

[159] Vezzetti, *Sobre la violencia revolucionaria*, 61.

[160] Portantiero, op. cit., 94.

government of Juan Domingo Perón. “People of the Nation. The conduction of *Montoneros* inform that today at 7:00 am Pedro Eugenio Aramburu was executed. May God our Lord has mercy of his soul. Perón or death! Long live the Homeland!” So was the mode how *Montoneros* made its appearance in the public sphere. In an interview made in September 1974 for the magazine *Causa Peronista*, Mario Firmenich and Norma Arrostito described in details this operation performed by, what Lucas Lanusse called, the myth of the twelve foundational members.[161] In the preface by Felix Luna to the third edition of the history of *Montoneros* written by Richard Gillespie, the Argentine historian stated: “What we have in the next pages is the history of a madness. A madness that at the beginning took control over the spirit of handful young men stemming from the upper middle class and then infected the whole Argentine society.”[162]

The name in itself, *Montoneros*, was shaped by history. At the time of the foundation of Argentina as a national state, in his inaugural speech to Congress, the General Julio Argentino Roca stated:

“Anyone who has attentively followed the progress of this country has been able to notice, as you Honorable Gentleman know, the profound economic, social and political revolution that the iron road and the telegraph bring as they penetrate the Interior. National unity has been assured by these powerful agents of civilization; they have conquered and exterminated the spirit of the *montonera*”[163]

The words *Montonera* and *Montoneros* came from the term *montón*, a rabble. So it was a pejorative form of referring to “the wild horsemen of the now-vanquished irregular armies.” Such armies were operating in the national territory since the independence from Spain in the decade of 1810. Later on in the century, when the forces of the economy started to be centralized around Buenos Aires, its harbor and the global market ruled by England; the *Montoneros* represented throughout their rebellions the popular discontent of the federal forces in the interior of the country. They were led by the *caudillos* of the interior whose most famous names were Angel Vicente Peñaloza, Felipe Varela and Ricardo López Jordán.[164] The consolidation of the national state under the administration of president Roca did not only signified the military defeat of the *Montoneras* but also its symbolic reverse. The liberal historiography founded by the writings of Bartolomé Mitre was not a friendly place for the *Montoneros*. It would be recently in the 1930’s, along with the crisis of the agro-export

[161] Lanusse, *Montoneros*, 33.

[162] Felix Luna, introduction to third edition of Gillespie, *Soldados de Perón.*

[163] Quoted in Gillespie, *Soldiers of Perón*, 2.

[164] Ibidem, 1,2.

model, that a positive image of the *caudillos* and the *Montoneros* emerged in the writings of authors who were considered part of a revisionist historiography. *Montoneros* was a name, then, that made reference to the popular sectors which were historically discriminated, subjugated and defeated by the upper classes and specially by the landowner "oligarchy." The image that they had from the Argentine society was based on a central premise: "violence establishes the political, social and economic order where the whole society relies on." The three major sicknesses of Argentina were: "economic dependence, social injustice and proscription and repression to Peronism."[165]

Richard Gillespie explained the importance of this name

> "They presented themselves as "part of the final synthesis of a historical process which goes back 160 years." Their historical revisionism portrayed Argentine history in terms of a constant conflict between two major political currents: "on the one hand, that of the Liberal Oligarchy, clearly anti-national and *vendepatria*; on the other, that of the People, identified with the defense of their interests, which are the interests of the Nation against the imperialist attacks of each historical situation." In the past, the national-popular current had been present in "the struggles of San Martín's Army and the *montonero gauchos* of the last century, in the heroic struggles of the immigrants who gave their lives for the formation of our unions, and in Yrigoyenist nationalism." More recently, the current had been expressed by Peronism, "the only expression of national unity in 160 years." Its liberating enterprise had been interrupted in 1955 because "power was shared with the enemies of the people and with the traitors. But that counter-revolution purified our ranks, leaving the Movement composed almost exclusively of the popular forces."[166]

Since 1970, the year of its appearance, *Montoneros* really attracted the attention. Even they were not the only guerrillas operating in the country, the magnitude of its first actions was so spectacular that it not only made them renown but it also made gain popularity and sympathy in the Argentine society. Just a couple weeks after the execution of Aramburu, another striking action was performed by the organization when they took over the town of *La Calera*, some 17 kilometers away from the city of Córdoba. They captured the local bank, police station, and town hall. 1970 was also the year when *Montoneros* got its first martyrs. On September 7, Fernando Abal Medina and Carlos Gustavo Ramos were ambushed by the security forces and lost their lives in William Morris, province of Buenos Aires. From then on, September 7 became the "Day of the *Montonero*".

The transformations experimented within the Catholic Church of those years played an important influence in *Montoneros*. According to Michael Löwy, "the genesis of liberationist Christianity" was a combination of several factors and changes that took place in the periphery of the institution in the last years of the 1950s.

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[165] Ollier, *El fenómeno insurreccional y la cultura política*, 18.

[166] Ibidem, 100.

it was the development since World War II of new theological currents, particularly in Germany (Bultmann, Moltmann, Metz, Rahner) and France (Calvez, Congar, Lubac, Chenu, Duquoc), new forms of social Christianity (the worker priests, Father Lebret's humanist economics), a growing openness to the concerns of modern philosophy and the social sciences.[167]

These new orientations were legitimated by the Vatican II Council (1962-65) and the pontificate of John XXIII (1958-63). In Latin America, this *aggiornamento* of the Church occurred simultaneously with structural changes. 1950s was a period of a strong industrialization of the continent under the rule of multinational capitals, a process that was named "developed underdevelopment." It "fostered greater dependency, deepened social divisions, stimulated rural exodus and urban growth, and concentrated a new working class as well as an immense "pooretariat" in the larger towns." Along with the Cuban Revolution and its effects in the continent, the breeding ground was there for the emergence of the "Church of the Poor."[168]

The popes John XXIII and Paul VI had a new approach regarding social matters. The encyclical *Pacem in terris* written by Paul VI on April 11, 1963, recognized that "Marxism contained good elements, worthy of approval." Another important text written by Paul VI was the *Populorum progressio.* It "pointed out the importance of equality in christian doctrine of live. In order to do that, it was mandatory to struggle for the development of the peoples condemning "man's greed for power and wealth.""[169] The creation of the *Third World Priests Movement* in 1967 and the Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Medellin, Colombia in 1968 were decisive in the adoption of this ideas in Latin America but also in a reformulation in matter of violence, "there was a difference which was introduced between the "unfair violence of the oppressors" and the "fair violence of the oppressed.""[170]

In 1974, Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian Jesuit who studied at the Catholic universities of Louvain and Lyon, published his *Liberation Theology, Perspectives*. His central idea was the rejection of the Greek conception of dualism. There were not two realities, one "temporal" and other "spiritual." There were either two times, one "sacred" and other "profane." So the Kingdom of God and the redemption of mankind have to take place in this one reality, in this human and temporal history. He took the account of Exodus as a proof that "the construction of the human

[167] Löwy, *The War of Gods*, 40,41.

[168] Ibidem.

[169] Gillespie, op. cit., 53.

[170] Ibidem, 54, 55.

being by himself through the historical political struggle." The redemption of the Jewish people was different to the redemption of Jesus on the stake which was individual. The liberation of a whole enslaved people was a communitarian and public act. The poor ones gained in this conception a whole completely role as the one they previous had had. They were not more the object of pity or charity, they were empowered and this empowerment made them agents of their own emancipation." [171]

Rubén Dri was one of the active member of the Third World Priests Movement between 1966 and 1974 in the *Mariano Moreno* neighborhood in Resistencia, capital city of the Chaco province. During this time, his interpretation of the Gospel suffered a radical transformation that can be illustrated with his version of God's Kingdom. There were three understandings about what is the kingdom of God. The first one was a spiritual interpretation. Jesus said: "my kingdom is not part of this world," so it was in another reality, a superior one and it had nothing to do with this world ruled by the devil. A second interpretation emerged in the middle age and it was based on the "City of God" conception exposed by Agustine of Hippo. The church started to play a role in the political sphere until the point reached in XI century, under the administration of the pope Gregory VII, when the pope started to have the legal authority to excommunicate the emperor. After the Reform, and specially after the bourgeois revolutions, the kingdom started to be associated exclusively to the church until a point that both concepts represented the same. In the interpretation made by Rubén Dri, none of these historical conceptions on God's Kingdom were accurate. The beatitudes described in the gospels of Matthew and Luke were the key to recognize who were the true subjects of God's Kingdom. Several times, they repeated that blessed were the poor ones. So for Rubén Dri, the poor people were the subject of this kingdom.

"The prophets and Jesus know perfectly that poverty is the result of a political struggle that has to be surpassed throughout a struggle where Yahweh takes part. We are talking of a political struggle in the whole amplitude of the meaning that goes from the dialogue and skillful use of the circumstances until the violent confrontation. In this context it is necessary to place the role of Moses in the liberation of the Jews from the slavery and poverty under the ruling class in the Egyptian State: the discussions of Moses with the Pharaoh and his advisers, the action of the plagues, the action of the angel of extermination, the fight of the armed people in their way to the promised land, the action of all the prophets confronting the king, the riches and the priests; the action of Jesus in favor of the sick people, the sinners, in a nutshell, in favor of the poor ones against the riches, the priests, the Sadducees, scribes and pharisees. In Jesus' praxis there are dialogues, heated discussions that sometimes reached a high level of violence, the use of underground activities, constant displacements, appearing and disappearing, popular mobilization, occupation of the temple, expulsion of the merchants, in brief, the use of the most various methods of fight. Jesus was completely convinced that

[171] Löwy, op. cit., 46.

poverty was the product of an oppressive social practice that was necessary to surpass. In this task, the poor ones constitute the true subject, they were the builders of the kingdom."[172]

Carlos Mugica, a member of the Jesuit Order and Third World Priests Movement, was another central actor in these changes among the church. Around 1964, he met Fernando Abal Medina, Carlos Gustavo Ramus and Mario Eduardo Firmenich. They were students at the National School of Buenos Aires and were part of the Catholic Student Youth. The first two had already participated in a violent right-wing organization known as *Tacuara* when they were fourteen years old. The members of *Tacuara* were fans of the Spanish Falangism, wore the Maltese Cross and held "secret initiation rites in the darkest recesses of the *Chacarita* cemetery in Buenos Aires. They were known by their anti-communism and anti-Semitic discourse and actions.[173] Mugica's teachings were centered in the figure of a poor Christ. To love and fight for the poor people against injustice was a central part of Christianity. He used to take these three young men to work with him in the slum of Retiro in Buenos Aires or even in a trip that he made to Tartagal in the North province of Salta in February 1966.

In 1967, Abal Medina, Ramus and Firmenich broke out with the Catholic organizations and went underground founding the *Camilo Torres Command*, an organization whose main ideas were: Peronism, Socialism and armed struggle. In this new stage, Juan García Elorrio joined them. He was the "son of upper-middle-class parents of the Catholic Right who after a couple experiences and contacts with Marxist ideas became a "revolutionary Peronist." He made his appearance in September 1966, when the first number of the magazine *Christianity and Revolution* came out.[174]

Christianity and Revolution was formed by different groups that came from Integralism, Nationalism and catholic humanism. It lasted thirty numbers and had an edition between 2,000 and 5,000 copies. The review was a kind of "ideological trench" that attacked the regime of Ongania in the source of its legitimacy, the myth of catholic nation.[175]

The number 25 of *Christianity and Revolution* had an article that explained the "Causes and responsibilities in the Aramburu's execution." Based on the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Hernán Benítez stated:

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[172] Dri, *La utopía de Jesús*, 146.

[173] Ibidem, 48,49.

[174] Ibidem, 56,57.

[175] Campos, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 9, 18.

"The Gospel never justifies violence. Of course not, neither the one of the exploiters nor the one of the exploited. But Christ, to redeem the World from sin, "made himself sinner." He did not redeem it from an uncorrupted stratosphere. "He made himself sinner" does not mean that he was guilty of committing a sin but that he became incarnate in a vital or existential environment corrupted and ruled by the sin. So the fact that we christians can not canonize violence as something objectively good, not even, as I said, the violence of the exploited, does it mean, I ask myself, that it is forbidden for us to become incarnate, as Christ, in the redeeming and liberating violence of the oppressed? Of course not! We can and we must become incarnate in it."[176]

Those who within the Catholic Church criticized severely the "redeeming violence" were seen and defined by this sector as pharisees while the model of Jesus was followed by examples like Camilo Torres and the guerrilla priests. Like Christ who sinned to save mankind and was criticized by his contemporaneous, these priests were following a corrupted path, violence, in order to reach the same goal that Jesus had.[177] The new theology found in *Christianity and Revolution* proposed a kind of revisionist history as an alternative to the liberal and traditional historiography. In this alternative the subject assumed a role much more relevant due to fact that he was the one who was able to realize his own history.[178]

During 1960s, the political leftist spectrum entered in a process of revisionism and renovation. The two important leftist parties until that moment were the Socialist and Communist. Both of them suffered important transformations and splits in its interior. One of the new organization that emerged from the interior of the Socialist Party was the *Partido Socialista de Vanguardia* (Argentine Socialist Party) in 1961. On the other hand, the Communist Party maintained in those years the need of going through two phases in order to reach the revolution. They were the national democratic and the socialist one. In order to accomplish the first phase, it was necessary to conform a national front together with the progressive sectors of the national bourgeoisie. Within the first splinter groups were those who edited the magazines *Pasado y Presente* (1963-1965) and *La Rosa Blindada* (1964-1966). As result of these changes there was an approximation to the popular nationalism and in some cases to the guerrilla warfare and the lost of relevance of the traditional leftist parties. In this whole new panorama, which is usually denominated the *new left,* the discussions between the different sectors were ruled by two principal

[176] Ibidem, 79, 80.

[177] Ibidem, 81,82.

[178] Ibidem, 204.

questions: the role of Perón and Peronism was the first and the guerrilla warfare as a political alternative the second one.[179]

In 1965 the Workers' Revolutionary Party was founded and after its first split, in 1968, the ERP, People's Revolutionary Army. emerged. The Peronist Armed Forces were also created in the same year. One of the main newness introduced in the leftist field was the importance of the subject in the revolutionary changes. According to Ernesto Guevara, the Cuban revolution had shown that it is not "necessary to wait until the conditions are proper for the revolution, the insurrectionist *foco* can create the conditions."[180] The anthropological consequences of this valorization of the role of the individuals would be manifested in the hero's figure. A hero that would have to sacrifice his life and give everything up for the noble cause. Since its first publications, the revolution was understood by the ERP as a revolutionary war, a concept that transformed the activists into militants.[181] They had a double conception of the enemies. Firstly, the enemy was the bourgeoisie, the capitalist society and the imperialism; secondly, related with the Argentinean political culture, the enemy was fundamental and specifically the repressive agents of the State.[182] Between 1972 and 1977, the ERP performed 62 executions. 36 were performed against the repressive forces, 17 against entrepreneurs, 4 against traitors and 3 against trade unionists.[183]

Hugo Vezzetti saw the subjective interpretation of the "revolutionary situation" of the 1970s condensed in the expression pronounced by a guerrilla's cadre: "we have seen God's face."

"Erotic metaphor, employed in this testimony, does not make reference to the power but to the passion: "a mode of devote oneself to the politics as one devotes to sex." It remains as a mark, it is said, one does not want another thing: the utopia, that is to say, "to pursuit an excessive objective." God, somehow, comes into this equation and so the formula is an extraordinary condensation of politics, erotic drive and religion that offers a starting point for an exploration of the revolutionary violence's complex conceived as a human action that touch the untouchable."[184]

As a result of an explosive cocktail of catholicism, Marxism and revolutionary Peronism, this "revolutionary situation" made real the powerful symbol of the *Hier und Jetzt*, the here and now, the "myth of revolution." Quoting Mariategui: "The force of the revolutionaries does not lie in their

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[179] Tortti, "La nueva izquierda argentina. La cuestión del peronismo y el tema de la revolución" in Tortti (ed) *La nueva izquierda argentina (1955-1976)*, 22,23,27.

[180] Carnovale, *Los Combatientes*, 32.

[181] ibidem, 70.

[182] ibidem. 122.

[183] ibidem. 143.

[184] Vezzetti, op. cit., 131.

science; it lies in their faith, their passion, their will. It's a religious, mystical, spiritual force. It is the force of Myth." Revolution moved the motivations "from heaven to earth."[185]

The "imaginative dimension of politics" started to play a main role. Horacio Tarcus pointed out that usually the social sciences analysis underestimate this imaginative level assigning to it just an instrumental and secondary function. However, in some political or social structures, the imaginative dimension play "a decisive and even constitutive role."[186] The presence of a "dominant wish" for a radical change, "for a better world, for a world that does not exist but will soon come gives an immediately perceptible picture" to experience, or at least "a directly intelligible set of meanings." The utopians of the XIX century were conscious of the power and importance of this wish. Fourier and Saint Simon, for example, emphasized the role of the passions acknowledging that "a social order is built on passions more than on mere ideas."[187] Even when from a materialistic conception of history, E.P.Thompson has warned us about the danger of underestimating "the powerful subjective motivations."[188]

Hugo Vezzetti pointed out the appearance of a new revolutionary paradigm, a change in the leftist tradition that until that moment had had as one of the most essential value for the revolution: the strategic intelligence. Lenin, Trotsky and Mao were among the most outstanding examples. With the Cuban revolution and the figure of Ernesto Guevara, the strategic intelligence as most important value was replaced by the courage and sacrifice.[189] In his quest for the cultural origins of the *Hombre Nuevo* conception, Vezzetti recurred to the crossover between the image of Guevara's death in Bolivia and the martyrdom of Christ reflected for example in the film *La Hora de los Hornos* directed by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in 1968 to show the biblical genesis of this idea. The new man came to replace the old man, Adam, who had fallen in sin. The new man is regenerated and reborn by faith united to Christ by baptism.[190] The *Hombre Nuevo* (new man) was "a border figure between the present and the future, between life and death, between the individual and collective bodies, between the warrior and the ascetic. He was the horizon figure: guide, promise and finally impossibility."[191]

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[185] Löwy, Michael, op. cit, 17,18.

[186] Tarcus, op. cit.

[187] Ibidem.

[188] Thompson, *The making of the working class*, 49.

[189] Vezzetti, op. cit., 142.

[190] Ibidem, 174.

[191] Carnovale, op. cit., 183.

The *Hombre Nuevo* par excellence was Ernesto Guevara, he himself elaborated a theoretical conceptualization of the new man. In a letter sent to the weekly publication *Marcha* of Montevideo on March 1965 he spoke about the Socialism and the man in Cuba. The individual was defined here as "an uncompleted product" due to the fact that "the defects of the past are still in the present and it is necessary an eradication work." The new man was attached to the constructive process of Socialism so the construction of the new man was running parallel to the development of a new economic structures. The final goal was to liberate mankind of the alienation. "Throughout his individual and collective conscious participation" in the processes, he "will feel how both, the individual and the collective ones, are closely interdependent and so he will achieve the conscious of his social being which means the breaking of the alienation chains and the full realization of the human creature."[192]

The actions, the "what is done," were a "long road filled of difficulties."

"Sometimes one lose the route and has to go backwards, other times by going to fast we separate ourselves of the mass or by going to slow we feel the nearby breath of those who are come on our heels. In our ambition of revolutionaries, we try to walk as fast as we can, opening roads, but we know that we have to be nourished by the mass and at the same time the mass can only move forward more quickly if we encourage it with our example."[193]

Finally, the instructions, the "what is said," the education was provided by the party which was the living example. The cadres have to give a demonstration of industriousness and sacrifice. The party was the channel to leave the mass into the revolution.

The experience of Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara in Cuba represented to many the undeniable possibility of a revolutionary via in Latin America. There were an established method, the guerrilla *foco*, and the conviction of an inevitable future war.[194] In the writings of Guevara, since the Cuban Revolution the American continent had the task of creating a second or third Vietnam. It was not a political option, it was a duty. Martí said: "It is criminal to provoke war in a country where it could be preventable, and it is criminal who do not provoke it when it is inevitable." This last was the situation in the continent. They were forced to fight. "There was no choice but to prepare and decide to fight." The history was determining this moment, capitalism was in its last phase, its imperialistic phase. The elements that compound this apocalyptic situation were: "The horrible exploitation conditions in the continent, the development of the revolutionary

[192] Guevara, "El Socialismo y el hombre en Cuba," in *Obras Completas*, 170, 172, 173, 174.

[193] Ibidem, 173.

[194] Vezzetti, op. cit., 62.

consciousness in the crowds, the worldwide crisis of imperialism and the universal fighting movement of the subjugated peoples."[195] According to Fidel Castro, the duty of the revolutionaries was to take advantage of these conditions and take the initiative instead of waiting for a miracle. Once that the revolutionary process has begin, the proletariat has to hit and hit tirelessly.

The objective was, in Guevara words: "the sacred redemption of mankind."[196] Something that could only be reached by the destruction of imperialism in the hand of a proletarian internationalism where each rebel army fight for the same cause in Vietnam, Venezuela, Guatemala, Laos, Guinea, Colombia, Bolivia or Brazil. "Each drop of blood shed in a territory whose flag is the one of the country where one was born, is an experience picked up by the survivors that later will be applied in the fight for the liberation of his fatherland."[197] It was clear that such a sacred cause, the redemption of mankind, shaped the lives of those who were fighting under the idea of sacrifice.[198]

The foundation of the first *foco* in the province of Salta in 1963 made by Jorge Masetti is a clear example that illustrated how early the Cuban model started to have influence in Argentina. The *Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo* was compound of no more than 20 people. They did not accomplish any operation and when they were broken up by Gendarmerie some of them were already executed by the same group. In a meeting that Ernesto Guevara had with the first guerrilla experiment in Argentina, he stated:

"Well, here you are, you agreed to join us and now we have to prepare everything, but since now you have consider yourselves death. Here the only certainly is death; maybe some of you will survive, but consider that since now you are living for nothing."[199]

Héctor Jouvé, one of the integrant of the *Ejército Guerrillero del Pueblo* defined the Cuban Revolution as a fresh air, it "shook the floor under our feet, […] It was a time when we were, somehow, preparing the war influenced by the international process: Cuba, Algeria, Indochina, Mozambique, Angola…"[200]

The commentary made by Rodolfo Galimberti about the war is very illustrative

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[195] Guevara, "Crear dos, tres…, muchos Vietnam es la consigna" and "Guerra de guerrillas: un metodo" in *Obras Completas*, 341-370.

[196] Ibidem

[197] Ibidem

[198] Ibidem

[199] Belzagui, *No Matar. Sobre la responsabilidad*, 11.

[200] Ibidem, 12.

"The war is the strongest thing that exists. It constructs the most serious ties between human beings. It is not only misery, physical suffering, impiety, cruelty […] It also was solidarity, affection, the love of the ones who are with you […] War is the biggest act of love that exists. What kind of men accept to sacrifice his life, the ones of his family, of his loved ones, for an idea?"[201]

The guerrilla experience was founded in the belief of sacrifice. The sacrificial example was supposed to lead the society in a revolutionary process. Rubén Caletti defined it as a "phenomenology of the gun," a kind of fetishism where the guns represented values like heroism, strength and technology. The political scenario and the social subject were subordinated to this phenomenology that brought a kind of alternative reality.

"Where there no was a revolutionary theory, it introduced a handful of brave men. Where there no was French colonial army, it established a national military occupation. Where there was no party to direct the weapons, it promised to found it. Where there was no Cuban example to imitate, the Che will do it."[202]

The guns gave a kind of divine nature, they believed themselves as "revolutionary gods" able to decide "who was right, who was a sinner, who was corrupted, who was an infiltrator, who could live and who could die."[203]

The sacrifice's main problem was not the life of the one who sacrificed himself. This action was in the basis of the military action. In any combat, it was not the number of casualties that decides the defeat but the loss of the objective. Even the own death must not mean a defeat when the objective can still be reached. Death was a defeat only when there is no more a cause or final objective to keep fighting for.[204] After the death of Carlos Capuano Martínez, one of the founder of *Montoneros*, in 1972, his epitaph stated:

"He knew that if he died, it would be at the hands of the enemies of the people, of the enemies of Peronism, which is the most beautiful form of dying. It makes the comrades proud; it distresses our hearts, but makes us happy to know that sacrifice is no mere gesture but a form of life. Just as Evita, the owner of our revolutionary tenderness, would have wanted it… You incarnated, little Carlos Capuano Martínez, standing upright with gun in hand in the midst of this Peronist Revolution, the purest essence of our people."[205]

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[201] Quoted in Vezzetti, op. cit., 133.

[202] Caletti, "La revolución del voluntariado", 7-9 quoted in Vezzetti, op. cit., 88.

[203] El Kadri, Dialogos en el exilio, p. 22 quoted in Vezzetti, op. cit. 95.

[204] Vezzetti, op. cit., 145, 146.

[205] ibidem, 118.

In the letters that Rodolfo Walsh wrote after the death of his daughter, we find a good example of the perception of life that those who were dedicated to the guerrilla had.

"Dear Vicki: […] The day that you were murdered, you turned 26. The last years were very hard to you. I would like to see you smile one more time. I will not be able to say good bye, you know why. We died persecuted, in the darkness. The true cemetery is the memory. There I keep you, I rock you, I celebrate you and maybe I envy you my dear. I spoke with your mother. She is proud in her pain, sure of having understood your short, hard, wonderful life.

In an analysis focused on the "perception, sensibility and action schemas that allowed the emergence of a revolutionary culture of violence", Vezzetti reached the conclusion that

"In the main motivation of the revolutionary violence there was the combination of a political myth (violence exacerbates the contradictions), an epistemological myth (it reveals the true nature of the power relationships) and a moral myth (it activates the subjects and get the best out of them: courage, sacrifice and heroism)"[206]

This utopian horizon that was opened in the ideological superstructure of the Argentinean society by the Cuban revolution maturated during years. The intellectual and artistic activities were displaced by politics. Many painters quitted painting, writers quitted writing because the end and the appearance of a new time were near. A new time when art and philosophy will be no more because they have been realized in the world.[207] The revolution, this "powerful subjective motivation" was compound by different elements. It was a mixture of Catholicism, Peronism and Marxism that emerged with the *Cordobazo* and would only be stopped and controlled years later with the most tremendous violent methods in Argentinean history.

Since 1969, the Establishment was isolated from the armed forces. Ongania and Krieger Vasena were replaced by the duo Levingston and Ferrer who tried to redirected the "Argentinean Revolution." The national capital tried to accomplish a "nationalization" of the economics based in a coalition among the armed forces, the trade union bureaucracy and the organizations that represented the national bourgeoisie. The political parties and the popular sectors were excluded of this project. This attempt failed soon and the general Levingston was replaced by the general Lanusse in March 1971.[208]

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[206] Vezzetti, op. cit., 171.

[207] Terán, "Intelectuales, cultura y política" in De *Utopías, catástofes y esperanzas*, 82.

[208] Portantiero, op. cit., 108.

Even when the popular class was the spearhead in the defeat of the Onganiato, the beneficiaries of it were the trade union bureaucracy and the political parties that represented the non monopoly bourgeoisie, a sector which was "at the economical level on the defensive, but at the political level on the offensive." According to Portantiero, this veto capacity was the political distinguishing characteristic of Argentina.[209] The defeated armed forces had to negotiate with the political parties and the trade union bureaucracy the *Gran Acuerdo Nacional* (Great National Agreement). Since then on, their function was concentrated and limited to the term order. Their duty was to control the social mobilization throughout violence and to guarantee the security against the "internal enemy."[210]

Between 1969 and the presidential elections in March 1973, there was an increment in the radicalization, mobilization and politicization of the working class.[211] During 1971, the guerrilla organization that performed more military activities was the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). *Montoneros*, on the other hand, started a process of fusion with other guerrillas. Since the death of Abal Medina and Ramos, the one responsible for the reorganization and direction was José Sabino Navarro. *Montoneros* undertook three other organizations at this time: the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP), Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) and *Descamisados* (Shirtless-ones). The sympathy and popularity of the first years could be explained, according to Gillespie, as the result of an "armed propaganda." They performed a kind of "psychological warfare rather than an attempt to engage in an armed confrontation with enemy units." The aims of the organization were at that moment gaining the support of the society and also the accumulation of financial, logistical and military resources. They wanted to show that the military regime was vulnerable and create a "climate of insecurity and social disorder." José Sabino Navarro was murdered in July 1971 and was replaced by Mario Firmenich in the leadership of *Montoneros*. In August 1972 it took place one of the most striking set back to the guerrillas. In a coordinate operation in the prison of Rawson within *Montoneros*, ERP and FAR, the organizations lost sixteen of its members in what was later known as the "Trelew Massacre."

In January 1972, the Justicialist Party was recognized as legal by president Lanusse. On March 11, 1973, Héctor Cámpora, the FREJULI candidate, won the election with 49,59 per cent of

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[209] ibidem, 106.

[210] ibidem, 112.

[211] Basualdo, Victoria; Jasinski, Alejandro, "La represión a los trabajadores y el movimiento sindical, 1974-1983, in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 248.

the poll.[212] On May 25, 1973, Héctor Cámpora assumed as President of the Republic. The very same day, the Government applied the amnesty promised in campaign to political prisoners. The prisons of Rawson, Villa Devoto, Córdoba, Resistencia, Chaco, Salta and Ezeiza released its prisoners who were received by their relatives and comrades. The arrival of Cámpora to the presidency on May 25, 1973, was seen for many as the chance to introduce the social and political revolutionary changes that they were fighting for. It was a society that was mobilized for a change. This intensive time, known as the *Primavera*, lasted just a couple of months. With the new Government, a new division arose between the Peronist organization and those of Guevarist nature that did not trust in the popular element of the new administration. The Guevarists continued then with their militarism while *Montoneros* decided to get more involve in politics.

From July 1973 to July, 1, 1974, during the presidencies of Lastarini and Juan D. Perón, a war between the different factions among the Peronism where the same Perón played the role of arbitrator took place. Perón took over the Presidency on October 12, 1973. Immediately after, he started a fight against what he considered the Marxist elements that had been infiltrated in his movement, meaning *Montoneros*. The main figure that incarnated this attack was the Social Welfare Minister José López Rega. The definitively breakdown between Perón and *Montoneros* took place on May 1, 1974, when they were expelled from *Plaza de Mayo* by Perón.

After Perón's death, the presidency of María Estela Martínez de Perón, from July 1, 1974, to March 24, 1976, was marked by a political, economical and social crisis. The mobilized society headed by the *juventud maravillosa*, a combative trade unionism and intellectuals related with the development modernization were replaced by the Peronist traditional trade unionism, the minister of social welfare, José López Rega, and extreme right sectors.[213]

On June 20, 1973, the Ezeiza massacre had already shown the violence level that the fight among factions in the Peronism had. Different sectors of the Peronist right fired against *Montoneros* and the FAR in the ceremony organized to welcome Perón to the country. 13 people died and 365 were wounded.[214] This episode marked the beginning of a war between the right and the left wing among Peronism.

Two days after the election of Perón for presidency in September 1973, *Montoneros* murdered one of the most important member of Peronist old guard, the general secretary of the

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[212] Ibidem, 106,107,113, 115.

[213] Merele, "El proceso represivo en los años setenta constitutionales" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 106.

[214] ibidem, 108

CGT, José Ignacio Rucci. The reaction in the government was a depuration of the party, a purge from "Marxist infiltration." The provinces of Formosa, Córdoba, Mendoza, Santa Cruz and Salta were took over because they were considered "provincias montoneras." A series of new laws were sanctioned but without doubt the most important measure was taken by López Rega who formed an organization whose first manifestations could be seen in the Ezeiza manifestation, the Triple A (Anti-Communist Alliance). It was a death squad directed from the Social Welfare Minister. The lieutenants were the commissioners Juan Ramón Morales and Rodolfo Eduardo Almirón. Another of the important names of the Triple A, was Alberto Vilar, member of the Federal Police command. On 21 November 1973 they performed an attack with a bomb to the senator of the *Partido Radical*, Hipólito Solari Yrigoyen. They started then a set of attacks to prominent victims that included Rodolfo Ortega Peña, Horacio Chávez, Julio Troxler, Atilio López, Silvio Frondizi and Alfredo Curutchet. There was a division in the interior of the government about the measures to be taken to resolve the problem of political violence. The first one was the one of Perón and the General Iñiguez who thought that the same party had to generate its "antibodies." The second stance was the one of Benito Llambí and José López Rega who were in favor of a police intervention. This last one consolidated at the end of 1973.[215]

On 6 September 1974, Mario Firmenich announced the "return to resistance" of *Montoneros*.[216] "To mark the 16 September 1955 anti-Peronist coup in 1974, 1,500 people were mobilized nationally to carry out about 100 operations which included molotov attacks on targets with imperialist, oligarchic, and repressive associations, plus leafleting, occupations, and lightning demonstrations."[217]

With the reincorporation of Alberto Vilar and Luis Margaride to the police institution, the Triple A was systematized. Both, Vilar and Margaride, had been expelled of the force in May 1973 by the government of Cámpora. Their reincorporation generated a great malaise in the forces and even the chief of the federal police, Miguel Ángel Iñiguez, renounced and was replaced by Vilar.

A series of kidnappings in 1975 gave to the organizations important incomes that allowed them reinforce the armament resources and also improve the public image by distributing part of the booty in poor sectors. A chain of *ajusticiamientos,* vengeance killings, were also performed. In November 1974, Alberto Vilar "was blown to pieces as he steered his motor launch away from a Tigre boat dock." In the list of *ajusticiados,* General Jorge Esteban Cáceres Monié, Brig. Gen.

[215] Merele, op. cit., 120

[216] Ibidem, 164.

[217] Ibidem, 179.

Cesario Angel Cardozo, José Mario Russo, Juan Ramón Morales, Adolfo Dibatista and José Miguel Tarquini were included.

There were three "tactical military offensives launched in the 1974-76 period. The first one took place in the first months of 1975. It "consisted mainly of armed propaganda and the settling of accounts with Peronist "traitors" and members of security apparata." In July the second campaign was launched that "involved blocking roads, establishing temporary control over urban areas, and attacks on police stations". Between August and October, the Armed Forces were attacked for the first time. The third campaign was announced at the end of the year.[218]

It is important to take into consideration this social context in order to understand how the DIPBA constructed the figure of the subversive. In the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, the DIPBA dedicated specially interest to their origins: "Coming from the Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses have gone much far away than their forerunners on dogmatic radicalism."[219] One of the main victim of this activism, according to the DIPBA's reports, was the Catholic Church. "They take advantage of the vacuum led by the Catholic Church in those sectors that are marginalized of the Church due to different circumstances and who do not practice any religion or just believe in God but not in the Church."[220] In the report about the "recruitment campaigns" in *La Matanza* (Buenos Aires), it is said that they were carried out in a very evasive and selected way, concentrated in neighborhoods with poor cultural level and away from the urban centers." They went "house to house at times and days when the men are working and from neighborhoods to neighborhoods, never in the same place in order to avoid being expected and detected." The "propagandistic tactic" is:

"Usually they go by two, good dressed (like robots) with a bag full of books, brochures and flyers. They preach that either the Bishops or the priests understand the Bible, not even the Pope, because they are the only ones who can understand this book. In this aspect, they are reiterative and in some cases (which are very common) unbearable due to the fact that if a person was not strong enough in his negative, they come back several times in the day."[221]

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[218] Ibidem, 193.

[219] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo 837. Departamento General de Inteligencia, Legajo Roca N°15, Asunto: Actividad de los Testigos de Jehová en la calle 117 N°1698, La Plata. Octubre de 1982.

[220] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo 258. Factor religioso, N°182, Asunto: Testigos de Jehová, Origen DCI, 18/9/1987

[221] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo 854. Factor Religioso, Legajo RMA N°23. Testigos de Jehová-Antecedentes, La Matanza. 27 de Marzo, 1981.

Another interesting opinion that we find in the archives of DIPBA related to Jehovah's Witnesses was the analysis made by Patricio José Maguire, who directed the magazine *Informaciones sobre Masonería y otras sociedades secretas* since 1981. Maguire defined the Jehovah's Witnesses as a "destabilizing sect." They were an instrument of the American imperialism used to control the lower classes in the Latin America countries. "In the same way that every "marxist sect" was directed by the Russian imperialism, the CIA was behind the multitude of religious sects and specially behind the Jehovah's Witnesses." The main target of Jehovah's Witnesses was to convert "the most disinherit classes" in countries were the Catholic Church controlled the popular classes. The origins of "the sect" went back to Henry VIII of England and the formation of the Anglican Church. Later on this church was divided in two sections, the one ruled by the king and the one conformed by the dissenters. In 1608 the sect of the Baptists emerged from this second group and then were divided in 1659 with the formation of the Quakers. From the Quakers came the Adventists, whose foundation was in 1845, and from this last ones, the Jehovah's Witnesses who were defined as "the most lethal and courageous enemy of the Church." From a theological perspective, Maguire considered them as "the most leftist and radical wing of the millenarianist protestant movements." Their proselytism was directed to the familiar nucleus and their cadres were their principal "weapon." They "were trained with the most modern psychological and propaganda technics. They were teach to constantly smile, good customary and to persist in their objectives. It was clear for Maguire that behind the Jehovah's Witnesses were not only the CIA and the United States but also the international Zionism and the Jewish capitals. In many parts of the article he made allusion to this Jewish connection but one of the most interesting is the one that pointed out to the social objectives of Jehovah's Witnesses activities. Maguire stated that their objective was to "democratically domesticate the people, to terrorized them with the calamities that would come before Jehovah's arrival and in this way to influence psychologically in the people to be more easily dominated by the Anglo-Saxons and Hebrews." The article stated that nobody in Argentina payed attention to the expansion of "the sect" in the country and even the Supreme Court had failed saying that their activities were legal and they should not be "persecuted."[222]

In 1977, the magazine *Cabildo* exposed similar arguments to justify the ban of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1976. According to *Cabildo*, the "principles and dogmas of the Jehovah's Witnesses were clearly subversive, satanic and perverse, anti-catholic and anti-national." Basically, the attitude that they had in reference with the "fatherland, patriotic symbols and sovereignty" was "a marxist

[222] Maguire, Patricio Jose, "Testigos de Jehová. Una secta desestabilizante" in *Informaciones sobre Masonería y otras sociedades secretas*, Ediciones de los talkers Edigraf S.A., in DIPBA archive 30-35.

posture sifted with biblical quotations." They had already "undermined number of Catholic families" with a similar "preaching as the one of the Communist."[223]

The connection between Jehovah's Witnesses and the working class was also pointed in the studies on the German case by authors like Michael Kater. He described "the resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses as opposition of socially and economically underprivileged circles."[2] Eberhard Aleff alluded to their social behavior as a "nonpolitical escape of the underprivileged."[2] For Walter Struve, Jehovah's Witnesses were "class-conscious workers" and here is the reason why "the seriousness of the measures of persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses could have resulted to a certain extent, from their affiliation with the working class."[226]

Werner Cohn considered Jehovah's Witnesses as a "proletarian movement", a term he also used to make reference to Nazism and Communism.

"Following Toynbee, I use the term "proletarian" to describe a movement which lives in, but is not of, a given society. (…) When Marx described the working class as "proletariat," he wished to indicate that it lives and works in, but does not partake of capitalist society. He spoke of the worker's "alienation" from the conditions of his work; he advocated a workers' organization that would function within, but look beyond the present society."[227]

For Cohn, the main characteristic of this kind of movement was its eschatology.

"Examination reveals that, despite their many obvious differences, the ideologies of the various proletarian groupings show the most striking resemblances: invariably they emphasize eschatology. A cataclysmic end of the world, with a millennium following, is prophesied by all the movements."[228]

Cohn explained the social behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses according to two concepts: adolescence fixation and anomie. Explaining the first term, Cohn stated:

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[223] Cersósimo, 132.

[224] Garbe, 507.

[225] Ibidem.

[226] Ibidem.

[227] Cohn, "Jehovah's Witnesses as a Proletarian Movement," 282.

[228] Ibidem, 283.

"it has been frequently noted that there is an adolescent quality about proletarian movements: there is a romantic selflessness that has contempt for the grownup's concern over economic security; there is an all-important "cause" whose internal life takes the place of family relationships."[229]

On the other side, Cohn made use of the term Anomie taken from Durkheim

"Where -as in England and the Scandinavian countries- anomie is at a minimum, the proletarian movements are small and are composed of individuals whose personal difficulties loom exceptionally large; where social anomie is dangerously acute - as it was in the Weimar Republic and is now in France and Italy- the rank and file of proletarian movements are not restricted to the emotionally disturbed."[230]

For Cohn, the "proletarian movements," which were characterized by a structure based on three "typical proletarian mechanisms: irregularity, onion form and mystification" were elements to be fight against. Actually, the popularity of such groups relied on problems of the contemporary society which had to resolve in order to avoid the formation of such groups.

"Ultimately, the roots of all proletarian movements lie in contemporary society. We might speak of the proletarian's desire to secede from the community, but we know that this desire is always conditioned by spiritual and material deprivations. The strength of proletarian movements within a country is a good barometer of the cohesion and permissiveness of its social structure. Instead of merely hating and despising these movements, we might take them as a challenge to reorder things so that none will need to take flight into proletarian fantasies."[231]

Cohn's negative critique is a good example of those authors whose conceptualization is based on just some elements of Jehovah's Witnesses, usually those which have resemblances with other groups, which are better known in social sciences.

E.P.Thompson, on the other side, was one of the few authors who were able to reflex and indicate the contradictions and complexity of organizations like Jehovah's Witnesses. For Thompson, the "turning away of the kingdom without to the kingdom within" was a withdrawal which was "crucial to an understanding of the 18th century and of a continuing element in the later working-class politics."[232] This withdrawal was

[229] Ibidem, 297.

[230] Ibidem, 298.

[231] Ibidem.

[232] Thompson, op. cit., 30.

"the defeat of the Levellers in the Commonwealth. When the millennial hopes for a rule of the Saints were dashed to the ground, there followed a sharp dissociation between the temporal and spiritual aspirations of the poor man's Puritanism. Already in 1654, before the Restoration, the General Association of the General Baptists issued a manifesto (aimed at the Fifth Monarchy men in their midst) declaring that they did not "know any ground for the saints, as such, to expect that the Rule and Government of the World should be put into their hands" until the Last Judgement. Until such time it was their portion "patiently to suffer from the world… than anywhere to attain the Rule and Government thereof. At the end of the Commonwealth, the rebellious tradition of Antinomianism curved back from all its claims. Where the ardent sectaries had been zealous -indeed, ruthless- social gardeners, they were now content to say: let the tares (if tares) alone with the wheat."[233]

Thompson saw in this "patiently suffer from the world" an attitude with a double contradictory function. It "enabled them to combine political quietism with a kind of slumbering Radicalism -preserved in the imagery of sermons and tracts and in democratic forms of organization- which might, in any more hopeful context, break into fire once more."[234] Following Weber classical analysis, Thompson pointed out that

"faith in a life to come served not only as a consolation to the poor but also as some emotional compensation for present sufferings and grievances: it was possible not only to imagine the "reward" of the humble but also to enjoy some revenge upon their oppressors, by imagining their torments to come."[235]

Due to this particular way of thinking, the groups analyzed by Thompson were

"caught in a tension between opposing tendencies, both of which led away from any popular appeal: on the one hand, the tendency towards rational humanitarianism and fine preaching -too intellectual and genteel for the poor; on the other hand, the rigid Elect, who might not marry outside the church, who expelled all backsliders and heretics, and who stood apart from the "corrupt mass" predestined to be damned."[236]

The remarks made by Thompson about John Wesley and the Methodists are specially important in our analysis. On the one side, Wesley wrote that Methodists "do not impose … any opinions whatever. (…) One condition, and one only, is required, -a real desire to save their souls."[237] On the

[233] Ibidem, 29, 30.

[234] Ibidem, 30.

[235] Ibidem, 34.

[236] ibidem, 34,35.

[237] Ibidem, 38.

other side, “once within the Methodist societies, the converted were subjected to a discipline which challenges comparison with the more zealous Calvinist sects.”[238] They had to

“abstain from marriage outside the societies; to be distinguished by their dress and by the gravity of their speech and manners; to avoid the company even of relatives who were still in “Satan’s kingdom.” Members were expelled for levity, for profanity and swearing, for lax attendance at class meetings. The societies, with their confessional band-meetings, classes, watch-nights and visiting, made up a lay order within which, as Southey noted, there was a “spiritual police” constantly alert for any sign of relapse. [239]

However, Thompson did not consider that everything was negative. He underlined a constantly “tension between opposing tendencies” which had positive effects in the working class.

“On one hand, a religion which found a place for humble men, as local preachers and class leaders, which taught them to read and gave them self-respect and experience in speaking and in organization: on the other hand, a religion hostile to intellectual enquiry and to artistic values, which sadly abused their intellectual trust.”[240]

For Thompson, the complexity of these groups was so relevant that in several opportunities he made reference to it

“We might suppose, from some popular accounts, that Methodism was no more than a nursing-ground for Radical and trade union organisers, all formed in the image of the Tolpuddle martyr, George Loveless, with his “small theological library” and his forthright independence. The matter is a great deal more complex. (…) Thus, at this level Methodism appears as a politically regressive, or “stabilising,” influence, and we find some confirmation of Halévy’s famous thesis that Methodism prevented revolution in England in the 1790s. But, at another level, we are familiar with the argument that Methodism was indirectly responsible for a growth in the self-confidence and capacity for organization of working people.”[241]

As we may see, in the analysis made by Thompson we find a constantly allusion to the contradictions between authoritarian and democratic tendencies, between radical and regressive forces and between liberty and control.

Besides these seesaws, there were two elements which were underlined by Thompson as essential in the making of the English working class: the communitarian tradition and millenarianism. Thompson noted about the communitarian ideas

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[238] Ibidem.

[239] Ibidem, 38.

[240] Ibidem, 40.

[241] Ibidem, 41,42.

"In the first place, there is a continuous thread of communitarian ideas and experiments, associated with the Quakers, Camisards, and in particular the Moravians. It was in Bolton and Manchester that a ferment in a small group of dissident Quakers culminated in the departure, in 1774, of "Mother Ann" and a small party to fund the first Shaker communities in the United States; forty years later Robert Owen was to find encouragement in the success of the Shakers, whose ideas he popularized in secular form."[242]

The same characteristics Thompson saw in the dissidents groups, specially the communitarian ideas and millenarianism, can be found in Jehovah's Witnesses. If we want to understand the social pattern of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina and Germany, it is fundamental to take into consideration the idea that they considered themselves as an international brotherhood. They were part of an elected group among all nations, which was the foundation of a new society: The new world society.

Finally, I will like to make a remark about the periodization. Since 1950, Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in Argentina. The central manifestation of this ban was the impossibility to celebrate meetings in public spaces. In several occasion, as we have seen, when they tried to do it, they were interfered and some case those who organized it were detained. Anyway, the central of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina was not closed. The question is then, what was the novelty of the ban of 1976? Can we understand the repression against Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina when we concentrated exclusive in the facts after March 1976? The importance of this question is not limited to this specific subject, but to the whole historical process.

As we can seen, since 1950 there was a continuity in the politics against Jehovah's Witnesses. If it was a democratic like Frondizi or a dictator like Ongania made no difference in the repression to Jehovah's Witnesses. Marina Franco had already pointed out a "fluid temporality" that ended up in 1976.[243] In comparison with Communism that made allusion to specific party, organization and ideological corpus, the Subversion concept was much more ethereal and hard to be defined. As we tried to show in this chapter, there was similarities between Jehovah's Witnesses and other "subversive" groups like Montoneros, Marxists and the Movement of Priest for the Third World. One of this resemblance was the common idea of an absolute present. They all were living in a historical turning point that demanded their full engagement. Jehovah's Witnesses were not, however, neither Peronists nor Marxists nor Third World catholics. They were considered suspicious by the intelligence services due to their activism in the lower classes. In conclusion, we

[242] Ibidem, 47.

[243] Marina Franco, *Un enemigo para la nación*, 18.

cannot understand the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses during the last military dictatorship if our periodization starts in 1976.

We find here a particularity in the periodization. The continuities are usually marked between the dictatorship of 1976 and the previous years 1955-1976, sometimes 1930-1976. In the case of the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses, the continuity is between 1950 and 1976, between the first Peronism and the Junta of 1976. We can add this proscription to the other continuities that historians in recent years have pointed out between 1950s and the Junta of 1976. Both dictatorial and democratic administrations maintained the ban to this religious group. Moreover, it was the administration of Juan Domingo Perón which considered the Jehovah's Witnesses as a danger to the national institutions and denied his legalization, long before 1976 when the Junta decided to ban it. Mariana Franco and Boholasky suggest that in order to question the typical division between Peronism and Antiperonism as element factor, it is important to see the repressive measure of the Peronism and its similitudes with the militaries.[244]

Pontoriero remarked the importance of the term war in the perspective of the agencies since 1955. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau had pointed out that one of cultural effects of the war is a change in the conception of time. The way how humans conceive the time varies depending on the circumstances. The intensity of time lived by Jehovah's Witnesses as we may see in the case of Luis Miguel, the case quoted at the introduction of this chapter, was not a singularity of Jehovah's Witnesses. Several social actors of the Argentina society were also imbued in a similar conception of time due to the perception of being in the middle of a war, as this chapter has tried to show. A perception that had to be understood as global and that had as central element, at least in Latin America, the year 1959. Year of the Cuban revolution. Considering this year is also a way of considering the global determinations on the Argentinean historical process, something that Franco and Bohoslavsky have already pointed out by remarking the importance of incorporating the global and regional historical processes and its effects in the configuration of the repressive forms in Argentina.[245]

[244] Franco, Boholavsky, Elementos para una historia de las violencias estatales en la Argentina del siglo XX, 218.

[245] Ibidem, 212.

4. A “Mystical Subversion”

Luis was baptized at a circuit assembly on Sunday April 17th, 1976. It was at the stadium of Club Atlético Moron, in the locker rooms due to the strong raining outside. Since he started to study the Bible with the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the parents of Luis were very troubled. They were complete against the fact that their son enter in what they considered a problematic organization. They were catholics and, additionally, the father of Luis, as architect, had a very important function among the armed forces. He was part of the civil personal that worked together with the military hierarchy. Therefore he was quite acquainted that the militaries considered Jehovah’s Witnesses as a dangerous sect. As a matter of fact, the father of Luis went to visit monsignor Bonamin to see if he was able to help him to “save” his child. Bonamin described the Jehovah’s Witnesses as a sect, using the arguments that had been elaborated among the armed forces in the previous decades to 1976, when the militaries gained their experiences in dealing with the members of this religion. [246]

“A Jehovah’s Witness is a subversive. He may not know it but he is. And he is one of the worst subversive, because he is a mystic.”[247] With the putsch of 1976, the main objective of the militaries was the defeating of the “subversive elements” of the nation. As we may see in this quote taken from the *Military Vicariate Bulletin*, Jehovah’s Witnesses were considered part of the “subversive elements” that were threatening the country. According to the Vicariate, Jehovah’s Witnesses were not a Christian religion because they denied the divinity of Christ, the holy trinity and the existence of hell. Their theology was considered incoherent and “did not deserve a serious treatment or an honest and scientific discussion.” Therefore, they were a “sect and not a religion” that practiced a “fanaticism and not a cultured form of religion.” The strong point of Jehovah’s Witnesses, its “attractiveness strength” was located in certain emotional poles like “the messianic pacifism of Isaiah and the condemnation of pervert and diabolic society.” They used doctrines that could not be proved or reasoned in a logical way. These doctrines were just “strength loaded stimulus,” something that made quite difficult the pastoral task with these people who ended up to be “practically insurmountable minds.” Moreover, it resulted in the fact that every Jehovah’s Witnesses became into a “dangerous minister.”[248]

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[246] Interview to Luis Miguel on January 4th, 2024.

[247] *Boletin del Vicariato Castrense* N°56, Abril 1978, 25.

[248] Ibidem, 24.

The Argentinean military Vicariate was the result of a Concordat between the Vatican and the dictatorship headed by Pedro Eugenio Aramburu. It was created in 1957 with the objective of taking care of the "spirituality" of the armed forces. This institution played twenty years later a noteworthy role in the "hard years" of the dictatorship, at an ideological and also practical level. The years post-1955 were also a time when the problem was not only the ban to Peronism (*desperonización*). It also took place "a redefinition of the security forces in the context of the Cold War."[249] The emerging of the subversion as concept corresponds to these years.

The armed forces were threatened by Jehovah's Witnesses because they said *No*. They refused to be drafted. They were a living critic to the obligatory military service, a cornerstone of the nation and armed forces during the XX century in Argentina. The Vicariate stated that the refusal of these "insurmountable minds" to be drafted, to use weapons, to donate blood or to recognize fatherland, authority or flag showed "their inhumanity and riskiness because they opened up the borders to an universalism that would have the form of the strongest threat: communism."[2] The main sophism of this "sect" was to transfer precepts and advises of the moral and religious order to the social and political one. For example, two of the favorites passages employed by Jehovah's Witnesses in order to justify their point of view regarding the military service were Isaiah 2:4, and Micah 4:3. Those texts were taken out of its context, a biblical context characterized by holy wars. Based on different biblical quotations, on the other side, the Vicariate proved "the armed arm of the fatherland accomplished a function of love: to defend the family and those who are not able defend themselves to whom we are united by a deep loving bond."[251] Love was the main reason to fight, love for these people, "love for justice and love for the reestablishment of peace against unfair aggressors. "Their pacifism" was even in contradiction with the God of the Bible, Yahvé or Jehovah, whose name means Lord of the armies. Furthermore many scholars said that the Holy Scriptures are the book of the Lord's fights."[252]

Based on the observations, made by the Federal Germany representative in the *Apostolat Militaire International* that took place in July 1971, about the problem of conscious objection in West Germany in comparison with the Democratic Republic of Germany where there was no consideration to this subject, the Vicariate pointed out what kind of problem this matter represented:

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[249] Marengo, *Lo aparente como real*, 69.

[250] *Boletin del Vicariato Castrense* N°56, 24,25.

[251] Ibidem, 20.

[252] Ibidem

"The conscious objection could be a dissolution instrument, part of the great plot which is the universal revolution or subversion to break in a new way the western and Christian world."[253]

The Vicariate was created in 1957 throughout the concordat: *Acuerdo sobre Jurisdicción castrense y asistencia religiosa de las Fuerzas Armadas.* Even when generally the political ideology of the *Revolución Libertadora* is considered liberal, the place that they gave to the church should not be underestimated. After a short period under the conduction of Lonardi, Pedro Eugenio Aramburu took the responsible as president *de facto*. It was in his government that the first concordat signed between Argentina and the Vatican took place. It was on June 28, 1957, with the Pope Pius XII. The Military Vicariate was created due to this concordat. Antonio Caggiano was designed vicar in 1958 and as sub vicar his trusted man, Victorio Manuel Bonamín.

The influence of the Church in the military sphere can be seen in the names assigned to the different units of the three armed forces. The infantry was named Immaculate Conception, the cavalry, Saint George; the artillery, Saint Barbara; the unit of engineering, Saint Ignatius of Loyola; the unit of communications, Archangel Saint Gabriel; the units of arsenals, Saint Martin of Tours; the administrative unit, Saint Matthew; the one of military bands, Saint Cecilia; the one of military justice, Saint Alphonsus Maria de' Liguori; the one of physical education, Archangel Saint Michael; the veterinary unit, Saint Francis of Assisi; the health service, Saint Luke the Evangelist; the one of administration, draftsmen and translators, Saint Mark the Evangelist; the units of drivers and motorcyclists, Saint Christopher; the mountain troops, Saint Mary of the Snows; the one of intelligence, Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist; and the one of air force, Our Lady of Loreto.[254]

Mario Ranalletti has pointed out that since 1955 there was a process of indoctrination where the dehumanization of the enemy was a characteristic of the militaries. This indoctrination was leaded by the Argentine subsidiary of the French *Cité Catholique*, Jean Ousset, Carlos Sacheri, Jordán Bruno Genta, Julio Meinvielle and the congregation Christ the King. In general, politics and religion were to this people part of the same reality. They were convinced, like the French philosopher Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, that "every politic error was a theological error fulfilled."[255] If Meinvielle, Bruno Genta, Sacheri and Ousset were the theoretical and ideological

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[253] Ibidem, 22, 23.

[254] Bilbao, Lede, *Profeta del Genocidio*, 17.

[255] Ranalletti, "Aux origines du terrorisme d'État en Argentine. Les influences francaises dans la formation des militaires argentins (1955-1976)", 45, 47.

references, Victorio Manuel Bonamin was the responsible of the propagation of these ideas among the armed forces.[256]

Bonamín, who was born in Rosario on October 19, 1909, and was ordained as priest on July 7, 1935, said about Communist

"Take the invention of God; replace "God" for "substance," "spirit" for "dialectics," grace for work, original sin for property, redemption for social revolution, Christ for proletariat, Church for political party, Pope for General Secretary, Bible for Communist Manifesto, dogma for order of the party, hell for capitalism, heavens for classless society, etc., and you will have the same turn inside out. The most wonderful best ever copy! That is what a writer called Karl Marx did."[257]

In the analysis of Victorio Bonamín, one of the problem of the Catholic Church in Argentina was not to understand the role and intentions of General Perón. The Church never understood that Perón was prepared to favor Catholicism. "He was with the trade unionists not because he was red, but because he wanted to take the red out of trade unionists' minds." Perón was the responsible of removing Communism from Argentinean unionism. In a conversation with Monsignor Di Pasquo, Perón stated: "Yes, Monsignor, I made Communism, I made Communism to conquer men but it was a necessary tactic. You have to scratch our workers, scratch our workers and you will find the red inside. We have to scratch in order to discover the red and then take it away." According to Bonamín, even when Perón had some Fascist characteristics that he had learnt in the period he was military observer in Italy, it was just a method. Perón's main skill was "*sentir el pueblo* (to feel the people)." Something that Monsignor De Andrea tried to do before, following the exhortation of Pope Leo XIII, *allez au peuple,* but could not due to the social structure of the Church whose majority of priests came from the wealthy class. "Before Perón, the Church was with the oligarchy," he stated. The opposition of the Jesuits and the oligarchy led to the failure of De Andrea intentions. Intentions that were later accomplished by Perón in 1943. It was regrettable for Bonamín, "we had lost the opportunity."[258]

The army chaplaincy taught its conception of authority in contrast to the Rousseau's idea that the sovereignty relies on the people, even the people has the right of exerting a measure of sovereignty, the main source was God and the obedience was first directed to God. This kind of

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[256] Bilbao, Lede, op. cit., 57.

[257] Ibidem, 74,75.

[258] Interviews to Victorio Bonamín made on November 14, 1988, and March 15, 1989, in Funes, Santa Fe. Source located in José Pablo Martín, *Ruptura ideológica del catolicismo argentino*, 60,61,103-105.

ideas were used to indoctrinate a huge percentage of Argentinean society throughout the conscription. The *Boletin de la Inspección General de Instrucción del Ejército* made it clear that the chaplaincy objective was to provide to the young men in the first year of conscription with the "antibiotics that allowed them to be immunized against Communism."[259]

The origins of this political milieu have to be tracked down to the decade of 1930-1940, that started with the military putsch of José Felix Uriburu in 1930 and ended up with a new military putsch in 1943. Those years were witness of the emergence of a mature nationalism that had been developing in the previous decades as the consequence of the crisis in the liberal structure of the country. Those years have been considered as the time when a "long voyage made by the Catholicism to the center of the national myth" took place. A voyage characterized by a revenge spirit against the dominant laicism in Argentina during the first decades of the XX century. It was a Church involved in the creation of a Catholic world as an alternative to the modernity throughout its social actions and politics. For example, in 1931 the Catholic Action was created with the motto given a couple years before by Pius X, to "restore all things in Christ."[260]

Thomas Aquinas provided the theoretical and doctrinal corpus that came along with this restoration. A restoration manifested in the "myth of the Catholic nation." This myth provided an interpretation of the past, a diagnosis of the present and plan for the future. The whole Argentinean history was reinterpreted under a Catholic perspective that stressed a continuity between the Catholic monarchs, the responsible men of Argentinean independence, the constituents of 1853 and all those who had contributed to Argentinean civilization. Based on the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, it was a neo-Scholastic interpretation that compared the Argentinean society to a healthy body, the *pueblo*, that had to deal with a "virus" implanted from abroad. Liberalism was this virus. The present of the country was a critical present marked by a moral crisis. There was "a struggle between two Argentinas, the liberal against the Catholic one, the cosmopolitan and elitist against the national and popular, the *gringa* against the native one." The plan for a better future included a battle for the national essence, which was a catholic essence basically, against the foreign elements which also included the different protestant sects coming, for example, from the United States. A second important feature of this plan for a better Argentina was the corporative doctrine. Politics had to be based on the principle of harmonious collaboration between the different social classes

[259] Bilbao, Lede, op. cit. 14, 15.

[260] Di Stefano, Zanatta, *Historia de la iglesia argentina*, 367, 368, 387, 413, 414.

and not on the liberal principle of individuality and by no means on the Marxist principle of class struggle. Finally, the Spain of Franco was seen as a model to follow.[261]

The three main references of these ideas were Julio Meinveille (1905-1973), Jórdan Bruno Genta (1909-1974) and Carlos Alberto Sacheri (1933-1974). The renaissance of the Catholic Church during the decade of 1920s by the warmth of the critique to the liberal fundaments of the nation was the beginning of Julio Meinveille's intellectual career who was one of the teachers of the *Cursos de Cultura Católica* that started in 1922.[262]

"History is God's mind written on the time," wrote Julio Meinvielle in 1937. His philosophy of history was based on this theological idea. History was marked by the conflicts between "God's merciful love and man's misery, between God's city and man's city with the final triumph of God's city." These conflicts were incarnated in the struggle between three or four peoples throughout history. The pagan, Jewish, Christian and Muslin peoples. The Christmas of 800, when Charlemagne was enthroned by pope Leo III, was the moment when a sacred civilization emerged, the medieval civilization. However, along the time the Antichrist materialized by separating mankind from God. The estrangement started in the XVI with Luther's reform, continued with the French Revolution in 1789 and reached its summit in Russia in 1917. Protestantism, Liberalism and Communism were all part of the same problem, the alienation of mankind from God. 1917 introduced then an apocalyptic time when the three main biblical peoples would be involved in a final battle. The pagan people was represented by the National Socialist regime, the Jewish people by the communist Russia and the Christian people by the regimes in Portugal and Austria "and in top shape in the Christian State that had to emerge from a Spain that bleed." The element that allowed to characterize the Soviet regime as Jewish was not a religious political one, but rather it was the fact that it was a regime dominated by Jews.[263]

Julio Meinvielle was among the most important personalities who were related to the *Cursos*. His thoughts were specified in four books: *Concepción católica de la Política*, *Concepción católica de la economía*, *El Judio* and *Los tres pueblos bíblicos en su lucha por la dominación del mundo*. Inspired in Thomas Aquinas, he supported a medieval theocratic order. There were four main ideas: the first one is that the sovereignty comes from God and not from the people, second the moral and the legal order were not a human creation and third the organization of the city has to have the common good as its main goal. The main reference for Meinvielle were: the Thomist

[261] Ibidem, 434-439.

[262] Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y Antisemitismo*, 198,206.

[263] Meinvielle, *Los tres pueblos bíblicos*, 11, 42, 43, 56

interpretation of the Bible, the writings of Leo XIII and Pius XI, Berdiaeff, Barruel, Cochin, de Maitre and Le Play.[264]

The philosophy of history of Meinvielle stated that since the coming of Christ the world was divided in two forces. Everything that was not dominated by Christianity, was controlled by Judaism. The first ones have a primacy in the spiritual realm while the others on the material or carnal sphere. The medieval age was thousand years of Christian civilization. "The men had chilled out their passions and lived in peace with themselves and with their brothers". Everything was ordered according to the medieval hierarchy. This order was broke up by the Reform, the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution.[265]

In *El judío en el misterio de la historia*, Meinveille's objective was to explain the mystery of Judaism, something that could only be reached throughout theology, the science of God's mysteries, and not through psychology, biological or historical sciences. Buenos Aires, a great Babylon, was an example of the power possessed by the Jews. There was a confrontation between two peoples throughout mankind history, the Jewish and the Christian people. The whole human race had to choose between both of them, there was not middle place. The renaissance, the reform, the Freemasonry, the French Revolution, capitalism, liberalism and communism were all different stages in a process of "dechristianization of the world."[266]

His book *Concepción católica de la política,* published in 1936, became a classic reference book for many members of the army. It was a book that could be found in the bibliographies given by the instructors of the military school.[267] In this work, Julio Meinveille understood that Catholicism was "the communication between man and the untold trinity life." This communication transformed the Catholic man in a supernatural man, a man with a new life. All human activities had to be originated in this supernatural, untold and mysterious life. In other words, the metaphysics had to rule the real nature in which politics was included and politics had to be conducted in the direction of a superior aim. This metaphysics provided the "ontological principles" that allow to find an explanation to the facts. The "decomposition of the modern world" was the result of a lack of this kind of metaphysics. A modern world that was characterized by confusion due to the fact that it had become a festival of absolute phenomenons named "state, individual, liberty, sovereignty,

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[264] Lvovich, op. cit., 404, 405.

[265] Ibidem., 407,408.

[266] Meinvielle, Julio, *El judio en el misterio de la historia*, 73-101.

[267] Ranalletti, op. cit., 48.

revolution, equality, fascism, democracy, left, right and centre." Using Thomas Aquinas' ideas in the opuscule *De Regno*, Meinvielle pointed out what was the aim of the society.

"Due to the fact that the aim of this life which deserves to have down here the name of good life is the celestial blessedness, it is proper of the kings to look for the good life of the multitude because it is necessary to make them obtain the celestial happiness; which means that the king has to prescribe what lead to this aim and, as much as possible, forbid what opposes to it."

Based on these reasons, on these metaphysical basis, "politics in an ethic that has as fundamental law the assurance of the earthly common good to the families congregated in the social body."[268]

Among the names of those who, together with Julio Meinvielle, took part in the *Cursos de Cultura Católica* were César Pico, Leonardo Castellani and Juan Sepich. In 1936, Alberto Ezcurra Medrano emerged from this environment saying that the only successful way to combat the liberalism had to be more than political due to the fact that "to give a primacy to the politics over the spirituality meant to give primacy to human will over the reason and soul when world's order demands a will directed by a reason subject to God." Nationalism and Catholicism, then, had to be one and the national state had to be a catholic state also. Another important protagonist of this time was Gustavo Franceschi who directed the magazine *Criterio* between 1932 and 1957. From the pages of this publication, he promoted an authoritarian state based on a catholic ideology. He saw himself as the representative of the opinions of Vatican and Argentine episcopate. He was also very critical of Liberalism and hated the Communism but he was also critical of fascism and specially of the Hitler's State due to its paganism and racism.[269]

The military putsch of 1943 seemed to be the transmutation of the catholic nation myth into reality. The "military revolution" that took place on June 4, 1943, tried to put an end to the long liberal tradition and set firmly up the bases for a Christian restoration of the country, a restoration that was called *restauración argentinista*. Many members of the new government came from the Catholic ranks. One of the most exemplary cases was Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, the minister of justice and public instruction who reinstated religious education in public schools wiping off the tradition of the law 1420 of education. Another names related to this tendency were Federico Ibarguren, municipal commissioner of San Miguel de Tucumán, Alberto Baldrich, auditor of the Tucumán province, Santiago de Estrada, auditor of Tucumán University, Héctor Llambías, auditor of the philosophy and literature faculty of Cuyo University, whose auditor was the president of

[268] Meinvielle, *Concepción católica de la política*, 13, 34, 41.

[269] Lvovich, op. cit. 379, 395, 396.

Catholic Action of Mendoza Dr. Phitold, and also Jordán Bruno Genta, auditor of the National University del Litoral.

The symbolic scenery was also transformed. Ceremonies, Virgins, like the Virgin of Mercy or Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and crucifix invaded the public spaces. Even the reforms in the labor field introduced by the Colonel Perón were part of this restoration. This regime was the genesis of the first Peronism. The relationships between the regime and church were characterized by high levels of conflict. Even so the political coordinates of Perón regime, specially the social policies, were shaped by the church.[270]

Jordán Bruno Genta was an anarchist converted to catholicism for whom the only "virtuous body" in the society was the army. During the 1930s he gave different conferences in the military circles and ended up to be one of the counselors of GOU, the group that headed the putsch of 1943. After the fall of Perón in 1955, he asked the militaries to take action saying: "Being conscious of the mason and communist disintegration that already threat the same existence of our fatherland, we, as catholic, nationalist and hierarchical, take the fight for Christ and for the restoration of the fatherland in Christ." In the 1960s, Bruno Genta was called by the air force in order to contribute to the indoctrination of the members of this force. His book *Guerra Contrarrevolucionaria: doctrina política antisubversiva* became a classic reference for the instructors of the new militaries.[271]

At the end of 1974, Carlos Sacheri, the other great reference of this milieu was shot down by the ERP. On September 15, 1975, his book *The Natural Order,* which was prefaced by Monsignor Tortolo, was published. Sacheri was one of the disciples of Julio Meinvielle who based on the ideas of Thomas Aquinas explained that there were a supernatural and a natural order. Both of them showed the unity that existed in God. The natural order was previous to the existence of mankind so the human beings had to obey the rules of this natural order because by doing so they were obeying the order imposed by God. This order had several sides, a moral, social, economic and political one. In his book, Sacheri tracked down the origins of human modern way of thinking that did not respect neither this supernatural nor natural order. "The man had been mythologized, apparently converted in the final end and center of history," Tortolo stated. Following Aristotle, Sacheri announced that the natural order had four causes or principles: material, formal, efficient and final. The formal cause of the political society was order which was introduced by authority into society in order to obtain the common wealth which is the final cause.[272]

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[270] Di Stefano, Zanatta, *Historia de la iglesia argentina*, 446-449.

[271] Ranalletti, op. cit., 50.

[272] Sacheri, *El order natural*, foreword and 146,145,

In 1958, the problem around the university policies known as "*laica o libre*" led to a radicalization of some sectors of the catholic movement. In this context, the Tacuara Nationalist Movement made its public apparition. At the beginning, the group was compound by teenagers and young people stemming from patrician families educated in Catholic schools. Its first leader was Alberto Ezcurra Uriburu. Their model was the Spanish Falange of the JONS, they worshiped José Antonio Primo de Rivera and wanted to establish a catholic authoritarian syndicalist national regime. Their interest in the proletariat led them to participate in the occupation of the Lisandro de la Torre meat processing plant. This contact with the working class led to a split so the more conservative faction formed the *Guardia Restauradora Nacionalista*. In 1961, another split allowed the formation of *Movimiento Nueva Argentina*. One of the most striking operation of Tacuara was the kidnapping of Graciela Narcisa Sirota in response to the kidnapping of Adolf Eichmann by the Mossad. Sirota was a student of Jewish origins who was captured in June 1962 and liberated a couple days later with a swastika tattooed in her breast. One year later, in 1963, another split in this organization originated *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara* headed by Joe Baxter, Alfredo Ossorio and Amilcar Fidanza.[273] One of the main ideologues of Tacuara in its original formation was Julio Meinvielle. They used to assist to the conference that Julio Manville gave in the library Huemul.[274]

In September 1954, the two French priests Georges Vinson and Joseph Chénard arrived at Argentina, followed three years later by Georges Gasset, Victor Sarat and François Volle. All these French priests were renowned by their fanatical anti-communism. Moreover, they considered that every liberal, progressive or leftist thinking was a sin and one of their main goal was to reestablish a clear distinction between good and evil. We also find this kind of obsession on the reestablishment of what is good and what is evil in one of the books written by Jean Ousset, the founder of *La Cité catholique* in France. He illustrated the problem of Marxism with the words pronounced by Engels at Marx's funeral.

"His dialectic philosophy dissolved all the notions of absolute and definitive true and the human conditions related to them. There is nothing definitive, absolute or sacred in front of them. He showed the expiration of all these things. It does not exist anything but the continuous and transitory process of becoming."[275]

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[273] Lvovich, *El Nacionalismo de derecha*, 80-83.

[274] Gutman, *Tacuara*, 64.

[275] Ousset, *Marxisme et Revolution*, 29.

This confusion generated by Marxism was the main problem of the civilization. It was necessary to reestablish the natural universal order which was resumed in Jesus words: "Let your Yes be Yes, and your No, No." In March 1959, Georges Grasset and Robert Pincemin founded *La Ciudad Católica argentina* which was a subsidiary of the French *Cité catholique* of Jean Ousset. The magazine *Verbo* which had an important circulation among the military circles and could also be found in the published their ideas which circulated in military libraries as for example the one of Superior School. In 1967, Carlos Alberto Sacheri became the president of the organization. He initiated a campaign against the "communist penetration." The social situation after the fall of the military regime in 1973 led to a radicalization of *Ciudad Católica* discourse. Sacheri stated that "without effusion of blood, there is no possible redemption." The situation demanded from the supported of the catholic Argentina "to pour their blood." If they wanted to save the country from Marxism, "Argentina needed a "bloodbath."[276]

Between 1955 and 1976, the French influence provided the Argentinean militaries, specially the army, with a consistent ideology and with a methodology, learned in base of the defeat of Indochina and the Algeria experience, in order to fight against the communism menace in Argentina. Carlos Jorge Rosas was a good example of the good connexions between the Argentine and French militaries. He attended the *École supérieure de guerre* in Paris between 1953 and 1955. During the next decade he was dedicated to strengthen the relationships with France inviting French officials to give conferences, courses and discussions in the schools of the army.[277]

Rubén Dri is one of the authors who has centered his attention in this relationship between the church and the armed forces in order to explain the nature of the military regime established in 1976. It was a restitution of the old christianity, the centuries of the middle age were back. There were a spiritual and a temporal order whose functions and roles were mixed up. It was not clear if the spiritual authority was Videla or Bonamín. The two orders were also reciprocally dependent.[2] If there was such restitution headed by the Catholic church, seems to be logical that a religious group like Jehovah's Witnesses were banned and persecuted.

However, it is important to take into consideration that the influence of this political milieu in the regime of Videla was limited. From the reflections of Videla in his last years, we can see that this limitation. Videla stated about the relation Church-armed forces

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[276] Ranalletti, op. cit., 54.

[277] Ibidem, 55.

[278] Dri, *Hegemonía de los cruzados*, 93.

"The Church was not addicted to us. We had our brief encounters but as institution they behaved with caution. They said what they had to say without generating unsustainable situations. In this context, the relation was very good. In the individual level, I had an excellent relationship with Monsignor Adolfo Tortolo, for example, he was a saint. I had known Primatesta in Córdoba, when I was assigned as chief of operations in the Third squad. Primatesta had at that time fame of being progressive like many other bishops but he was not a Jaime de Nevares, a Miguel Hesayne. As titular of the episcopate, we reestablish contact, he was a comprehensive man, he did not applaud what we were doing, but he was not a Vicente Zazpe, who also integrated the episcopate executive board and he generated us problems."[279]

Rubén Dri even pointed out that the San Patricio Church massacre in July 4, 1976, where three priests and two seminarians of the Pallottine order, along with the death of Angelelli in La Rioja and afterwards the death of Monsignor Ponce de León, bishop of San Nicolás waked up the alert alarm in some of the members of the Argentine Episcopal Conference and the Vatican.[280] The hegemony of the most extreme defenders of the "holy war" in name of the Catholic nation started slowly to decrease. The militaries and the bishops considered that the war ended in 1979. From then on, the influence of this group started to decreased and the episcopate started to be directed by Juan Carlos Aramburu, Raúl Primatesta and Antonio Quarracino whose idea was that the war had to be replaced by a reconciliation and, especially between 1980 and 1983, by a time of forget and forgiveness.[2] This reconciliation policy was expressed in three documents: "The path to reconciliation" on August 11, "Orientations for the dialogue" and "Principles of civic orientation for Christians" both on October 22, 1982.[282]

From a class perspective, this political milieu can be defined as an expression of the Argentinean upper class. First of all, because they did not want to transform the economic structure of the country. The army chaplaincy sustained that the private property and the right of inheritance were a "sacred right." The armed forces had to combat and control the strikes in order to avoid losses and injustices to these rights. Such muss not even be taxed.[283] But there was a second reason why we can classify this milieu as an expression of the Argentinean elite, the disdain that they had for *el pueblo,* the people. This is the reason why it is a huge error to consider that the right spectrum had a strong ideological proximity to fascism or, even more distant, to Nazism. For the Argentinean right, it was not the people but the Church and the Army, the institutions that incarnated the essence of the nation. This is the reason why they were not so worried on founding

[279] Reato, *Disposición final*, 254

[280] Palermo, Novaro, *La dictadura militar 1976/1983*, 101,102.

[281] Dri, op. cit., 56,58,64.

[282] Ibidem. 77,78.

[283] Bilbao, Lede, op. cit., 15.

political parties or organizing manifestations and rallies. They were not interested in numbers, they were interested in the co-optation of the elites. They wanted to penetrated in the economic, social, military and religious "aristocracy." We can quote the method suggested by Jean Ousset in order to reach the re-Christianizing of the society. It was not necessary to indoctrinate the masses, it was enough with the indoctrination of thousand men. It was enough with the formation of an elite capable of a social "restoration of everything in Christ."[284]

According to the sources,[285] the first Jehovah's Witness who was imprisoned as conscientious objector was Antonio Videla. Videla was born in Córdoba in 1926. He was baptized and became a Jehovah's Witness in December 1947. At that time there were 28 members in Córdoba. He was the only one in his family who belong to this religion and he was considered by his relatives as a madman. He was drafted in the Armed Forces and at the beginning there was no big problems because he made all the exercises as a normal conscript. The problem arose when he refused to salute the flag. He was then sent to the dungeon. Time later, he was sent to Buenos Aires, to the *Primera Brigada Aerea* in Palomar and then transferred to the *Penitenciaria Civil* in Buenos Aires. He was in the pavilion 126, assigned to military prisoners. Together with Videla, there were two more Jehovah's Witnesses, Reinoso from Córdoba and Parucheski from La Plata. The three had a profession so they were able to work. Videla worked as carpenter, and the other two as painter and electrician. In the *Penitenciaria Civil* he was visited by a Jehovah's Witness from Córdoba monthly, who provided Videla with literature. Once that Videla finished his sentence, he was transferred to the aerial base of Reconquista, Santa Fe, where he stayed eight months more. He started there to search for Jehovah's Witnesses and met a German one, who visited Reconquista every two weeks. Since then Videla started to lead the little group of Jehovah's Witnesses while he still was at the aerial base. Once free, he even decided to stay in Reconquista for a year working in an oil factory.[286]

Between 1947 and the putsch of 1966, there were seventeen Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned due to their refusal to be drafted by the armed forces. There was no special treatment for Jehovah's Witnesses. The Military Service regulations had at that time no consideration for the conscientious objectors due to religion reasons. The first three cases: Videla, Reinoso and

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[284] Cersósimo, *El proceso fue liberal*, 21,22, 61.

[285] o-conciencia.org

[286] Interview to Antonio Videla in https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019

Parucheski were sent, for example, to a regular prison. Pedro Lobato, who was to be drafted in 1951, together with Dante Anelli were sentenced to the prison at the Martin Garcia Island. Emilio Sauras and Alfredo Iunco were in Campo de Mayo. The first Jehovah's Witness who was assigned to Magdalena Prison was Juan Carlos Marcequi. Between March and April, 1964, he was in Rio Santiago, Buenos Aires, in August, 1964, he was judged by a council of wars and sentenced to Magdalena Prison.[287]

The fact that Jehovah's Witnesses were tried by councils of wars was one of the controversial aspect in the legal treatment to the members of this religion. The defense attorneys of Jehovah's Witnesses have always argue that due to the fact that they were never drafted, they were never soldiers but civilians. Therefore they had not to be judged by councils of war, but by civilian tribunals. The role played by the councils of war judging the civilian population has been studied in relation with the question about the continuities between the previous years and the regime of 1976. Debora D'Antonio has already showed that the first precedent of councils of war judging civilian population took place during the first Peronism in 1948. Under the "General National Organization in war times" Law (*Organización general de la nación en tiempos de guerra*), 300 activists were judged by council of wars in the railway workers' strikes of 1950-1951. The next important moment was during the government of Frondizi and the application of the Plan CONINTES. The armed forces had the legal authority to arrest activists and judge them in the council of war. During the *Cordobazo*, the regime of Ongania also made use of this instrument in order to repress the manifestations. With the decree-law 21.264 of 1976, the dictatorship established special councils of war in the whole national territory. The majority of cases judged by councils of war took place between 1976 and 1978. Among the crimes that were treated by these councils were: rebellion (N°647), insubordination (N°669), insult to members of the armed forces (N°671) and riot (N°683).[288] Long before the putsch of 1976, Jehovah's Witnesses had been judged by councils of war due to their refusal to be drafted, these councils of war were not just a temporal measure taken by the dictatorial regimes. The use of this institution against civilians was a continuity along the second half of the XX Century, under the militaries regimes but also under constitutional governments. At least, so was it in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

With the arrival of the "Argentinean Revolution," the Jehovah's Witnesses became more visible as problem for the armed forces. As a reaction to the increased number of Jehovah's

[287] Interview to Carlos Marcequi in https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019

[288] D'Antonio, "Los consejos de Guerra," 22,24,28.

Witnesses who refused to be drafted, the sentences were intensified. The first class to be drafted under the regime of Ongania was the number 1946. We find seven Jehovah's Witnesses in this class.[289] The number of Jehovah's Witnesses incarcerated increased to 12 (class 1947)[290], then 9 (class 1948)[291], 8 (class 1949)[292], 21 (class 1950)[293], 31 (class 1951)[294]

1967 was also the year of the first casualty. It was the case of Raul Góngora who was in the naval base of Punta Alta. His casualty was reported by the Navy as suicide and the relatives received the body in a sealed coffin. The Navy was sued by the relatives because the body had been beaten and it was verified that it was a murder. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, after this event, the Navy established an internal procedure to be followed with Jehovah's Witnesses named MASERIN, *Manual de Servicio Interno*.[295]

Juan Carlos Fontela of the class 1954 was the second casualty among this group. He was incorporated at the *Agrupación Ingenieros Anfibios 601* in Santo Tomé (Santa Fe). He was able to visit his family a couple of times until they received his dead body. It was reported that he died of Chagas disease but his body had vestiges of being tortured. The case was never clarify.[296]

In 1963, Ongania decided to start a restructuring of the army and assigned the general Nicolás Cándido Hure to head the *Comisión Especial para la Reestructuración del Ejército*

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[289] Angel Bautista Canaperi, Edgardo Julio Denton, Luis Dinaro, Hugo Ramon Musumano, Nestor Salinas, Jose Luis Salomone and Emilio Eduardo Urretarazu. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[290] Jorge Rubén Capiello, Ricardo Carlino, Francisco Dieguez, José Omar Giorgi, Nestor Raimundo Gonzalez, Mario Arturo Iglesias, Luis Alberto Kasan, Eduardo Rene López, Carlos del Valle Moyano, Florentin Padilla, Albino Retamales, Carlos Alberto Toubes. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[291] Juan José Basile, Ricardo Gustavo Boja, Angel Nicolás Bruno, Hilario Ricardo Bustamante, Jesus Costa, Hugo Ricardo Fernandez, Joel Dario Gimenez, Hector Jorge Moleiro, Rubén Ricardo Pasquini. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[292] Julio Nicolas Calas, Patricio Raul Carballo, Eduardo Miguel Chiappero, Hugo Omar Pohl, José Cristobal Romero, Juan Carlos Ruiz, Raúl Seva, Roberto Solkoloski. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[293] Silvestre Martiniano Albarez, Alberto Lujan Aguilera, Sergio Mario Caludrini, José Cancio, Oscar Alberto Castillo, Mario Esposito, Martin Fernandez, Ramón Alfredo Galarza, José Ignacio Gallardo, Carlos Gani Quevedo, Gabriel Guillermo Garcia, Roque Higa, Angel Lauria, Higinio Abel Lima, Jorge Hugo Mendoza, Mergioli, Héctor Raúl Navarro, Gumercindo Hugo Ponce, Francisco Gabriel Retamales, Roque Ruiz, Alberto Zorrilla. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[294] José Alberto Alonso, Juan Alberto Albistur, Eduardo Barrios, Victor Bustamante, Salvador Pascual Casaforte, Jose Luis Chantada, Juan Jose Cores, Carlos Mario Desposito, Eduardo Jesús Esmoris, Leopoldo Luis Farini, Ricardo del Valle Fernandez, Juan Miguel Ferrari, Rubén Oscar Gómez, Martín Agustin Gomez, Miguel Angel Landi, Héctor Bernardino Liman, Jorge Enrique López, Julio Oscar Martin, Jorge Tomas Mercado, Jorge Luis Mingorance, Carlos Antonio Novillo, Ricardo Mario Oyola Martinez, Luis Pallares, Oscar Luis Prado, Victor Hugo Pucheta, Nelson Esteban Rojas, Faustino Weneslao Sistema, Jorge Alberto Stamboni, Agustin Antonio Torres, Alejandro Mario Valderrama, Miguel Angel Valery. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[295] https://www.o-conciencia.org/torturados/

[296] https://www.o-conciencia.org/torturados/

(CERE). This commission was the responsible of the laws that years later, during the "Argentinean Revolution" reformed the armed forces: 16.964 (*Ley de Desarrollo Nacional*) and 16.970 (*Ley de Defensa Nacional*).[297]

Until 1971, the sentences applied to Jehovah's Witnesses were based on the Article 667 of the Military Justice Code: they could receive a four years sentence. Nestor Salinas, who was incorporated to the Army's *Compania de Montaña 6* in Bariloche, April 1967, recalled that when he was judged, the council of war stated that they increased the sentences against Jehovah's Witnesses.[298] For example, Jesús Costa (class 1948), Eduardo Miguel Chiappero (class 1949) received a five years sentence, Carlos Mario Desposito (class 1951) five years and six months.

On September 28, 1971, the Commander in Chief of the Army resolved that the conscientious objector due to "confessional reasons" had to be sent free once that the prison sentence was over and they did not have to return to the military institutions where they were previously assigned. Moreover, they had to be documented as: "Excluded in base of the article 41 of the Law 17.531 (…) due to confessional reasons to refuse to arm in defense of the fatherland and the constitution."[299]

The Law 17.531 was the Law of Obligatory Military Service, which was published in the *Boletin Oficial* on November, 16, 1967. The article 41, that was used to categorized the Jehovah's Witnesses, made reference to those who were considered unworthy of being drafted.

Article 41: to exclude of the military service those who due to their precedents are considered by the military authorities and according to the regimentation of this law, unworthy to be part of the armed forces. The exclusion, properly justified, has to be enacted by the authority of the corresponding force.[300]

In April 1975, the *Military Vicariate Bulletin* dedicated several of its pages to the subject conscientious objection. The article was written by Dr. Laureano Castán Lacoma, bishop of Sigüenza-Guadalajara, Spain. The "expansion of Atheism in the East" and the "enlightened and anti-Christian secularism" were considered the reasons of the increase of war and conflicts in the XX century.[301] The problem of those, who due to biblical reasons refused to be drafted and be

[297] See Mazzei, *Bajo el Poder de la Caballeria*, Chapter 6.

[298] Salinas, Nestor, "El capellan me consiguio una Biblia" in https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/2513-salinas-nestor-1946-el-capellan-me-consiguio-una-biblia/ consulted 8.17.2019.

[299] *Boletin del Vicariato Castrense*, N°38, Mayo 1972, 16.

[300] http://www.saij.gob.ar/legislacion/ley-nacional-17531-ley_servicio_militar.htm%3Bjsessionid=8jsfqgjwi4hmptmhya6t7p4?0 consulted 8.17.2019

[301] *Boletin del Vicariato Castrense*, N°47, Abril 1975, 6.

military trained, had misunderstood the difference between the moral-religious and the socio-political order. The Spanish bishop sustained the importance of making a clear division between both orders. Otherwise

"in the name of the Sermon of the Mount, one can argue for the exclusion of property, courts and every institution of the society. The real and deep signification of the Gospel is to teach the souls the secret of an inner and moral renovation for the generosity, but that does not exclude the reasonable requirements of the human society. Christ taught to respect the institutions and laws of the social order, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."[302]

The author pointed out three positions about the war: 1. Militarism: to consider that wars are a way to resolve conflicts, 2. Integral Pacifism: the war is always a bad thing, and the natural law: peace is a great but not the supreme value. The conscientious objectors were part of the second group. "The radical pacifism of some philosophical trends, like the Lollard movement or the Hussites, had been completely sterile in the international law." 3. On the other hand, the natural law stand for a dynamic peace based on the word of Isaiah: "and the work of righteousness shall be peace (32:17). This peace has to be active defended.[303]

Communism has been the lifelong enemy of the security forces in Argentina during the XX century. However, since 1955 this communist menace was gradually replaced by a new enemy, a "modern menace": the subversion. What was the difference between communism and subversion? For the security forces, the difference between these concepts relied on the remark made by Mao Zedong: "The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea." According to this core idea, the difference between enemies and the whole civilian population disappeared. This transformation leads to a generalization based on the idea that the enemy can be hidden everywhere. "Every opponent is not only a potential ally of communism, it is also a subversive."[304] The specificity of the terms subversive and subversion relies, then, upon their ambiguity and vagueness. On the one hand it is hard to define and understand who is a subversive, on the other hand it is a definition easy of being used and applied.

The changes in the politics of Moscow after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 were considered by the Argentinean armed forces as a radicalization and reorganization of the Soviet Union's politics by the "mysterious tactic of

[302] Ibidem, 7.

[303] Ibidem, 11.

[304] Mazzei, Op. Cit., 131-143.

misleading the opponents with unexpected changes of aims and directives."[305] The intelligence of Buenos Aires police started to use a categorization in order to evaluate the potential dangers in the population. They started to use three new categories: communists, pro-communists and crypto-communists. The communists were the members of the Communist Party. The pro-communists were those who had a sympathy for this political ideology but were not members of the party. The crypto-communists were those who concealed their true ideology with an apparent one. The most dangerous group was this last one because they could be active in the society without being identified.[306] During the 1960s, the political spectrum also mutated and the Communism was not the only enemy for the security forces. There were also a "Marxist Nationalism" and a "National Left," and a whole new lexicon: "the most dangerous extremists," "undesirable," "subversive," "living danger," "communist monster," "political delinquent," "terrorist" and "subversive delinquent."[307]

With the arrival of Perón and his government, the figure of the subversion as the main menace of the country gained importance. On January 19, 1974, a command of ERP assaulted a regiment of the cavalry in Azul, Buenos Aires. The importance of this assault was the hard reaction that it generated in Perón, who started to speak about the elimination of the guerrilla. The semantic change that during the decades before was taking place in the security forces now was part of the president's discourse. The "communist" internal enemy of the Peronist party was transformed in the figure of the "subversive." Ranalletti and Pontontiero remarked about this change:

"If "communism" had a connotation limited to a party or a political ideology, the term subversion extended considerable its range. This last one is not associated to manifestations or concrete political practices, like in the case of Communism –parties, trade union organizations, student organizations– subversion made reference to any type of potential for conflict, dissatisfaction, activism and/or malaise in the society."[308]

During these years, when the presence of the "international subversion" was gaining more and more attention, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses who attended to the military units in order to refuse to

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[305] Archivo DIPBA, Mesa Doctrina, "Tema Comunismo", Legajo N°167, Archivo y Fichero, 1956, folio 2, quoted in Marengo, *Lo aparente como real*, 118.

[306] Marengo, op. cit. 119.

[307] Ibidem, 208.

[308] Quoted in Merele, "El proceso represivo en los años setenta constitutionales" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 114.

be drafted increased. In 1973 35 Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned (class 1952),[309] 45 in 1974 (class 1953)[310] and 57 in 1975 (class 1954)[311].

Marina Franco has studied these years pre-1976. In her analysis of the years that goes from 1973 to 1976, the assault in Azul, at the beginning of 1974, is also considered decisive. At that time, Juan Domingo Perón statements were a clear manifestation of the changing perspective that the government had the situation. Perón established a difference between the Fourth and the Third International. On the contrary to the Third one that had an orthodox Communism, this new International had a complete different objective, it was a deformed movement that tried to impose itself throughout struggle. The only solution to this problem, according to Perón, was to fight against them. A fight that had a very important limitation. In Perón's words, this limitation was the law. Legal regulations that were old and did not make possible to fight against the subversion. Perón stated: "We are going to proceed according to the need, the means do not matter. If there is no law, we are going to do without law and violently. To violence, we can only response with more violence."[312]

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[309] Ramón Ernesto Antunez, Juan Carlos Alcala, Juan Carlos Alvarez, César Daniel Amato, Francisco José Balbuena, Teofilo Gregorio Barrionuevo, Fernando Bilbao, Eduardo Emilio Borrelli, Santos Martires Canteros, Oscar Alberto Collia, Alberto Carlos Cordoba, José Oscar Echeverria, Raul Roberto Esquenon, Ricardo Arturo Fernandez, Mario Cristobal Gonzalez, Sergio Luis Hecklein, Carlos Eduardo Herlein, Raúl Eduardo Lancouquis, Víctor Hugo Loubet, Reimundo Jorge Maciel, Juan Arturo Maley, Romulo Mansilla, Roberto Ismael Martel, Jorge Domingo Massara, Angel Alberto Mattiacci, Eduardo Omar Montes de Oca, Miguel Elias Nassar, Juan Carlos Quinteros, Guillermo Omar Rangoni, Ricardo Nestor Rodriguez, Sergio Bernabe Suarez, Pedro Miguel Tejerina, Miguel Angel Tripaldi, Ramón Ambrosio Vicario, Juan Raúl Yenzi. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[310] Raúl Altuna, Oscar Aldo Alvarez, Raul Cristobal Alvarez, Francisco Ramon Aquino, Victor Angel Barboff, Jorge Roberto Beghe, Luis Omar Benavidez, Juan Carlos Breglia, Hugo Oscar Brizzio, Héctor Miguel Buenaventura, Osvaldo Alfredo Carletti, Orlando Ramón Castillo, Hugo Hipolito Castro, Raúl Antonio Cerdan, Nestor Colli, José Alfredo Correa, Osvaldo Hugo de Mingo, Juan Ricardo Dietrich, Angel Ricardo Estepa, Victor Alfredo Fonseca, Luis Fontana, Juan Fontela, Ismael Isaac Foschiatti, Carlos Mario Garay, Miguel Angel Gomez, Juan Grchich, Roberto Daniel Guerini, Ramon Angel Guzman, Ricardo José Iunco, Víctor Juul, Celso Bautista Leiva, Gabriel Orlando Machado, Héctor Armando Marquez, Rodolfo Alfredo Martinez, Enrique Nestor Molteni, Julio Ruben Montenegro, Alberto Reynaldo Morales, Bienvenido Orellano, Rafael José Peña, Héctor Hugo Perez, Eduardo Retamales, Cristobal Sanchez, Daniel Emilio Sanchez, Alberto Sorrentino, Ramon Emilio Suarez. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019)

[311] Horacio Omar Almeida, Julio Cesar Agudin, Héctor Antonio Arce, Hugo Alberto Astra, José Antonio Barbaran, Julian Barrera, Miguel Edgardo Batista, Gerardo Bienvenido Benavidez, Carlos Adrian Bragini, Ricardo Omar Butarelli, Mario Rubén Buzzi, Jorge Gustavo Cabrera, Carlos Caso Rosendi, Adolfo Emilio Chiquichano, Daniel Constancio Cortegiano, Jorge Abraham Cosaire, Julio Cesar Curros, Rolando Dean, Nestor Dorado, Cesar Eduardo Dri, Mario Alberto Escalada, Rinaldi Eligio Ferreyra, Miguel Angel Gimenez, Cesar Guajardo, Juan Carlos Domingo Gualteri, Oscar Roberto Gutierrez, Carlos José Kalisz, Eduardo Lares, Hugo Omar Martínez, Hugo César Martínez, José Medina, Luis Felix Miguel, Oscar Manuel Moreno, Armando Nancu, Eduardo Norberto Navarro, Herminio Fernando Otero, Daniel Héctor Pagano, Hilario Ramón Paiva, Antonio José Paladino, Alejo Rubén Palomeque, José Vicente Perez, José Edgardo Pfatshbacher, Juan Pablo Pie, Miguel Prestefelipe, Oscar Héctor Quinteros, Ernesto Scarlata, Oscar Sistema, Astulfo Hostilio Suarez, Esteban Isaac Sziamazarnik, José Ricardo Torres, Adrian Traficante, Carlos Omar Urquia, Roberto Gaspar Van de Velde, Pedro Honorio Velazquez, Carlos Weber, Ramon Hugo Zuñiga, Juan Fontela. (Source https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 8.15.2019).

[312] *Clarín*, 23 de enero de 1974, quoted in Franco, *Un Enemigo para la nación.,* 71,72.

A couple months after Perón's death, the government sent to the Congress a new law of security in order to "repress the terrorist and subversives activities," a law that had to serve for the eradication of the subversion in frame of the law."[313] November 6, 1974, the Minister of Interior enacted the state of siege in the whole territory, a state of siege that was maintained until 1983 and that allowed the detention of 8,625 people during the previous years to the putsch of 1976.[314]

In August 1975, new regulations were enacted inside the army in order to fight against the subversion, the project of regulations RC-9-1: *Operations against subversive elements*. In just one document, the army was able to resume all the know-how and experience that they had acquired during the 1960s and 1970s in the fight against subversion. Moreover, two external experiences were also considered as model to follow: the experience of the French army in Indochina and Algeria and the experience of the American Army in Vietnam. The subversion was defined in this document as follow: "it is the clandestine or public action, insidious or violent that looks for the modification or elimination of the moral rules and the way of life of a people, with the aim of taking the power and impose a new form based on a different scale of values."[315]

A quite similar definition was given by the Catholic Church and specially by the Military Vicariate. In *Fuerzas Armadas, ética y represión* that was published in 1979 by the chaplain Marcial Castro Castillo, the subversives were defined not only as those "who gripped a weapon but everyone who tried to "subvert the order of the Western and Christian society."[316] Abel Catuzzi stated in the *Jornadas Pastorales Castrenses* that the anti-subversive war was in the defense of the "spiritual life received from the Spanish evangelization, the liberty defended by San Martín and the sense of property that attracted the migration to Argentina. It was a definitive war between God and no-God."[317] Cersósimo stated: "all those who did not accept the centrality of the Church in the social framework, or those who were members of the Church but proposed reforms (in the doctrine, in the liturgy or in the organization) were considered subversive."[318]

At the end of the 1950s, it was a combination of factors that contributed to the appearance of an "internal enemy" in the nation. The Cuban revolution and its effects in the whole continent, the

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[313] María Estela de Perón, *La Nación*, 27 de Septiembre de 1974, quoted in Franco, *Un Enemigo para la nación.,* 118.

[314] Franco, *Un Enemigo para la nación.,* 124,128.

[315] Ejército Argentino: RC-9-1. *Operaciones contra elementos subversivos (Proyecto)*, Buenos Aires, Instituto Geográfico Militar, 1975, quoted in Pontoriero, "Preparativos de Guerra," 329.

[316] Cersósimo, *El proceso fue liberal,* 123.

[317] Ibidem, 126.

[318] Ibidem, 130.

Plan *Conintes* and the French influence in the armed forces were among the factors that lead to an "internationalization of the conflicts between Peronism and Antiperonism." Mario Ranalletti has pointed out that, since 1955, there was a process of indoctrination where the dehumanization of the enemy was a characteristic of the militaries. This indoctrination was leaded by the Argentine subsidiary of French *Cité Catholique*, a publication that gathered together the most important intellectuals of the "marginal right": Jean Ousset, Carlos Sacheri, Jordán Bruno Genta, Julio Meinvielle and the congregation Christ the King. Politics and religion were, from the perspective of these authors, a part of the same reality. They were convinced, like the French philosopher Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, that "every politic error was a theological error fulfilled."[319]

The Cuban Revolution and the indoctrination received by the French school contributed to an identification of this internal enemy with communism. The hiatus created in the social-political level by the *Cordobazo* and the appearance of the guerrillas during the 1970s introduced the "phantasy" that the revolution was possible. The assassination of José Ignacio Rucci by *Montoneros* in September 1973 started a process of purge inside the Peronism during the constitutional presidency of Perón. This purge was called against "Marxist infiltration." A second important moment in this mutation was the assault of the regiment of cavalry in Azul by a command of the ERP on January 19, 1974. It was there that the logic of Cold War suffered a modification, or maybe it is better to say, it underwent an Argentinian modification. Communism, the enemy, was transformed into Subversion. Ranalletti and Pontotiero stated that since 1955 an "organizing myth," that allow to understand the past and the present, was installed among the armed forces, the security forces, the Church and the "marginal right." This myth allowed to see behind the political active masses, behind the suspected *pueblo* an enemy that was acting in the framework of a "Third World War." Unlike the term Communism that designated a concrete political ideology, party and practices, subversion had an including function that transformed the enemy in something more general, hard to be defined but very effective as a vector for the action.[320]

Going back to the conceptualization about Jehovah's Witnesses, the Spanish bishop of Sigüenza- Guadalajara, Dr. Laureano Castán Lacoma, claimed that "the main sophism of this "sect" (Jehovah's Witnesses) was to transfer precepts and advises of the moral and religious order to the

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[319] Ranalletti, "Aux origines du terrorisme d'État en Argentine", 45, 47.

[320] Ranalletti, Pontoriero, "La normativa en materia de defensa y seguridad," y la criminalización de las disidencias (1955-1976)," 2,6.

[321] *Boletin del Vicariato Castrense 47*, 7.

social and political one."[321] This statement was repeated in other articles of the Buletin of the Military Vicariate, for example the one quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

In 1971, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses was of "20,750 publishers, including 408 special and 1,019 regular pioneers."[322] They even celebrated an international assembly in 1974 in Rio Ceballos (Córdoba) and Buenos Aires with a total attendance of 15,000 delegates that came from different countries. They even organized "a tent city with neatly arranged rows of tents and trailers, complete with streets having Scriptural names."[323]

In the years previous to the putsch of 1976, Jehovah's Witnesses had already been already categorized among the "subversive elements" that were a threat to the nation. They were considered "an instrument of the American imperialism, international Zionism and Jewish capital," a "mystical subversive," there was already a systematic treatment of them in the military units, they were judged by military councils and they were growing in their underground activities.

In *La represión militar en la Argentina (1955-1976)*, Esteban Pontoriero comes to the conclusion that between 1953 and 1975 the armed forces in Argentina went through a training process where firstly the French and later the American influences played a major role. However, the Argentinean armed forces made their own way being their repression a particularity of this institution. In 1975, this learning process was capture in the Reglamento RC 9-1.[324] In this document we find a specificity of the Argentinean militaries: the definition of subversion. This definition was the result of what Pontoriero called "the moment of 1975," an expression that reflects the convergence of two traditions: a long one whose beginning can be traced since, at least, 1953 and the situation of crisis of 1975. The coming together of these two processes led to the secret extermination of persons.[325] We have to remember that together with 1958-1962 and 1971-1973, the time between 1973 and 1976 were considered official state of exception. As it has been already mentioned, the concept of subversion that we find in the RC 9-1 of 1975 had as its main characteristic being very general and ambiguous which led to a flexible application of the concept.[326]

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[322] *1972 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 123.

[323] *2001 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses,* 160.

[324] Pontoriero, *La represión militar en Argentina (1955-1976)*, 217.

[325] Ibidem, 229.

[326] Ibidem, 185.

Since the repressive measures of the first Peronism against Jehovah's Witnesses until the ban of 1976, it is possible to trace a continuity and a progressive attention to the problematic given by a part of the Catholic institutions and the armed forces. The successions of military putsches and democratic administrations during decades seems to play no role or influence in the treatment that Jehovah's Witnesses received as conscientious objectors or as part of the civil society. The situation changed after the "moment of 1975."

5. A “Threat” to the Nation

The recent history of Argentina is constructed on the fundamental idea that 1976 was an absolute rupture. The origin of this fundamental idea can be traced to 1983 and it was the result, among other reasons, of the political interests of the both major parties (Peronism and Radicalism) in the return of democracy. A demonization and estrangement from the armed forces went hand in hand with the construction of 1976 as an absolute rupture in Argentina’s history. The native category, State Terrorism, served to underline the relevance of 1976.

The term has been defined as a “systematic plan of state repression compound of an articulation of different agencies with some structural characteristics like: the clandestine operation, kidnappings, the use of torture upon the prisoners and the disappearance of people. A plan that was implemented at a national scale.”[327] Eduardo Luis Duhalde described the Terrorist State as “the degenerative culmination of the efficient Garrison State.”[328] The main characteristic of the Garrison State was that “the armed forces, principal repressive device of the bourgeois state, abolishes, subordinates and replaces the functions of the other state-devices (parliament, justice, etc.) with a projection to the whole society of the typical characteristics of the armed forces.”[329] In the particular case of Argentina, this Garrison State had the function of an authoritarian resolution to the political hegemonic draw.[330] According to Eduardo Duhalde, the State Terrorism started in 1976. Prudencio Garcia and José Luis D’Andrea Mohr considered that the *Operativo Independecia* in 1975 has to be considered as the starting point. Mario Ranalletti and Esteban Pontoriero have showed that there were already “structural elements” of State Terrorism in the military manuals of 1968 and 1969. Daniel Feierstein pointed out the year 1974 as the beginning of the “genocidal practices.”[33

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[327] Aguila, “Modalidades, dispositivos y circuitos represivos” in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal,* 353.

[328] Duhalde, *El Estado Terrorista*, 19.

[329] ibidem, 245.

[330] Ibidem, 246.

[331] Duhalde, *El Estado Terrorista*, 216, 230-236; Prudencio García, *El Drama de la autonomia militar*, 140, 141; D’Andrea Mohr, *Memoria Debida*, 55; Ranalletti, Mario and Esteban Pontoriero, “La normativa en materia de defensa y seguridad y la criminalización de las disidencias (1955-1976),” Feierstein, Daniel, *Genocide as Social Practice. Reorganizing Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas.* See Franco, *Un enemigo para la Nación*, 139 (note 24).

Leaving aside the question about when it started, the definition of this kind of state can be summed up on three elements: its clandestine side, the terror implanted in the society, and its rationality.[332]

The necessity of a cultural history that take as central point the perspective of the military agency has been pointed out by Federico Lorenz. The difficulty of assuming such a perspective is an epistemological and, at the same time, a moral problem. For many, trying to understand the military rationality is just a way of justify the crimes committed by the armed forces. This is the main obstacle until today that does not allow us to have a cultural history of "the war against subversion."[333]

On December 29, 1970, the General Alejandro Agustín Lanusse stated that after a century Argentina was one more time in war.[334] A couple months later, on April 29, 1971, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FAR) assaulted a truck of the military police in Pilar, Buenos Aires, killing the lieutenant Marcos Asúa, who was the first casualty among the armed forces at the hand of the guerrillas. The contra offensive was the kidnapping of several leftist cadres who were taken to secret places where they were tortured in order to obtain information and later reappeared in a police station. It was a "new methodology in experimentation."[335] A methodology that came along with repressive laws like the 18,670 that established judging certain crimes only in first instance and throughout oral trial. In May 1971, the law 18,953 increased the punishments to normal crimes and the law 19,053 that created the *Camarón* (Camara Federal en lo Penal) with the specific task of judging the "subversive crimes."[336] In those years, specially after the enabling of the law 19,081, revolutionary activists were arrested by the Federal Police, provincial police and the army, which meant that they were tortured in clandestine centers, police stations or the central of the political police. This law was the reaction to the riot known as *El Viborazo*. "After the kidnapping of somedays, the detention and torture of the prisoners, they were incommunicado during ten days "in order to remove the effects of the institutional violence in the bodies."[337] The detention and incarceration of political activists increased during those years, 1972 was a peak with 1,200 and 1,500 prisoners. In 1975 the number of such prisoners was 5,000.[338]

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[332] Duhalde, op. cit. 37, 250.

[333] Lorenz, Federico, *Guerras en la Historia Argentina*, 26, quoted in Pontoriero, "Preparativos de Guerra," 322,323.

[334] Mazzei, *Bajo el poder de la caballeria*, 262.

[335] Ibidem, 278,279.

[336] Ibidem, 280.

[337] D'Antonio, Eidelman, "El sistema penitenciario y los presos políticos (1966-1976)", 94.

[338] Ibidem, 108.

The period 1973-1976 was marked by a number of continuities between the dictatorship of 1966-1973 and 1976-1983 in matter of the "war against subversion." The investigation of Marina Franco is central in order to understand the continuities between the years pre and post 1976. Questioning the conceptualization of Duhalde who saw the clandestine and terrorists aspects as main characteristics of State Terrorism, Franco stated: "From our point of view, it is important to mark that more than the clandestine and terrorist character, the measure taken after the putsch of 1976 corresponded to an official normative that for the first time since 1973 was systematic and had a central function in internal security by the armed forces but whose progressive historical construction can be tracked down to the beginning of the Peronist government in 1973."[339]

The autonomy of the repressive groups increased and after the death of Perón their activism was out of control. They started to function in an independent way having their own logic and objectives. There was even a command related to the intelligence services (SIDE) that established the first clandestine center in 1974 known as *Protobanco-Puente 12* which later was changed for the name *Automotores Orletti*.[340]

The several casualties were the reason that the armed forces had at the end of 1974 and the beginning of 1975 to take one more time the leading role in the repression against the "subversion."[341] To the state of siege in September 1974, in February 1975 the government of Isabel Perón assigned the army with the secret decree 261 to defeat and exterminate a guerrilla Focalism headed by ERP in the province of Tucumán.

In February of 1975, a presidential decree established the legal framework for the repressive measures that were taken under the *Operativo Independencia*. The goal was to deactivate the "subversion sources" in the province of Tucumán. The methods that were employed would be later apply in the whole national territory. A group of 5,000 men were mobilized on the operation including militaries and policemen. The first clandestine detention centers started to function during this operation. Hundred of political, trade union and university activists were kidnapped, tortured and murdered in those centers. They also served as training camps to prepare the militaries for the next stage in the "anti-subversive war". It is estimated that during the first year, 2,000 officers and noncommissioned officers were trained there.[342]

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[339] Franco, *Un enemigo para la nación*, 139.

[340] Merele, "El proceso represivo en los años setenta constitutionales" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal,* 123.

[341] Pontoriero, *La represión militar en Argentina (1955-1976)*, 328.

[342] Novaro y Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1976/1983. Del golpe de estado a la restauración democrática*, 68-70.

The decrees of annihilation, (decrees 2770, 2771 and 2772), sanctioned in October 1975 after the assault performed by *Montoneros* to the *Regimiento de Infanteria de Monte 29* in the province of Formosa,[343] allowed the military actions taken against the "subversion" in Tucumán to be extended to the whole national territory. They were an extension of the decree sanctioned in February which provided the legal structure to the Army Commander General with the faculty "to execute the militaries operations needed for the neutralization and/or annihilation of the subversive elements functioning in the province of Tucumán."[344] The legal elements to fight against the "subversion" were not limited to the military sphere. During the years of the constitutional Peronist government, a series of laws were also sanctioned in this direction in other spheres of the society. For example, the law (20,840) of National Security and Economic Subversion was approved.

The term subversion was defined in the regulation of August 1975, RC-9-1 *Operations Against Subversives Elements*. Elements of the doctrines of the French army in Indochina and Algeria and the America army in Vietnam were incorporated in these regulations. The "counter-revolutionary" war had to have a centralized direction and a decentralized execution. It had to be centralized because all the authorities, militaries, political and civilians, had to coordinate the operations against the enemy in every area: political, economic, social and military. However, the nature of the enemy and its methodology required that the armed forces had available in the field a considerable level of autonomy.[345] Even the same regulations stated that its application had to be performed according to the "free and creative faculty of the conductor" or with the "creative mentality in function of the "meticulous analysis of the situation in which the action had to be performed."[346] We find in this document a definition of subversion related with marxist ideological movements and with national political orientations, which meant Peronism. The use of violence and terrorism could be related to extreme link or extreme right tendencies. The subversion had as main objective the population trying to exploit their dissatisfactions and to gain them for the revolutionary cause throughout psychological action and physical intimidation. The regulation defined "the subversion as the clandestine or open action, hidden or violent that look for the

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[343] Ibidem.

[344] Scatizza, Pablo, "¿Para agarrar a ese gil semejante despliegue?," in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 416..

[345] Pontoriero, "De la guerra (contrainsurgente): la formación de la doctrina antisubversiva del Ejército argentina" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 65.

[346] Montero, "El rol de la comunidad informativa" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 400.

destruction of the moral criterion and the way of life of a people, with the purpose of taking the power and imposing a new way based in a different values' scale."[347]

Throughout a systematic plan according to the directives 1/75 and 404/75, the national territory was divided in five zones assigned to the I, II, III, V Corps and the Military Institute. The actions have to be centered in a "hot zone" which was delimited in a kind of line that goes through the principal urban centers and its adjoining areas. The zone included Tucumán, Córdoba, Santa Fe, Rosario, Capital Federal, the Province of Buenos Aires, La Plata and Bahia Blanca.There was also a special attention on the rural zones of Misiones, Formosa, Chaco, Salta, Jujuy, Neuquén, Rio Negro and the delta of Paraná in order to avoid any attempt of rural guerrilla.

It was the "Operation Independence" where the concept of subversion reached its peak. The Vicariate interpreted it as the Argentinean edition of the Battle of Algiers. The *Verbo* magazine published in September and October of 1975 an article where the events in Tucumán were interpreted as a clash between "civilization and subversion."[348] Already at that time, it was possible to see that the enthusiasm of this catholic milieu in the "sacred war" was not shared by everyone. It is not possible to say that the "crusade" inspired in the Catholic Nation was hegemonic. The failed attempt of a putsch at the end of 1975 was a clear manifestation of the divisions and controversies that already in the "hard years" existed among the armed forces and the ruling classes. *Operativo Condor Azul* was named the attempt that came from the Air Force and was headed by Jesús Orlando Capellini and Fernando Luis Estrella. The objective was "the establishment of a new re-founding order with a national and Christian sense." The reactions of the Navy and the Army, the reaction of the United States ambassador and the position taken by Videla showed that the "systematic plan" of extermination was not harmonious at all.[349]

In the previous months of the putsch, for Videla and the core that took the power in March 1976, it was clear that the subversion was not only a leftist phenomenon but also there were rightist subversives.[350] The epic of the regime was based on the signifier Order, not on the signifier Crush. It came not to establish the Catholic Nation, it just wanted to safeguard the "christian moral." They were much more inspired by the army of Julio Argentino Roca that organized the nation upon liberal ideals than on the mythological alliance between the Crush and the Sword. These facts were

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[347] Pontoriero, "De la guerra (contrainsurgente): la formación de la doctrina antisubversiva del Ejército argentina" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal*, 65.

[348] Cersósimo, *El proceso fue liberal,* 99.

[349] Ibidem, 102.

[350] Pontoriero, "Preparativos de guerra," 329

clear since the first moths after the putsch when it took place the replacement of Adolfo Tortolo for Raúl Primatesta at the head of the *Conferencia Episcopal Argentina* in May 1976.

After the big failure of the "Argentinean Revolution," the militaries had to return to the barracks, defeated and restricted to the function of controlling the social mobilization and guaranteeing the security against an internal enemy. Three years later they would return to the power and would try "to put an end to the misgovernment, corruption and subversive whip."[3] From a rhetoric perspective, the objectives of the *Onganiato* were not much different to those that we find in the *Acta de Objectivos* of March 1976. The "Argentinean Revolution" has also aspired to resolve: "Inflation, scarce economic development, high social divisiveness, corruption, sectorial selfishness, subversion, "Argentineans' skepticism," "lack of spiritual cohesion" and "lack of representation" of the civil organizations.[352] To fight for "the validity of the Christian moral, national tradition and the dignity of being Argentinean," were not an exclusivity of the militaries of 1976. A long tradition considered the armed forces as the "moral reserve of the nation."[353] They had been "the last aristocracy, the last chance of hierarchical organization that remains in this demagogic dissolution," had Leopoldo Lugones already stated in December of 1924 when he pronounced his memorable discourse at the centenary of the Battle of Ayacucho.[354]

Beyond the objectives of the armed forces, many expectations and hopes reappeared among the multiple social actors that supported the putsch of March 1976. One of this actors was the fraction of the Church embodied in the Military Vicariate, the national Catholicism. The weight of the Vicariate specially in the first years of the regime was significative. The number of Chaplains went from 217 in 1976 to 274 in 1983 while in the previous seventeen years the increase had been from 172 to 217.[355] For this sector, the arrival of the armed forces to the power was interpreted as a historical chance to reorganize the nation on a Catholic foundation. It was necessary then, to ignore the dialogue with other religions proposed by the Second Vatican Council, and consider the "false religions" as part of the subversive enemy. Loris Zanatta has showed that the non-catholic religions "were considered not only injurious, they were foreign ideologies artificially imported to Argentina

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[351] Novaro, Palermo, *La dictadura militar*, 20.

[352] O'Donnell, *El estado burocrático autoritario.* 88.

[353] See Salvi, Valentina, "Ejército y Nación."

[354] Quoted in Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y Antisemitismo*, 194.

[355] Cersósimo, op. cit., 120, note 292

and irreconcilable with the national identity. They were therefore illegitimate. They not only have to be defeated but also eliminated."[356] In the first months after the putsch, other important social actors of the Argentinean society, like the press, echoed the idea that the "false religion" of Jehovah's Witnesses was a menace.

During the celebrations of independence day, July 9, 1976 The province of Misiones was the scenario where the Jehovah's Witnesses started to be discussed in the public opinion due to an article published by the magazine *Gente*. "The case of the pupils that do not want to sign the anthem" was the title of the report. It remarked: "they belong to the sect Jehovah's Witnesses, refuse to sing the anthem and salute the flag (…) they came as intruders throughout the border with Brazil**.** It is an additional problem in a neglected region by the country."[357] The report was based on a visit made by Manuel Caldeiro and Gerardo Prego to a couple of schools located in the near of San Pedro: The *Escuela Provincial N°238* at the *Paraje Gentil*, the *Escuela N°81* and the *Escuela de Frontera N°1*. Pedro López Guerra, principal of the Escuela N°81 reported the parents of the children that refused to sing the anthem to Gendarmerie. They were described as "the children of Brazilian trespassers that cross the border and take position of Argentinean government property where they burn out a couple hectare of wood in order to seed something and breed swine. After a time they move on and make a new "rozado," continuing with a practice of exploitation that no national authority controlled."[358] The parents were called to explain the behavior of their children but "they are not easy to be located because they live in the middle of the woods."

The article contains an interview to Celeste Cardozo de Añais, a Jehovah's Witness who refused to sent her five children to school in order to "prevent idolatries." "Does the Bible forbid to respect the national symbols?" asked the journalist. She answered: "The Bible says that we must refuse the worship of idols. At school, they compel my children to sing a song that said: "here is the idolized flag" and they can not do that, the Bible does not allow it. But they show respect, they remain standing while the flag is raised. They do not sing." The next question was if the religion force to refuse to be drafted in the military service. She replied: "It is a question of consciousness. What we do not do is to participate in a war because in the Bible states: "Thou shalt not kill." The report continued mentioning that "the religious question was one more of the many problems in the frontier region with Brazil and Paraguay. Not only Jehovah's Witnesses introduce exotic customs. A very popular religion in the region and also stemming from Brazil, the Pentecostal Church or

[356] Quoted in Cersósimo, op. cit., 130.

[357] Revista *Gente*, Julio 1976.

[358] Ibidem

creyentes do not allow their children to take part in the classes of sport or music due to religious reasons." They are all manifestations of what the article defined as an invasion that "infests the borders of our country" and can be described as a "pacific invasion" or "the invasion that comes from the East."[359]

There were several of such conflicts in the province of Misiones. Two high schools students, their parents and the teacher were arrested and jailed for 16 days. The students refused to sign the national anthem and also the March of San Martín and were "charged with "[contemptuous] slighting" of the country's emblems." The case was presented before the justice. On August 27, Federal Judge Francisco Kalicz issued a ruling. He ordered their release from prison and the exoneration of all charges. The judge observed that "contemptuous slighting is performed with material acts," like "destroying, burning, breaking, cutting, soiling, spitting, tearing and trampling." He also noted that such contemptuous slighting is performed "verbally (whistling, hissing) or by writing and even with offensive gestures." In this case, "no element of weight comes forth from the proceedings that any of the ones charged might have had that intention." The judge added: "To the contrary all are unanimous in asserting their respect for all the national emblems, as well as for the laws."[360]

The refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses children to salute the flag and to take part in the patriotic celebrations was considered as a menace not only by the catholic nationalists, but by several sectors of the society including the newspaper *La Nación,* a bastion of liberal ideas. In its editorial of August 6, 1976, that talked about the respect to the national identity, it stated: "We do not have to give up with this exigence because if we do so, the plural and open Argentina of our forefathers will no longer be country and will start to be a Babel of men and women that not recognized each other."[361] The threat of "becoming a Babel" arrived at the moment when the repression was in its most intensive phase.[362] It was from among the Church that some voices started to denounce the formation of a parallel church due to the autonomy and importance that the vicariate started to gain. Angelelli, for example, was among those who saw this danger. According to Cersósimo, this split responded to the conception that the "traditionalists" had about the place that the Church and the

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[359] Ibidem

[360] *Awake!* September 22, 1978, 7.

[361] *La Nación*, 8/6/76 Editorial.

[362] Here we understand repression as repression as "the implementation of a combination of coercive elements, legal and extralegal, employed by the state, its apparatus and agents eliminate or weaken the disruptive actions of social and political actors." See Aguila Gabriela "Estudiar la represión" in Flier, P, (ed), *Dilemas, apuestas y reflexiones teórico-metodológicas para los abordajes en Historia reciente*, 43.

armed forces had in the nation. They were the fundamental upon which the re-foundation had to take place. *La iglesia clandestina* of Carlos Sacheri had already alerted about the "infiltration" from "false catholics" that the Church was suffering.

In this context where Jehovah's Witnesses were at the center of the attention, the federal police raid the installations of the Jehovah's Witnesses' central office in Buenos Aires searching for weapons during the last days of August 1976. The police officers told to Charles Eisenhower that the government was preparing a ban for Jehovah's Witnesses. Eisenhower and the personal in charge of the activities in Argentina started to prepare and organize the underground activities throughout the circuit servants, cadres that played a fundamental role during those years in maintaining the organizing structure.[363]

On August 31, 1976, the presidential decree 1867 announced:

"The freedom of religion consecrated by articles 14 and 20 of the National Constitution of course finds itself limited in the sense that religious ideas should not imply the violation of laws or an attempt against public order, national security, morals or good customs."

"For this reason . . . THE PRESIDENT OF THE ARGENTINE NATION DECREES:

"ARTICLE 1: The activity of the religious association 'JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES' or 'THE WATCH TOWER BIBLE TRACT ASSOCIATION' and all groups, entities, or associations directly or indirectly related to said association is prohibited in all of the territory of the Nation.

"ARTICLE 2: Likewise are prohibited (a) the papers, magazines, and all publications that openly or otherwise contribute to the doctrine under consideration; (b) the acts of proselyting and indoctrination.

"ARTICLE 3: All places where the afore-mentioned association holds meetings as well as the places where such material mentioned in Article 2 is printed, distributed or sold will be closed.

"ARTICLE 4: Through the Ministry of the Interior provisions will be adopted and instructions will be given for the carrying out of this decree."

The reason why Jehovah's Witnesses were banned according to the decree was that "the sect in question had principles that were against the nationality, the basic institutions of the State and the fundamental principles of its legislation." Even when the regime respected the liberal constitution that in its articles 14 and 20 assured the freedom of belief, the religious ideas should not imply a violation of the law, a threat to the public order, the national security, the morality and generally accepted good customs." It was banned the activity of the religious organization, its publications, its acts of proselytism and indoctrination and all the publications related to their ideology. The physical places where they produced their literature or they held their meetings were all closed down.

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[363] *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 2001*, 164.

The decree was signed by Videla, Harguindeguy, Klix and Guzzetti.

On September 7, one week later, the police arrived to the central office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Buenos Aires. The offices, which were a complex where not only the literature was produced and it is coordinate the whole activity in the country, were closed down. These offices had a complex with little rooms and a huge dinning room. The people who were living there were able to have breakfast and lunch all together. The authorities "closed and sealed the printery, office, shipping and storage and guards were posted."[364] The rest of the installation continued to functioning so the personal was able to continue living there.

They did not just close the central offices. All over the country around 600 Kingdom halls were closed.[365] Once that the central offices were closed, the circuit overseers started to play a crucial role in reorganizing the underground activities. Each one of them had around twenty congregations to visit. A report of the DIPBA described how Jehovah's Witnesses were organized in the national territory that was divided in zones, territories and circuits. A zone was conformed by two or four blocks, a group of zones made a territory and the ensemble of territories conformed a circuit. Every zone was under the responsibility of one or two servants who were in charge of preaching the doctrine and were supervised by the chief of territory (also named servant). All of them were at the same time supervised by the circuit overseer.[366]

The circuit overseers gave instructions on how to

"conduct the meetings and how to witness in view of the changed circumstances. The elders were also told that the length of the circuit overseer's visit would not necessarily be an entire week but would depend upon the number of book study groups in the congregation. The meetings would take place in private homes, with each group receiving a one-day visit."[367]

The instructions for the circuit overseers on how they have to continue with their activities was that they had "to find part-time secular jobs and to establish a permanent address to minimize suspicion

[364] *Awake!* September 22, 1978, 10.

[365] Ibidem

[366] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo 770. Factor Religioso, número 182, Testigos de Jehová, 18/9/1987.

[367] *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 2001*, 167.

about their activities. Most of them sold a variety of products in the morning and then served congregations in the afternoon."[368]

On April 7, 1980, the SIDE local office of Bahia Blanca reported about a series of activities that had been planned by Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the Circuit Overseers. The personal of SIDE was following the activities of Hector Chap, who was living with her wife and two daughters and dedicated to sale camping accessories in the south region of the country. He received post from the *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Association,* informing about a series of conventions that were about to take place in Pelotas and Santa María, Brazil, from 17 to 20 July, 1980. Another convention was planned in Uruguay for September and October, 1980.[369] In the letter addressed to all the circuit overseers stated that no public announcement has to be made in the congregations about the coming conventions because the branch office does not want to make a scene for the authorities.[370]

Carlos Ferencia and Mario Menna were among the circuit overseers at that time. Ferencia was hold by the police with a letter of branch informing him of the coming ban. Once that they were in the police station

"The policemen took Carlos to a poorly lit room, and shining a bright light in his face, one of them shouted: "What do you have there in that bag?" The contents of his book bag were emptied on the table—a Bible, some magazines, and the letter! One of the policeman exclaimed: "The Watchtower! The Watchtower! Subversive, subversive!" But the officer in charge chided him: "Oh, be quiet. Haven't you ever seen The Watchtower, you fool?" Meanwhile, Carlos was trying to stay calm and to show respect. After the police examined the publications, they ordered him to put everything away. However, an officer interrupted and said: "What is in that envelope?" Carlos handed the envelope with the Society's letter to the officer, waited a few seconds, and then asked: "Excuse me, may I say something?" "Sure," the officer replied, looking up from the letter. Carlos continued: "I understand that you are looking out for the safety of the community." That captured the officer's attention. Carlos then showed him from the Bible that the current violent situation fulfilled Bible prophecies. When he had finished, the officer said: "I'm with you, my friend." He then returned the letter without having read it."[371]

In the case of Mario Menna, he described their tasks as Circuit overseers as follow: "It was a real privilege to serve the congregations and comfort the brothers in those years. We tried to encourage

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[368] Ibidem

[369] DIPBA, Mesa D E, Carpeta: Entidades Religiosas, Legajo 853. Testigos de Jehová en Bahía Blanca, Abril, 1980.

[370] Ibidem

[371] *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 2001*, 163.

them by sharing recordings of assembly programs, new publications that we obtained from neighboring countries, or upbuilding experiences."[372]

Denouncing the mistreatment suffered during those first two years, the *Awake!* in 1978 published a series of articles entitled "Argentina: Champion of Freedom - Or of Religious Intolerance?" The report stated that

"Since the ban, religious intolerance has flamed up in some 38 cities and towns from the far northern provinces of Misiones, Formosa and Salta to the southern provinces of Río Negro, Chubut and Santa Cruz. To date, over 320 persons have been arrested, many of them elderly men and women, and small children. Other people have been detained merely because of being relatives or friends of the Witnesses."[373]

One of the most controversial subjects was the refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses children to take part in the patriotic ceremonies.

After the enabling of the decree that banned Jehovah's Witnesses in the whole national territory, the Minister of Interior, Albano Harguindeguy, enacted the directive 4/77 in order to regulate the application of the ban because it was confused in several provinces how was the right way to proceed. The relevance of the measures to be taken were marked by the importance of the patriotic ceremonies for the conservation of the nation. "The nationality has the patriotic symbols as one of its most clearly form of expression. The remembrance of the national heroes and the events that marked relevant stages in the march of the country have the same relevance."[374] Even when the right of every citizen to practice a religion was an individual right, the document showed clearly that such a right had limits. "Even when the State can not interfere in the religious faith of the individuals so long they are not manifested publicly, it does can interfere by regulating and banning an individual right when the ostentation, diffusion or propaganda of this faith treaty against the superior interests of the Nation."[375] The directive stated that every provincial governor had to take the necessary measures to assure that the reverence to the national symbols were venerated in every public school. A control of the principals and teachers in the schools was necessary in order to be sure that the disciplinary measures were taken place against those who refuse to venerate the symbols. The admission of Jehovah's Witnesses' children had to be normal, they were able to

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[372] Ibidem, 167.

[373] *Awake!* September 22, 1978, 10.

[374] Directiva N° 4/77 del Ministerio del Interior (Normas para la aplicación del Decreto N°1867/76 en DIPBA Mesa de Referencia, Legajo 18.176.

[375] Ibidem

receive education despite of their faith but every pupil that refuse to take part in the national ceremonies had to be expelled. A summary had to be open against those teachers or principals that do not exercise the necessary control.[376]

In 1978, *The Awake!* denounced that more than 300 children had been expelled from the educational system since the beginning of the ban. The DIPBA archive allow us to see how was the situation in the province of Buenos Aires.

Region I

District	School	Number of expelled pupils
Avellaneda	Escuela N°20	1
La Plata	Escuela N° 93	2
	Escuela N°102	2
	Escuela N° 65	2
Almirante Brown	Escuela N°19	1
Chascomus	Escuela N°2	3
General Paz	Escuela N°4	2
Merlo	Escuela N°45	1
Lomas de Zamora	Escuela N°46	4
San Vicente	Escuela N°12	3

Region II

District	School	Number of expelled pupils
Moron	Escuela N°2	1
	Escuela N°44	2
	Escuela N°85	3
	Escuela N°6	1
	Escuela N°49	2
	Escuela N°76	4
	Escuela N°24	1

[376] Ibidem

District	School	Number of expelled pupils
La Matanza	Escuela N°75	1
	Escuela N°50	5
	Escuela N°80	2
	Escuela N°60	1
	Escuela N°61	2
	Escuela N°75	2
	Escuela N°151	1
Tres de Febrero	Escuela N°17	1
Escobar	Escuela N°4	2
	Escuela N°12	2
	Escuela N°1	1
General Rodríguez	Escuela N°1	2
General Sarmiento	Escuela N°11	2
	Escuela N°51	2
Merlo	Escuela N°1	2
	Escuela N°8	10
	Escuela N°29	4
	Escuela N°41	3
	Escuela N°48	4
	Escuela N°51	1
	Escuela N°18	5
Moreno	Escuela N°14	2
Tres de Febrero	Escuela N°19	2
	Escuela N°31	2
E. Echeverria	Escuela N°21	1
	Escuela N°22	3
	Escuela N°31	2
	Escuela N°35	1
	Escuela N°37	1
	Escuela N°41	7
Lanus	Escuela N°56	4
	Escuela N°64	9

District	School	Number of expelled pupils
Lomas de Zamora	Escuela N°10	6
	Escuela N°56	1
	Escuela N°45	1
Quilmes	Escuela N°46	3

Region III

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
Chivilcoy	Escuela N°65	1
Lobos	Escuela N°1	6
	Escuela N°11	7
	Escuela N°19	2
San Pedro	Escuela N°6	1
	Escuela N°10	3

Region IV

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
Junin	Escuela N°24	1
Adolfo Alsina	Escuela N°17	2
Pergamino	Escuela N°1	3
San Nicolas	Escuela N^29	1

Region V

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
Olavarria	Escuela N°76	1
Azul	Escuela N°2	3
	Escuela N°13	5
	Escuela N°18	10

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
	Escuela N°28	2
Benito Juarez	Escuela N° 26	1

Region VI

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
Bahia Blanca	Escuela N°6	4
	Escuela N°27	1
	Escuela N°35	4
	Escuela N°62	4
	Escuela N°7	2
	Escuela N°8	1
	Escuela N°12	2
Coronel Pringles	Escuela N°1	3
	Escuela N°2	1
	Escuela N°3	1
	Escuela N°6	1
	Escuela N°15	3
Coronel Rosales	Escuela N°8	1
	Escuela N°9	2
Villarino	Escuela N°6	1
	Escuela N°55	3
	Escuela N°1	3

Region VII

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
General Pueyrredón	Escuela N°1	3
	Escuela N°12	3
	Escuela N°15	3

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
	Escuela N°16	1
	Escuela N°18	1
	Escuela N°19	8
	Escuela N°21	3
	Escuela N°26	6
	Escuela N°31	1
	Escuela N°32	7
	Escuela N°33	1
	Escuela N°36	4
	Escuela N°41	3
	Escuela N°42	8
	Escuela N°45	10
	Escuela N°53	1
	Escuela N°57	1
	Escuela N°61	1
	Escuela N°62	4
	Escuela N°21	1
Necochea	Escuela N°2	7
	Escuela N°4	3
	Escuela N°6	1
	Escuela N°12	4

Region VIII

District	School	Number of expelled Pupils
Tigre	Escuela N° 5	3

A total of 308 pupils were expelled from the educational system only in the Province of Buenos Aires. The district of General Pueyrredon, whose center is the city of Mar del Plata, is interesting,

because we find there several schools with an important number of expelled pupils (*Escuela 19* with 8, *Escuela 32* with 7, *Escuela 45* with 10 cases). Another two institutions that also had a high number of cases were *Escuela 18* of Azul with 10 and the *Escuela 64* of Lanus with 9 cases. The expelled children were between 6 (1° grade) and 12 years old (7°grade).[377]

In the *Escuela 35* of Bahia Blanca, the school inspector Teresa E. Inchauste de Stechi decreed that Susana and Gladys Simón were to be expelled from all schools, public and private. She stated: "They are subject to the sanction of expulsion from the establishment, and as pupils of any other educational service, as well as being banned from being given exams as independent students"[378] This institution expelled a total of four children.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' Yearbook of 2001 stated: "Under the military regime, thousands of people disappeared and were executed. Surprisingly, despite the government's strong stand against Jehovah's Witnesses, not one of the Witnesses was among those who disappeared."[379] Even when we find no fatal victim of the clandestine repression among the Jehovah's Witnesses, they were related with this clandestine system of repression.

Besides the continuities that can be found between the pre and post dictatorial years, Gabriela Aguila has pointed out that in March 1976 we can find a turning point in two aspects: the scale and the results. The military regime centralized and coordinated the repression throughout the installation of around 600 clandestine centers of detention. They were basically used between 1976 and 1979 and had the central function of obtaining information in order to dismantle the "subversive organizations" and the breakdown of the prisoners. Palermo and Novaro considered that the most important were: *La Perla* (Córdoba) more than 2,500, *Campo de Mayo* 4,000 and *Vesubio* 2,000 (Buenos Aires Province), *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* 4,500 and *Club Atlético* 1,500 in Buenos Aires.[380]

Pablo Scatizza has already criticized the employment of the term concentration camp in the Argentinean case from a regional perspective. The use of this concept is based on the model established by the ESMA which can be defined as the paradigm of the "concentration camps" in Argentina. Other studies that have employed the concept were based on the "camps" of *La Mansión*

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[377] DIPBA, Mesa de Referencia, Legajo N°18177, Ref. Accionar de la "Asociación Testigos de Jehová", "La Torre del Vigia" o "La Asociación de Tratados Bíblicos," 10 de Abril de 1981.

[378] "Stop The Inquisition in Argentina!" in *Awake!* September 8, 1979, 16.

[379] *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 2001*, 187.

[380] Palermo Novaro, *La Dictadura Militar*, 118, quoted in Gabriela Aguila,(2013). La represión en la historia reciente argentina: perspectivas de abordaje, conceptualizaciones y matrices explicativas. CONTENCIOSA. Revista sobre violencia política, represiones y resistencias en la historia iberoamericana, 1, Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Santa Fe.

Seré, *El Atlético*, *El Banco*, *El Olimpo*, *Campo de Mayo* and *La Perla* (Córdoba). Based on his study on a particular region, Scatizza has pointed out that not all the places known as Clandestine Detention Centers had the same characteristic of these "concentration camps." There was a diversity that has to be taken into consideration. Not every Center was established as a place where "the mental and physical annihilation was practiced in a systematic total form," which seems to be the determining characteristic of the so-called concentration camps.[381] Gabriela Aguila and Pablo Scatizza have showed the differences among the clandestine detention centers in Argentina. There were differences in functioning and also variance according to each particular region. *El Olimpo* and *Campo de Mayo*, for example, did not functioned and responded to the same Goals that *La Quinta de Funes*.

Several Jehovah's Witnesses shared the same topological space with prisoners of the clandestine centers, it was the case of those who were imprisoned because they refused to be drafted in the armed forces. This phenomenon was not new, as we have seen, the dictatorship of Ongania had already confronted with this problem and in 1976 the armed forces knew how to deal with Jehovah's Witnesses. Nevertheless there was an increment in the number of prisoners. As the following diagram shows, the class that had to be drafted in 1976, the number 1955, had increased in the number of religious Conscientious Objectors. The class 1946 was drafted in 1967 and it was the first one to be drafted under the dictatorship of Ongania. In this class, there was eight Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to be drafted. A year later, 1968, 12 Jehovah's Witnesses who belonged to the class 1947 were imprisoned for refusing to be incorporated to the armed forces: Jorge Rubén Capiello, Ricardo Carlino, Francisco Dieguez, José Omar Giorgi, Nestor Raymond Gonzalez, Mario Arturo Iglesias, Luís Alberto Kasan, Eduardo Rene López, Carlos del Valle Moyano, Florerin Padilla, Albino Retamales and Carlos Alberto Toubes.[382] These 12 conscientious objectors in 1968 would be 84 in 1976 when the class 1955 was drafted. The names of those Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to be drafted in April 1976 were: Juan Horacio Agüero, Juan Roque Apendino, Víctor Manuel Alonso, Miguel Angel Avila, Rodolfo Barcelona, Daniel Eduardo Barria, Luis Angel Beghe, Pantaleon Bejarano, Pedro Antonio Beltran, José Luis Beltrani, Sergio Omar Belza, Pablo Daniel Berges, Armando César Bochio, Miguel Bosca, Alberto Brizuela, Diego Luís Bustamante, Julio César Echeverría Caballero, José Cabañete, Bernardino Caffa, Ramón Anastacio Carrizo, Conrado Ariel Cerutti, Francisco Alberto Ciappesoni, Raúl Armando Ciora, Raúl Cisterna, Juan Manuel

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[381] Scatizza, "Centros Clandestinos de Detención en el Comahue. Una reflexión conceptual" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal.*

[382] See https://www.o-conciencia.org/listados/ consulted 8.15.2019.

Coñuelo, Domingo Federico Cuello, Eduardo De Innocenttis, Samuel Diedrich, Oscar Rubén Dinoto, Julio César Dominguez, Raúl Ricardo Donadio, Carlos Hugo Echaniz, Hugo Alfredo Galan, Sergio Galliussi, Jorge Rodolfo Gandur, Pedro Oscar García, Juan Carlos Gauna, Jorge Omar Godoy, Daniel Eduardo Gomez, Ricardo Gonzalez, Miguel Orlando Gonzalez, Enrique Gregorio Gonzalez, Abel David Hecklein, Norberto Hein, Alfredo José Heredia, Emilio Eduardo Hernandez, Eduardo Daniel Larussi, Ricardo Indavera, Antonio Rosendo Infortuna, Héctor Oscar Iñiguez, Saúl Daniel Irusquibelar, Cristian Kazankoff, Narciso Eusebio Leyes, Rafael Longo, Ramón Héctor Lucero, Salvador Eduardo Maglione, Julio César Mayorga, Estergindio Enrique Medina, Anibal Manuel Merlo, Eduardo Jorge Moire, Carlos Oscar Montenegro, Carlos Alberto Navarro, Nicasio Armando Olazar, Jorge Eduardo Paez, Artemio René Pare, Julio Alberto Pelati, Gustavo Adolfo Pellegrini, Carlos Rosendo Pereyra, Ramón Irinero Piriz, Carlos Armando Pucheta, Juan Daniel Pugliese, Pedro Justino Quinteros, Manuel Antonio Rivero, Daniel Oscar Romero, Oscar Romero, Raul Oscar Saldaño, Nestro Omar Santana, Miguel Saravia, Vicente Santos Sassone, Héctor Sigliano, Juan José Semisky, Miguel Angel Ventriglia, Anselmo Andrés Viola and Juan Daniel Zazerej.

Rubén Oscar Dinoto was born in Santa Fe and was chemist as profession. He was incorporated in the *Batallon de Comunicaciones 601* and due to his refusal he was sent back home. During this time he was able even to assist an underground convention in the city of Santa Fe knowing that he would not be able to see his “brothers” for a long time. He was then transferred to City Bell in the province of Buenos Aires where he was imprisoned in the dungeon for 11 months. Since October 7, 1976, he was under the category *Prisión Preventiva Rigurosa*. He was judged by a martial-court on October 27, 1977, together with Anibal Raúl Merlo, Miguel Alberto Ramón Bosca, Hilario Ramón Paiva, Gustavo Adolfo Pelegrini and Abel David Heskleil. On Abril 25, 1978, he requested to be visited by a family of City Bell due to the fact that his family was not able to visit him. He was later transferred to Magdalena together with Héctor Carlos Mohammed. In the prison of Magdalena he was in the pavilion 6 Alto Seguro and worked as waiter in 10 Alto at the time when Carlos Saúl Menem was also there imprisoned. With the arrival of “three murders of SIDE” he was taken with others to the 9 Bajo where the Graivers were also imprisoned.[383]

Juan Zazerej, belonging to the class 1955, was incorporated in February 1976. He stayed in Campo de Mayo during this year and on October 20, 1977, was transferred to Magdalena. His

[383] Interview to Rubén Oscar Dinoto in https://www.o-conciencia.org/relato/audios/ consulted 9.22.2019. See also Legajo N°3891 Dinoto, Rubén Oscar, Instituto Penal de las Fuerzas Armadas. Available online in https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/

sentence ended up on March 8, 1981. At the moment of being imprisoned, Zazerej was already married and had two children. In January 1978, he asked to be transferred of pavilion so he was in better conditions to receive his wife, the demand was not conceded. Due to an illness of his wife in February 1979, he asked for an authorization to leave for a time the prison in order to support his family, specially his children of 2 and 3 years old. In the file of Zazerej, we can also find a series of disciplinary measures that he received during the time he was in prison. November 25, 1977, he was punished with three days without cinema and sports because he moved the furniture of the cell without authorization. July 3, 1978, he was punished during five days because he did not take care of the tools he used to work. One month later, on August 11, 1978, the punishment was five days of isolation because he did not display the proper respect during the farewell ceremony of the class 1958. Zazerej received a third punishment on November 7, 1978, because he did not take care of the working tools.[384]

In 1977, Videla declared that the subversion was over reducing it to just a mere military problem. This diagnosis marked a difference with those sectors of the armed forces and those groups of the society who thought that the fight against subversion had to continue in the psychological order.[385] In 1976, Ricardo Curutchet wrote in an editorial that the regime seemed to be limited to the function of just a sterilization of the State. It was necessary to take advantage of the historical process opened up by the putsch and transformed this new military intervention in a revolution. Other publications that expressed the opinion of the "traditional thinking," using the definition of Cersósimo, like the newspaper *La Nueva República*, stated in its editorial of March 24, 1976, the need of a "national and traditionalist revolution" that allowed a return to the historical roots of the national being and "remake a nation that had been converted in a wasteland." In the case that the regime headed by Videla would not take this path, the putsch would be reduced to just a revolt, one more of the many military uprising that failed due to the "respect for the "untrue institutions."[386]

In 1977, Roberto Raffaelli stated in the same publication that in order to obtain a true victory over the subversion, it was necessary to oppose a "national, hierarchical, based in spiritual elements mystic" order to the "international, equalling and materialist mystic" of the Marxism.[387] It

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[384] Legajo N°3990 Zazerej Juan, Instituto Penal de las Fuerzas Armadas, Available online in https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/ consulted 9.22.2019.

[385] Cersósimo, op. cit., 152,153.

[386] ibidem, 113,114.

[387] Ibidem, 154.

was clearly an ideological battle against an enemy that was named by Acdel Vilas, "cultural subversion."[388]

Once that "the subversion" was defeated, the regime entered in a different phase shaped by the divisions and contradictions among the armed forces and non-military powers which were behind the putsch of 1976.

[388] Ibidem, 154.

6. Human Rights and the Republican Institutions

In March 1978, Luis was preaching together with Liliana. They were together since September 1977. They knocked on the door of a police officer who immediately called the police central, In a matter of minutes a couple of Ford Falcons arrived. Liliana and Luis were taken to the police station 43 located at the front of Floresta square. One week later, they were once again arrested and this time they had to spend the whole night at the police station. Liliana was placed in the kitchen and Luis in a cell which was full with other prisoners. There were many people without identification documents and also a car thief. After a long interrogation the policemen arrived to the conclusion that Liliana and Luis were not subversive. They called then their parents. Once that Liliana and Luis were picked up, the officer told the parents that they had to take care of their children. Otherwise, if they were caught out once more preaching, they were going to kill them, and put a weapon on them so they would appear as subversive.[389]

At that time Bethel, the central office of Jehovah's Witnesses, was looking for reports about different repressive incidents. Until that time they were able to collect reports in almost every Argentinean province. However, they did not have any case in the city of Buenos Aires. When Luis and Liliana reported what happened to them, Bethel finally had a reported incident in the capital city. Those cases would be known worldwide.[390]

Once the "subversion" was defeated, the regime had to face a new kind of problems. In 1979 general Benjamin Menéndez essayed to take over the power throughout a military putsch. The failed attempt was the materialization of an enigma that had remained hidden under the overcoat of the "war against subversion." This great enigma was: How should it be continued? Once that the "inner enemy" was defeated, the heterogeneity of factions that were part of regime emerged. At the end of 1979 *Cabildo* expressed this heterogeneity in two words and two names: Process or Revolution? Viola or Menéndez?[391]

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389 Interview to Luis Miguel on January 4th, 2024.

390 Ibidem

391 Cersósimo, *El proceso fue liberal,* 282.

While the regime was occupied in resolving this new conflict, a new chance emerged for Jehovah's Witnesses to end up with the ban that was enacted two years ago. This chance was related to a wound suffered by the regime at the time when paradoxically it could celebrate its consolidation in the power with a "*fiesta de todos*" (festivity for everyone): the FIFA World Cup of 1978. In the coming years this wound, the human rights' issue, would end up to be lethal for the regime.

In contrast to the beginning, when the repressive plan, the "war against subversion," was the main objective, the regime started to show its main characteristics in 1978: stagnation, irresolution and confusion in its objectives. Paula Canela pointed out that we can find a common pattern along the history of the militaries regimes in Argentina. We always find a division between liberals and nationalists. The first ones usually took the technical positions like Economy, Industry, Agriculture and Finance ministries while the nationalists were in charge of Education, Culture and Interior ministry. Moreover, Alain Rouquié has exposed the thesis that there was a behavior pattern in the different Putsches, an alliance between the liberals and the more reactionary factions at the beginning of the processes and later on this second group is slowly displaced from the power. In the case of the regime that started in 1976, the different ministries were assigned according to the division among the armed forces. The Army received the Labour and Interior ministries, Horacio Tomás Liendo and Albano Harguindeguy, the Navy obtained the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Social Development, César Guzzetti and Julio Bardi, and the ministries of Justice and Defense were assigned to Air Force, José María Klix and Julio Arnaldo Gómez. Two ministries were reserved for civilians, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economy headed by José Alfredo Martinez de Hoz.[392]

Another classification of the internal conflicts among the armed forces is the one made by Morresi. He identifies three groups: The nationalist hard wing, also denominated falcons or Pinochetists; the liberal soft wing, also named doves and politicized, and a third group formed by the moderate who were between these two groups and exerted a major role in the last dictatorship. Videla, Harguindeguy, Saint-Jean (military members) and Martinez de Hoz, Grondona and Perriaux (civilians members) were those who formed this third group which stamped the ideological nature of the regime as a conservative liberalism.[393] Jorge Rafael Videla was like the materialization of these ideas, ideas that were the basic principle among the different sectors of the armed forces and

[392] Canelo, "Las dos almas del proceso", 72,73.

[393] Morresi, "El liberalismo conservador", 120,121.

determined a consensus that was beyond the fight against "subversion."[394] Cersósimo, on the other side, described the conservative Liberalism as "anti-comunist and also anti-peronist, it was promoter of the free market but at the same time of a strong state that allows such a market; it was favorable to the republican and representative forms but regulated and controlled (…); It was against democracy but it was opened to politic pluralism with restriction to communism and populism. It was inclined to a hierarchical order not made by corporations but by individual-citizens. it was far away from the Catholic Integrism but favorable to the christian ethic as the base of the political order."[395]

The internal different among the regime had its first consequences in 1978 with the hostilities between two members of the ruling Junta: Videla and Massera. The pressure exerted by Emilio Massera led to the retirement of Videla as major of the army, on August 1, 1978, at the cost of the Massera own retirement of the navy. It was stipulated that Videla would finish his mandate at the beginning of 1981. The new major of the army was Roberto Viola. Not everyone in the army agreed with his designation. From the ten generals of divisions, Videla, Harguindeguy, Galtieri and Urricariet, the softs, were with the Viola. The falcons, the hard core of the army, Menéndez, Suárez Mason and Riveros were not satisfied with the new major.[396]

This division among the army responded to ideological differences that lead to different diagnosis and solutions. But there was also a history that allowed to explain this divisions. The generals of 1976 and those who were leading what they considered a war compound a generation that was formed trained between 1955 and 1962 when they were captains, lieutenants and commandants.[397] There was a historical division between cavalry and infantry. Cavalry was dominated by the *blues*, they wanted to take into consideration the Peronism in the solution and was the hegemonic group during the dictatorship of Onganía. The generals of this group were Carlos Suárez Mason, Ramón Díaz Bessone, Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, René Azpitarte and Santiago Riveros. The other group, the infantry started to be protagonist with the Peronist government that started in 1973. It was predominantly red and it was the sector where Videla and Viola had made their careers. Other names in this group were Domingo Bussi and José Antonio Vaquero.[398]

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[394] ibidem, 104.

[395] Cersósimo, op. cit., 176.

[396] Novaro y Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1976/1983,* 233.

[397] Ranalletti, "Aux origines du terrorisme d'État en Argentine", 47.

[398] Novaro y Palermo, op. cit., 178, 179.

One of the document that incarnated the ideas and the politics of the "Falcons" was the one written by the general Díaz Bessone, the *Proyecto Nacional*. The premise of the document was the foundation of a "New Republic" based on the leadership of an elite that had to be a "new generation of the 80s."[399] The *Proyecto* and Díaz Bessone later were among the victims of the internal divisions of the regime. Slowly every name that was associated with this hard wing was displaced. The politics taken by the regime went in another direction, something that accumulated the malaise among the armed forces. The uprising of Menéndez in 1979 had to be understood in this context. For many, it was clear where the option to the path taken by Videla and Martinez de Hoz was. One more time, we can find in *Cabildo* a simple and clear definition of the situation at the end of 1979: "Viola-Menéndez, Process or Revolution?"[400]

To take into consideration the history of the armed forces helps us to understand how the ideological fundament of the regime had been developed in the previous years but even more important how this ideology related with the myth of a Catholic nation and a union between the Church and the armed forces was not shared and accepted by everyone. The name that the regime gave to itself, *National Reorganization Process*, can be better explained when we take into consideration these internal divisions. The name was closer to the ideas of Videla on what kind of regime they wanted to establish. As we have already mention, the regime was justified by the constitution of 1853, so it was a regime that had to fight for republican, representative and federal ideals.

On March 10, 1977, Federal Judge Dr. Jorge E. Cermesoni declared the first article of the decree that banned the Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina as illegal. According to Cermesoni, the regime has gone quite beyond its jurisdiction by banning this "religious sect." Anyway the ban was not to be ended because Jehovah's Witnesses were not registered in the Registry of Cults as an official religion with the recognition of the Argentinean State. Neither the Regime nor the Jehovah's Witnesses were satisfied with the verdict and appealed it. The Ministry of Interior appealed because the regime considered that the Executive Power had the right to regulated constitutional guarantees and the Jehovah's Witnesses appealed because the decision of the Judge did not remove the ban. On June 23, 1977, the court of appeals formed by federal judges Alberto Azcona, Juan Carlos Béccar Varela and Valerio Pico declared the decree enacted by Videla in 1976 as null. The newspaper *La Nación* reported: "Religious liberty is one of the most important human rights . . . in consequence,

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[399] Canelo, op. cit., 78.

[400] Cersósimo, op. cit., 282.

in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, their cult . . . cannot be validly restricted, unless its exercise affects the morals or public order."[401] The regime decided to appeal this decision of the court of appeals and the case arrived to the Supreme Court that on February 8, 1978, decided to uphold the legality of the ban. The decree enacted in 1976 "did not show arbitrariness nor apparent illegality." Moreover, the Supreme Court stated that 'the Witnesses had other administrative and judicial avenues for the defense of their rights, namely, inscription in the Registry of Religions."[402]

With the decision of the Supreme Court in 1978 the legal struggle was finished, the resistance of the Jehovah's Witnesses to the repressive measure would take another form. At the same time the FIFA World Cup opened a new field where the regime started to show its vulnerability and weakness and allowed the Jehovah's Witnesses together with an important part of the society to globalize the resistance against the repressive methods of the regime. In the issue of September 22, 1978, the *Awake!*, official magazine of Jehovah's Witnesses, published a series of articles about the situation in Argentina. The title of the first article was *Argentina: Champion of Freedom-Or of Religious Intolerance?* It started with an official response from the Argentine Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa:

"Freedom of conscience has been and continues to be fully guaranteed under the Constitution and Laws of Argentina. 'Jehovah's Witnesses,' in common with other religious bodies, have found . . . complete freedom for the practice of their beliefs. (…) It has never been the intention of the Argentine Government to curb or deny individual freedom of conscience, and much less to persecute any person for his religious convictions."[403]

Jehovah's Witnesses founded contradictory the fact that the Argentinean government and also important newspapers like *La Nación*, a liberal newspaper, sustained the tolerance and the freedom of conscience and religious convictions. It was even more inexplicable that the main argument to defend the regime and its measures was the national constitution. The *Awake!* quoted the editorial of *La Nación* of February 17, 1978, as a good example of this contradiction:

"The Argentine Nation can exhibit before the world, with legitimate pride over its history, the tolerance of its laws and of its people for the practice of religion (…) As in few places in the world . . . the law protects and permits [other religions] 'to freely practice their religion,' according to the wise Constitutional prescription."[404]

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[401] "Religious intolerance intensifies," in *Awake!* 1978, September 22, 8,9.

[402] ibidem

[403] "Argentina: Champion of Freedom-Or of Religious Intolerance?," in *Awake!* 1978, September 22, 3.

[404] Ibidem

Such statements were in contrast with what it had been happening in Argentina in the last two years

"The September 1976 ban, together with the February 1978 Supreme Court ruling, has deprived Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina of their freedom to worship God;

The meeting places for Christian worship and Bible study of Jehovah's Witnesses have been closed by law;

The publication and distribution of Bibles and Bible literature by Jehovah's Witnesses have been prohibited;

Hundreds of the children of Jehovah's Witnesses have been expelled from primary and secondary schools. Similarly, adult Witnesses in the employ of the government at federal, provincial and municipal levels, as well as in public utilities and schools, have been dismissed without pay;

A growing number of police raids have taken place on the private homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. They have been arrested and detained for hours, days and even weeks;

Jehovah's Witnesses have been victims of insults, blows and attempted intimidation on the part of the constituted authorities. On some occasions even the basic elements for their physical needs have not been provided.[405]

The *Awake!* quoted the three articles of the Argentinean constitution related with the ban in order to underline the contradiction of a regime that sustained liberal values and at the same time decided to ban a religious denomination

Article 14 states: "All of the inhabitants of the Nation enjoy the following rights, in conformity with the laws that govern their exercise; . . . to publish their ideas in the press without previous censorship; . . . to associate together for worthwhile purposes; to freely practice their religion; to teach and to learn."

Article 19 states: "The private actions of men that in no wise offend the public order and morals, nor injure a third party, are reserved only for God, and exempt from the authority of the Magistrates."

Then Article 20 declares: "Foreigners . . . can . . . freely exercise their religion."[406]

After exposing the contradictions of the regime, the *Awake!* continued with a brief summary of the story of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina. How they started with the arrival of Juan Muñiz, how they were legally established in the country and how the first ban in the 1950s started. To the question "What have they done?" *Awake!* stated:

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[405] Ibidem

[406] Ibidem

In all these years, Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina, and everywhere else too, have carefully adhered to the principle set down in God's Word at Titus chapter 3, verse 1. There it says: "Continue reminding them to be in subjection and be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers." Do those words sound like a revolutionary manifesto with intent to destroy the established order? On the contrary, they clearly tell Bible believers, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, to obey the laws of all governments. They are not to search out ways to overthrow established governments by human means.[407]

According to the situation and the position of Jehovah's Witnesses referring to ceremonies in school and in the compulsory military training

In all parts of the world, Jehovah's Witnesses do not take part in such ceremonies as the saluting of the flag and the singing of national anthems. Why not? Because to them this would constitute an act of worship in direct violation of the first and second of the Ten Commandments.—Ex. 20:3-5.They take a stand similar to that of the three Hebrews in Babylon. (See Daniel, chapter 3.) During such ceremonies, Witness schoolchildren stand quietly and respectfully. And they never interfere with others participating in such ceremonies. Also frequently questioned is the conscientious objection to compulsory military training by male members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet, Witness youths are neither deserters nor anarchists. They present themselves to the military authorities on the date that they are called up. But they request exemption because of their Bible-based beliefs. And such exemption is granted to them in many countries, particularly in the Western world. This refusal to bear weapons of war is based on numerous Bible principles. One of these is found at Matthew 22:39, where Jesus said to his followers: "You must love your neighbor as yourself." Another command is given at Matthew 5:21, where Jesus said: "You must not murder." Similarly, in the Bible book of Isaiah, chapter 2, verse 4, God's people are told: 'You must beat your swords into plowshares and not learn war anymore.'[408]

The biblical story of the three Hebrews in Babylon was one of the most used by the youth Jehovah's Witnesses in those years, specially those who refused to be drafted. It was a kind of compass that allowed their consciousness to know and recognize how far they were supposed to go. It is also an example that allow to explain or to understand a kind of behavior that otherwise sound contradictory: "Witness youths are neither deserters nor anarchists. They present themselves to the military authorities on the date that they are called up. But they request exemption because of their Bible-based beliefs."

Calling the experience of the Christians of the first century, the article finished with the following "positive balance:"

The small band of Christians in the first century were misunderstood, maligned and persecuted. Yet they left a positive balance of benefits for humankind.Without resorting to violence and war weapons, true Christianity transformed the very lives of those who embraced its teachings. It resulted in people's replacing practices that hurt themselves and their neighbors with beneficial practices of the highest moral and spiritual caliber. Commenting on Jehovah's Witnesses in

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[407] Ibidem, 4.

[408] Ibidem, 5.

Argentina, the Buenos Aires Herald of March 31, 1978, observed: "However irritating their practices may be to government officials, the Jehovah's Witnesses have proven throughout the years to be hard-working, sober, thrifty and God-fearing citizens of the kind the nation manifestly needs." A high-ranking naval officer expressed it this way: "Regarding the morality and honesty of the Witnesses, there exists no doubt."[409]

The second article of the same *Awake!* made a resume of how the ban developed between 1976 and 1978 making clear that the fact of making worldwide public what was happening in Argentina was a response to the decision taken by the Supreme Court in February 1978. Making reference to the decree that banned the Jehovah's Witnesses, it was surprising for *Awake!* the basis for the prohibition despite having the freedom of religion as one of the Argentinean constitutional standard.

"The Ministry of the Interior's General Direction of Legal Matters asserted: "It has not been proven . . . that the sect is devoted to religious worship, that such worship is in accord with our morals and good customs. (…) "Liberty cannot be thought of in the case of a religion that admits cannibalism, ritual murder, or polygamy, and, by the same token, a religion such as is present in this case cannot be admitted regardless of the form it takes."[410]

The reply of *Awake!* was

"Of course, the facts are just the opposite. It has been clearly proven throughout this century that Jehovah's Witnesses are intensely devoted to religious worship. And that worship is of the highest moral caliber. Nor does it interfere with the way anyone else chooses to worship or the customs they may want to practice. Authorities all over the world, including the United States Supreme Court, have long ago established the truth of these matters. (…) The wording of that statement might make it appear to the uninformed that somehow Jehovah's Witnesses are connected with such things as cannibalism, ritual murder or polygamy. But that is totally false. Yet, such insinuations as these do damage, as many who are not familiar with Jehovah's Witnesses may feel that there is some basis for these innuendos."[411]

The chronicle of the legal development continued with the verdict of the court of appeals and the reason for the decision favorable to the Jehovah's Witnesses. According to the newspaper *La Nación* of June 24, 1977,

"Religious liberty is one of the most important human rights . . . in consequence, in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, their cult . . . cannot be validly restricted, unless its exercise affects the morals or public order." The judges noted that "the statutes of the [Jehovah's Witnesses] state that its purpose is 'public Christian worship of the Most High God and Christ Jesus.'"[412]

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409 Ibidem, 5,6.

410 "Religious Intolerance intensified" in *Awake!* 1978, September 22, 8.

411 Ibidem

412 Ibidem, 8,9.

Finally, the decision taken by the Supreme Court was considered by the Jehovah's Witnesses not only a blow against their activities but also a blow against freedom. *Awake!* concluded

"Was the High Court simply 'washing its hands,' as did Pontius Pilate in the case of Jesus? Was it seeking to avoid the responsibility of defining a constitutional issue? How different was the attitude expressed by the renowned Argentine educator and statesman Domingo F. Sarmiento a century ago. He had said: "If there is a minority of the population, and I say even one person who honestly and sincerely disagrees with the sentiment of the majority, the law protects him if he does not try to violate the laws." Sarmiento further declared: "For the protection of his thinking the . . . Constitution has been constructed." Thus, the Supreme Court, shirking its duty, had rendered a heavy blow against freedom, and against Jehovah's Witnesses. What it did was to give its seal of approval to the many acts of intolerance that had already taken place when the ban was first imposed in September of 1976, and that would yet take place. And what were some of those acts?[413]

A third article reported the different mistreatments that the Jehovah's Witnesses had to suffered along the country in different cities. It is interesting how during the chronicle the *Awake!* made special emphasis in pointing out that no "subversive element" was found in the different actions taken by the security forces against the members of the religious community.

What evidence did the police find when they raided private homes or closed the branch office and meeting places of the Witnesses throughout Argentina? NOT ONE WEAPON WAS FOUND, NOT ONE PIECE OF SUBVERSIVE LITERATURE! In addition, none of the Witnesses offered resistance. Nor did they evidence any lack of respect toward the police and other authorities. Among the 33,000 active Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina there has yet to be found EVEN ONE SUBVERSIVE! But this is not surprising to anyone who is familiar with Jehovah's Witnesses. Their lives have been patterned after the Christian principles set forth in the Bible, the basic textbook of the Witnesses in all countries of the world. Living by Bible principles certainly is not subversive. Yet, to study and talk to others about this Sacred Book is now considered a crime in Argentina![414]

The victims making use and appropriating the vocabulary and the signifiers of the perpetrators. Part of the efforts was to make a difference with other groups that were persecuted and were also victims of the regime. There were no identification with the "subversive elements" but an appropriation of this term and an effort to establish a distance with these groups.

What Can Be Done? was the question posted in a last article of the *Awake!*'s issue. It explicitly pointed out what would be the next stage in the resistance against the ban. The

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[413] Ibidem, 9,10.

[414] "What happened after the Ban" in *Awake!* 1978, September 22, 11,12.

Argentinean government had to respond and demonstrate "before world" why they were handling in such a way with them

WHAT can be done to correct religious intolerance in Argentina? The authorities themselves need to pay heed to questions such as the following: WHEN will it no longer be a crime in Argentina just to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses? Must we wait months or years until the slow-moving wheels of justice turn out a just decision? Will the highest authorities of the nation of Argentina personally listen, JUST ONCE, without prejudice, to Jehovah's Witnesses' side of the issue? The invested authorities now have the opportunity to demonstrate before the world which role Argentina really represents on the world scene: that of a champion of freedom—or of religious intolerance. The invested authorities now have the opportunity to demonstrate before the world which role Argentina really represents on the world scene: that of a champion of freedom—or of religious intolerance.[415]

Awake! made a special effort to point out that the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses was not a problem of the whole Argentinean society but only of some sectors. There were even policemen, judges and other kind of functionaries that expressed solidarity with them. The same could be said about the press. There were newspapers like *The Buenos Aires Herald* and *La Opinión* from Buenos Aires or *El Territorio* from Misiones that were favorable to Jehovah's Witnesses at the time of reporting what was happening wish them. "What the future holds?"

Jehovah's Witnesses earth wide await true justice. They know that such will inevitably come soon through the kingdom of the righteous Judge and King, Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, they put themselves under the protection of the same Being to whom the framers of the Argentine Constitution appealed when they penned these words in the Preamble to the Constitution: "To assure the benefits of freedom for us, for our posterity, and for all the men of the world that want to live on Argentine soil: invoking God's protection, Fountain of all right and justice."[416]

In a more pragmatical way, the readers of *Awake!* were also encourage to write letters to the authorities and responsible people of the ban in Argentina. The article ended up giving the addresses of Jorge Rafael Videla, Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera, Lieutenant General Roberto Eduardo Viola, Brigadier General Orlando Ramón Agosti, Vice-Admiral Oscar Antonio Montes (Minister of Foreign Relations and Religion), General Eduardo Albano Harguindeguy (Minister of the Interior), Brigadier Major José María Klix (Minister of National Defense), Doctor Juan José Catalán (Minister of Culture and Education), Brigadier Julio Gómez (Minister of Justice) and the members

[415] What Can Be Done" in *Awake!* 1978, September 22, 14,15.

[416] Ibidem 15,16.

of the Supreme Court of Justice: Doctor Horacio Heredia, Doctor Adolfo Gabrielli, Doctor Abelardo Rossi, Doctor Pedro Frías and Doctor Emilio Daireux.[417]

The internal divisions in the regime coincided with the emergence of the activism of the human right organizations headed by the movement of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. In April 1977 when a group of mothers started to meet in the Plaza de Mayo (May Square) in order to demand for the appearance of their children. On 30 April, 1977, took place the first meeting. They assembled so as to ask to the Minister of Interior for information about the localization of their relatives. Due to the impossibility of held a public meeting, they decided to meet at the center of the square where there is a pyramid and to walk around it. There were just a few number of participants in the first meeting, just fourteen. But this number grow up rapidly and in October of 1977 they were already more than 300. The first reactions of the regime to their activism was the employment of terror. At the end of 1977, a *grupo de tareas* (death squad) of the ESMA, based on previous intelligence tasks, kidnapped the active core of this group represented by Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti and María Antokoletz, among others. The repressive actions included also people who cooperated in the search of the disappeared people. The French nuns Alice Domon and Léonie Duquet were also kidnapped. All the victims where taken to the ESMA where they were tortured and then executed. In spite of the repressive measure the group continued in the fight. The main roles were replace by René Epelbaum and Hebe de Bonafini.[418] This was the beginning of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. In very short time other groups, like Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, joined in the struggle.

Among the most active associations in the defense of human rights was the APDH, *Permanent Assembly for Human Rights* (Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos). It was founded at the end of 1975 in order to denounce the assassinations perpetrated by the far-right death squad *Triple A*. In 1978, the APDH had the most important documentation center about the disappearance of people and had published in the newspaper *La Prensa* the number of 2,500 cases.[419] They played a very active role in the denunciation against the regime and in establishing contacts with international associations.

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[417] Ibidem 16.

[418] Novaro y Palermo, op. cit. 293.

[419] ibidem, 293.

In the denunciation to the regime for violation of human rights, the religious issue and the persecution to Jehovah's Witnesses started to have a different relevance. The journalist James Neilson, from the *Buenos Aires Herald*, was one of the few journalist who gave attention to the religious issue generated by Jehovah's Witnesses. He published in the newspaper *El Dia* of La Plata's city an article where he analyzed what he considered the greatest persecution campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses since the end of the Second World War. The article pointed out that the only regime in the region that considered the "eccentric attitude" of Jehovah's Witnesses as threat to the nationality was the one of Rafael Videla. By taking this repressive measures, it was clear that the military government "did not understand the human mind. They can persecute them, incarcerate them and ban them to believe in God but they can not break their will." Neilson defined this religious community as a "tough and stubborn sect" that "welcome death raising hymns to God and they are able to face fanaticisms different to their owns. In order to prove how useless and irrational was to ban this religious denomination, the journalist mentioned that the only two regimes that were taking such repressive politics in the end of the 1970s were the Argentine Military Regime and the one of Hasting Banda in Malawi. Even of the accusation found in the decree of attempting against the "moral and the good habits" seemed to be a bad joke due to the high moral standards of this community. Moreover the article accused the military regime of insulting those who salute the flag with sincere enthusiasm because to obligate the worship of the patriotic symbols was leaving the rituals without significance.[420]

The measures against Jehovah's Witnesses raised the comparison with Germany. According to the *Buenos Aires Herald*, the ban against Jehovah's Witnesses was a way of "injecting the dangerous virus of religious intolerance in the national blood flow." It was a campaign "without parallel in the western civilization since the second World War which "has brought shame to the Nation something that will be remember with embarrassment for the next generations." Among the acts against the members of this religious community, the article mentioned those who were arrested for the "crimes" of having their prayer and study meetings. Some of them were judged and were also separated from their children. Hundred of children were expelled from schools and the provincial governments had expropriated their movable properties. Many of their young people had been circulating in different military prisons among regular prisoners and even some were expelled from the country due to their religious convictions. It was the case of Pedro Brousset Massey, a Peruvian Young who had to fight a legal struggle in Córdoba in order to stay in the country and

[420] James Neilson, "Los Testigos de Jehová en las catacumbas" in *El Dia* November 15th, 1979.

marry his future wife. The persecution to this religious minority whose social basis was basically the working and low middle classes was a going back to the time of the Roman Empire that persecuted the first Christians. It was hard to understand what was the objective of the government with these measures. The "resolved way how Jehovah's Witnesses hold fast to their principles, an unusual phenomenon in this days, can only increase their adherents." Moreover, they were used to face this kind of situations. The fact that they are not "very numerous, nor very rich, nor very influential" contribute to the fact that nobody was interested in defending them. Nevertheless, it was remarkable that "no protest expression came from the press or from another representative institutions of the country." Even the political parties that "were so willing to criticize the political economy of the government" had done nothing to defend this "little and not beloved sect" and their freedom of worship.[421]

The regime was not immune to these kind of critiques and the international reputation and relationships were not a minor subject. The militaries, or at least an important part of them, could not allow to be accused of religious intolerance. On April, 26, 1978, we find that the minister of the interior, Albaro Harguindeguy, sent a statement to the governor of the Santa Fe province saying that it was necessary to avoid those conflicts that were not essential to face like the threat of "the religious sect," especially Jehovah's Witnesses, "that damage the values of our national being." This change responded to a campaign in and outside the country that was trying to show that in Argentina there was an outbreak of religious persecution. In order to discredit this campaign, the minister of the interior recommended to avoid any police action against the members of these groups, in case that there were specific and concrete crimes committed by them, those case should be reported directly to the Justice and every action that could be interpreted as an effort to limited the freedom of belief should be avoided.[422]

Moreover due to the problem generated by the Jehovah's Witnesses' issue the regime decided in 1978 to promulgate the law 21,745, named worship's law, whose regulation decree established that all the religious organizations have to be registered in a period of 90 days in order to be able to operate in the national territory. In the framework of this regulation, the ban to Jehovah's Witnesses was revoked in December, 29, 1980, throughout the decree 2683 with the condition that the organization in question obtain the legal registration. In February, 1981, the Jehovah Witnesses presented their application in order to be register. The application was also

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[421] Buenos Aires Herald, 2/14/1980

[422] Ministerio del Interior, Document 456/78, April 26, 1978. (DIPPBA archive).

rejected by the resolution N° 336 and the reasons given on this second time were the same as the one given in 1976.[423]

The human rights issue awaked the interest of international organizations since the beginning of the regime. Amnesty International dedicated already attention to this problem in 1976. However, it would be the visit of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) and its consequent report which would play a decisive role for the regime. The commission visited Argentina in September 1979. They visited different places that functioned as clandestine detention centers like *La Rivera* and *La Perla* in Córdoba, *El Atlético*, *El Olimpo* and *La ESMA* in Buenos Aires. Moreover they visited different prisons like Caseros, Rawson and Devoto. They received 5,580 denunciations.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States visit was officially approved in December 1978 and the mission of seven members headed by Andrés Aguilar arrived in September, 6, 1979. This invitation responded to the external and internal problems with which the regime was dealing with especially since 1977. The human rights issues had been affecting since 1977 the diplomatic, political and economic relationships of Argentina with United States, Europe and the United Nations. Videla tried with his different visits in those countries to improve and transform the image that Argentina had as one of the countries that systematic violated the human rights. Among the militaries, the majority of them did not give to much attention to the reports and complaints from the difference embassies. Moreover the internal division among the armed forces aggravated the problem. The initial consensus in the violent repression started to deteriorate at the moment of facing the consequences of it. The differences that emerged were between those who were searching to go deep with the Process, the *duros*, and those who were considered of diverting the Process from its foundational objectives. Anyway, besides all these factors the militaries started to recognized that they need to do something in order to avoid the international isolation and the invitation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights responded to this necessity.

During the visit of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Jehovah's Witnesses confirmed their complaint against the regime. They stated that around 600 "kingdom halls" had been closed which did not allow that more than 60,000 people could not have their religious meetings. Moreover they denounced several "arrests, detentions, imprisonments along with maltreatments and hits, raids in private homes, the expulsions of several children from

[423] Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, Document R.E. 0122/84. (DIPPBA archive)

elementary and high schools, the dismissal of teachers and public workers like those of Entel, the state telephone company, and the confiscation and destruction of tones of biblical literature." The report even included the amount of literature that was confiscated by the authorities: "more than 300,000 books" and according to their inventory, in one occasion they took 225,709 books from the central bureau. Moreover, around 250 Jehovah's Witnesses were at that time in jail due to refusing be drafted by the armed forces. In the resolution of the Inter-American Commission, they judged that the regime had violated the "security and integrity right of the person (article I), the free worship and religious right (article V), the education right (article XIII), the association right (article XXI), and the protection right against the arbitrary detentions (article XXV) of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.[424]

Among these denunciations it was the one made by Jehovah's Witnesses. Under the case number 2137, it was reported that the number of members of this religion community in 1976 was a total of 31,140 members that were congregated in 604 congregations. The denunciations presented at the Commission mentioned the case of six Jehovah's Witnesses who were incarcerated in the city of Apostles, Misiones and 16 who were jailed during 60 days in the city of Puerto Rico of the same province. All across the country, "more than 300 children were denied primary education by being dismissed from the schools they had been attending, or simply by being prevented from enrolling. Some continued their studies at home, by themselves, with the intention of taking the examinations at the end of the school year with special examiners so that they would not lose the year." Finally, even this last option was denied as it testified a case that took place in Aristobulo del Valle where on March 2, 1977, the Director of Schools received a note from the General Education Council of the province of Misiones where stated: "You are hereby informed that the examination is not authorized for students professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses." In another official document included in the report, the Technical Secretary of the General Inspectorate of Primary Education sent a note to the Director of School Nº 6, Mr. Carlos Almeida where stated:

"It is recommended that the Director make a conscientious study of the Regulations for free examinations approved by Resolution Nº 45/68 and amended by Resolution Nº 3044/68, and that he faithfully implement it. Particular attention will be paid to preparation of the curriculum for the examination, which should be studied with care by the members of the Examining Board and properly supervised by the Director, to ensure that the basic subjects correspond to the grades to be awarded, thus ensuring that those passing have received a proper education.
The tests must be submitted to this office for final approval, along with the grades awarded by the examining Board and the corresponding reports.

[424] Informe de la CIDH, 14 de Diciembre de 1979, Capítulo X: Derecho de libertad religiosa y de cultos.

The Director will be responsible for any failure to comply with the regulations or with the recommendations indicated above.
You are hereby informed that this examination is not authorized for pupils professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.“

Another of the central point in the denunciation was concentrated in the members of this religion who were imprisoned for their refuse to be drafted in the conscription. There were at that moment 100 young Jehovah’s Witnesses incarcerated in the military prison of Magdalena, 500 in Campo de Mayo and another 50 who were in other places. Besides the problem with the children who were expelled from the schools and those imprisoned for their attitude against the obligatory military service, the report mentioned those “people dismissed from their jobs, homes destroyed, unjust detentions and confiscation of the literature.”

In response to the appeal made by Jehovah’s Witnesses against the ban as an unconstitutional act from the Military government, in February 1978 the Supreme Court decided to uphold the ban. As the result, the report presented before the Commission stated that “many Jehovah's Witnesses have been unjustly detained; they have lost their jobs and their children have been dismissed from school, and have been prevented from getting an education.“

The resolution of the CIDH was total negative for the Regime in the subject on Jehovah’s Witnesses. It stated

3. The foregoing constitutes a clear violation of the right to religious freedom, freedom of worship and hence to the possibility of declaring and practicing it in public and in private.
4. Also violated was the right to equality of opportunity in education and the right to life and personal security of the members of the Jehovah's Witnesses group,

THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, RESOLVES:

1. To declare that the Government of Argentina violated the right to life, liberty and personal security (Art. I), the right to freedom of religion (Art. V), the right to education (Art. XII), the right of association (Art. XXI) and the right to protection against arbitrary arrest (Art. XXV) of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.
2. To recommend to the Government of Argentina: a) that it reestablish the observance of religious freedom; b) that it repeal Decree Nº 1867 of August 31, 1976, because it violates the fundamental rights listed above; c) that it adopt the necessary measures to put an end to the persecution of the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses; d) that it inform the Commission within 60 days as to the measures taken to put into practice the recommendations contained in the present Resolution.

This incident revealed one more time the strong liberal element of the regime. Already at the moment of the ban against Jehovah’s Witnesses, *Cabildo* had criticized how the regime had taken

this decision. The measure against "the sect" was correct but the arguments were not. The government of Videla had justified the ban according to the constitutional principles. *Cabildo* stated that such principles were liberal and not enough in order to defend the "fair war" that had to be fought for the Catholic nation.[425] The fact that the regime came to defend the liberal and democratic fundaments of the republic enabled the Jehovah Witnesses to appeal to the Court of Appeals which declared that the dictatorial decree was unconstitutional. It was the Supreme Court that ended up to support the regime in the ban against the members of this religious group. *La Nación* published an editorial about the decision taken by the supreme court where it established a difference between the civil rights recognized by the constitution and the security problems generated by the religious activities of Jehovah's Witnesses. Even when the Argentine population was deeply rooted in the Catholic faith, the country was characterized by long liberal tradition. A tradition that started with the same birth of the nation in the May Revolution and then was reaffirmed in the Battle of *Caseros*. This liberal tradition allowed that the most diverse religious, political and philosophical thinkings could be expressed in the country with complete freedom. The Jehovah's Witnesses issue generated problems that were beyond freedom of worship and the tolerance to the religious diversity. Their activities generated serious problems to the civic and political order due to "a confusion that they have between the exact concept of religiosity and the due formal respect to the national symbols." The fragile situation generated by the social attitudes of Jehovah's Witnesses left no alternative to the State than the ban because it was its duty "to defend with tenacity the essential principles for the political order and the nationality survival."[426]

In September 1979, *Awake!* published a new article about the situation of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina

"Right now, in the country of Argentina, a type of Inquisition is being carried on. It is directed against a people whose peaceful, law-abiding and God-fearing way of life is well known throughout the world.This modern Inquisition began with the issuing of Presidential Decree Number 1867, on August 31, 1976. The decree banned all the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the country. And despite all the appeals, all the court cases, and even a favorable Argentine Supreme Court decision, the Inquisition continues."[427]

The contradictory social behaviors among the functionaries and the society in relation to the Jehovah's Witnesses increased in 1979. The issue of the "approximately 1,000 children of parents

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[425] Cersósimo, op. cit., 132.

[426] *La Nación*, 2/17/78

[427] "Stop the Inquisition in Argentina!" in *Awake!* 1979, September 8, 16.

who were Jehovah's Witnesses" expelled from the school was a clear example of such contradictory behaviors. The Supreme Court in 1979 had decided that the right to education was above any religious ban.

"The high court heard the case and ruled against the expulsion of schoolchildren because of religious beliefs. The Court agreed that this was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court's decision should have solved the problem immediately. Further expulsions should have been avoided. Students expelled in the past should have been reinstated. Even the public press felt that this would be the case. For instance, a front-page headline in the *Buenos Aires Herald* of March 9, 1979, declared: "SCHOOLS ORDERED TO TAKE BACK WITNESSES' CHILDREN." Another publication, *Somos*, carried this title to an article on the matter: "THE RIGHT TO LEARN."[428]

Despite the verdict, the schools continued with the repressive measures against such kind of students

"In May 1979, less than two months after the Supreme Court's ruling, two Witness girls were expelled from the Cura Brochero School in Barrio Residencial América, Córdoba. These two, Alejandra D. Brentan and Veronica L. Barrionuevo, were thrown out of school for not "revering" the national symbols."[429]

The attitude of the school personal was several denounced in *Awake!*

"It is hypocritical for school officials, whose duty should be to instill respect for the law and for the government, themselves deliberately to disregard the high court's decision! Indeed, their actions in expelling the children were contemptuous of the Supreme Court. Too, regarding the insistence by some school officials that children should "revere" such things as national heroes and other symbols, the comments of Dr. German J. Bidart Campos, a prominent jurist, are of interest. These comments were carried in the magazine *El Derecho*, published by the Argentine Catholic University. The jurist declared: "'Obligatory reverence' to the 'heroes.' Is there an official list of who these are? It is not the State's concern to manufacture lay saints. What does obligatory reverence mean? Does it mean that they cannot be argued with or criticized, or that one cannot disagree with what they thought or did? Is it that they were infallible? Where did this quasi-religious dogmatism come from? Because for me Rosas was a tyrant, and for others he was a hero."[430]

In spite of the "inquisition," the Jehovah's Witnesses continued with their activities in underground way. Among these activities were the conventions that they started to attend in the nearby countries. In April 1980, the SIDE office in Bahia Blanca, Buenos Aires, intercepted a letter sent to the circuit overseers where there was an invitation to assist to a series of convention that would be celebrated

[428] Ibidem 16,17.

[429] Ibidem.

[430] Ibidem, 17,18.

in Brazil and Uruguay. In the letter was detailed the whole procedure to follow. It was extremely important "not to make a public announcement in the congregations about these conventions."[431]

They also continued with their proselytism activities as the police of Buenos Aires was well aware of. In a report written about Jehovah's Witnesses in La Matanza, Buenos Aires, it was informed about underground "recruitment campaigns" that were taking place in 1981. These campaigns were directed to neighborhoods that were characterized by a poor cultural level and were isolated from the urban centers. By doing this, this "sneaky and selective" campaigns were able to avoid the control from the authorities. The campaigns were performed by "people who were previous selected from the most fanatics of the members who carried out didactic religious material together with the Bible and they go over the homes while the men of the families are working and from neighborhood to neighborhood so they can not be detected or waited."[432]

A report of the DIPBA explained how in those years Jehovah's Witnesses continued with their activities in spite of the ban. "They continued to celebrate their meeting underground and they also continued with their regular visits and distributing their literature," stated the report. The underground method was based on the work of the "siervos de pastoral" who were the responsible of selecting the new candidates, visit them in their homes, delivery literature and invite them to the meetings. Due to the legal issues that they had, they tried to get a permission to celebrate their meetings under the name of Bible Students. The intelligence reporter described them as people with "a great persistence and tenacity in the accomplishment of their duties related to their worship with a great patience and a strong pacifism that allow them support any attack against them when they promote their doctrine." The reporter also recommended what kind of procedures were the best to apply against "the sect." One of the possibility was to imprison them while they were in their service in order to look for their identity and profile information. The other possibility available was to imprison them according to the law 8031 and accuse them of attempting to the public order.

In a final balance, the report stated the strong and the weak points of "the sect." Among the first ones were the proficiency to detect future members and visit them, the capacity of printing and distributing their bibliography, the ability of converting the attacks against them in something positive making it seems as part of a "persecution," and finally to explode the emptiness left by the Catholic Church. Their ideology was defined as compound by "doctrinal fundaments highly segregationist that lead to an isolation of the religious member in a fanaticism and dedication state

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[431] Legajo 61/80, DIPBA Archive, 42,43.

[432] Factor Religioso, Legajo RMA 23, 3/27/81, DIPPBA Archive 46-48.

which convert him in someone “little assimilable” to the society.” These factors made the “sect Jehovah’s Witnesses” a “powerful economic-religious organization” that lead to almost total depersonalization and isolation of the individual who even reduce their working hours to the minimum in order to dedicate themselves to the proselytizing activities. The grade of total fanaticism made impossible to establish a dialogue with them or persuade them of something different to their doctrines. In spite of that, the report concluded that “Jehovah’s Witnesses were not a normal or ideological delinquent,” they were just “individuals who were captured in a pseudo religious doctrine which transform every new member in someone unusable for the national security.”[433]

On May, 11, 1980 the intelligence department of La Plata police reported the arrest of four persons responsible of the organization of a religious meeting in a hotel Mar del Plata. The event was destined to the projection of diapositives and a talk by Oscar Chamorro that was “focused in biblical interpretation of the religious philosophy of the sect.” The arrests were performed in order to search the precedents of these persons after it they were realized.

In the last years of the dictatorship, the regime decided to recuperate the Malvinas (Falkland) islands which led to a war that resulted in its fall. In this context, there was an intensification of the mistreatment to the Jehovah’s Witnesses who were imprisoned as conscientious objectors.

[433] Manuel Hector Asad (Comisario Inspector), Dossier Jehovah’s Witnesses DIPBA, folios 24-27. Tandil, August 1, 1983.

7. The Military Service

In April 1980 Luis, at the age of 26, was drafted. The person who studied the Bible with him, Luis Beghe, was already in prison for refusing to be drafted. It was quite well known in the different congregations what kind of destiny had to face those who refused to be drafted. As a matter of fact, it was common that several Jehovah's Witnesses accompany those who went to the military units in order to support them and show, unconsciously maybe, that the refusal to be drafted by the armed forces was a collective attitude among Jehovah's Witnesses. They were not alone.

The weakness of Viola went hand in hand with a realignment of the "Hards" around Galtieri and the new chiefs Nicolaides and Trimarco who started to see themselves as those chosen to be the "new generation" that would save the regime. Leopoldo Galtieri became Major of the Army on May 29, 1980. His political position was clear in the discourse he pronounced when he assumed his new position. It was there that he sustained the idea of maintaining the philosophical orientation of the regime avoiding and boycotting the approaching of Viola to the political parties and the trade-unions, which for Galtieri were the responsible of the chaos and the subversive infiltration.

Galtieri replaced Viola and assumed as president on December 22, 1981. In his first speech as president, Galtieri recognized that the repression and the "triumph in the anti-subversive war" were not enough to have the support of the society but that even then the armed forces had to continue with their program at least until the basic objectives of the "National Reorganization Process" were accomplished. It was a return to the origins but in other circumstances. According to Palermo and Novaro, unlike the self-confidence of Videla and the "resignation" of Viola, this return to the "re-foundation myth" was marked by "resentment feelings and deep frustration."[434] Roberto Alemann, who was designated as minister of economy, combined an increase of rates and taxes, a freezing of salaries, a liberalization and unification of the exchange market and the promise of privatization of the public enterprises. They were all gestures made in order to bring back together the *Establishment* to the regime. With the arrival of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of United States in 1981, the repressive actions increased in the continent, specially in Central America. Galtieri had very good contacts in those circles and once that he assumed the presidency of the regime his politics were directed to this orientation.[435]

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[434] Novaro y Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1976/1983. Del golpe de estado a la restauración democrática*, 342,343,388,399,400.

[435] ibidem, 402.

It is in this context that the idea of Galtieri and Anaya of recovering the Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas*) has to be understood. The political circumstances made necessary an important cause in order to regain the legitimacy that the regime had lost. But the immediate situation does not explain all. As Palermo and Novaro explained, the nationalism of the nationalists had never found a point where they were able to gain a massive support of the society. Liberalism, Socialism, Radicalism and Peronism were always an obstacle between the nationalists and the masses. However, there was a point where "the nationalism of the nationalists" and "the nationalism of the Argentines" met each other: territory. "The essence of the nation was in the desert," as Halperin Donghi stated, and the construction of Argentina was a matter of "finding a nation for the Argentine desert." The different attitudes between the conflict with Chile about the Beagle, a vindication of the nationalists only, and the conflict about the Falkland Islands, a vindication of the Argentines in general, was a clear proof of it.[436]

In this war's context the refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses to be drafted in the military service gained other relevance and significance. Jehovah's Witnesses' issue was not new for the militaries. As we have already analyzed in chapter IV, the problem of those who refused to be drafted due to religious convictions, had already been considered during the 1960s. The issue had not only been handled from a doctrinal perspective, for example in the writings of the Military Vicariate, but also it had been established a systematic treatment to Jehovah's Witnesses based even in a new legislation about the military service enacted during the regime of Ongania. Anyway the number of Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned due to their refusal during the years of the "Argentinean Revolution" remained low. In 1967 there were just 8 Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned and the peak of those year was 31 in 1972. If we look at the numbers during the last dictatorship we will see a significative increase in the amount of prisoners at the end of the 1970s. To the 84 who were imprisoned in 1976, we have to add 71 who were imprisoned in 1977, 86 in 1978, 89 in 1979 and the peak was reached in 1980 and 1981, with 100 and 103 respectively.

Campo de Mayo was, together with the ESMA, *La Perla*, *Vesubio* and *Club Atlético*, among the main detention clandestine centers during the "hard years" of the dictatorship. *Campo de Mayo*, together with *Campo La Ribera* in the province of Córdoba, functioned as Militaries Prisons for

[436] ibidem, 436-438.

prosecuted, where Jehovah's Witnesses were place in the first instance.[437] The clandestine centers of detention were the highlight of the repression system established by the last dictatorship but it was not the only repressive element. The prisons were another central component of this system. During the 1970s, the federal prison system started to be concentrated in the crimes considered as "subversive and terrorist." The armed forces took the control of the system which was reorganized throughout the refunding of the prisons of *Resistencia* and *Rawson* and at the end of 1975 with the foundation of *Devoto*, *Coronda*, *Sierra Chica* and *La Plata*. There was 10,000 political prisoners in the regime with 120 deaths between people who were shot down, those who disappeared, those who died due to diseases and those who "committed suicide."[438]

This "piece" of the system, the prisons, were the scenario where Jehovah's Witnesses resisted the military repression during 1970s. The main point of reference for thousand of Jehovah's Witnesses was the military prison of Magdalena, but it was not the only place where they were imprisoned. Since the 1950s, with the appearance of the first Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to be drafted, the armed forces had systematized a procedure that can be divided in three moment. A first one characterized by the isolation of Jehovah's Witnesses, usually in a cell or guardroom. A second one determinate by the judgement and a last one, the prison sentence.

In July 2007, a "historical recognition to the systematic persecution suffered by Jehovah's Witnesses" took place when the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights resolved to pay a compensation for damage to Daniel Víctor Guagliardo and other 530 Jehovah's Witnesses as "victims of state terrorism." On Abril 10, 1978, under the categorization rigorous preventive detention, Guagliardo was imprisoned in solitary confinement in the *Comando de Institutos Militares* in *Campo de Mayo*. On June 3, 1978, he was transferred to the military prison in the same garrison. Once that he was judged by a military tribunal, he was sentenced due to insubordination aggravated and sent to the prison of Magdalena where he was freed on June 30, 1982.[439] Here we have the case of a subversive type that was not and could not be circumscribed to a military

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[437] The Jehovah's Witnesses that were incarcerated in Campo de Mayo were: Eduardo De Innocentis, Saúl Daniel Irusquibelar, Juan Daniel Pugliese and Oscar Romero in 1976, Jorge Cortez (former soldier who was drafted due to conflict with Chile and because he refused was sent to a cell in Campo de Mayo) in 1977; Adrián Jesús Pedlone in 1978; José María Carmody, Juan Antonio Colatruglio and Isaac Isaias Monsalvo in 1980; Diego Carbajal, Sergio Hilicheff and Mario Nancuante in 1981. In Campo de La Ribera, the prisoners were: José Cabañete, Francisco Alberto Ciappesoni, Raúl Cisterna, Ricardo Gonzalez and Artemio René Pare in 1976; Heriberto Nagel, and Roberto Amado Sanchez in 1977; Ariel Alba, José Carpios, Antonio Manuel Delgado, Gustavo Rosa and Rene Ricardo Trejo in 1980; Hugo Benetti, Atilio Borsani, Alejandro Sosa and Guillermo Spossetti in 1981; Jorge Ismael Coronel, Enrique José Flores, Luis Antonio López, Cesar Martin, Mario Salvador Orellano, Dante Singh and Walter Omar Zamora in 1982. https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/ consulted 9.22.2019.

[438] D'Antonio, "Género y resistencias en la prisión política durante la última dictadura" in Aguila, Garaño, Scatizza, *Represión estatal y violencia paraestatal* 194, 195, 200, 209.

[439] Rodriguez, Carlos, "El delito de negarse a la colimba" in *Página 12* Martes 31.7.2007.

conception of subversion, because they were precisely condemned for their refuse to take part in military actions. What kind of subversive were they then? How was the systematic treatment used by the regime? These are some of the questions that this chapter would like to answer.

Luis Jardiel was among the Jehovah's Witnesses who were incarcerated in these years. Following the systematic procedure, Luis was taken to a cell, the dungeon number 5, in one of the section of *Campo de Mayo* where he stayed nineteen months. In the garrison of *Campo de Mayo* functioned between 1976 and 1980 four clandestine detention centers: *El Campito* o *Los Toldos*, *Las Casitas* o *La Casita*, the *Hospital Militar* and the *Prision de Encausados* (Prision of Accused). *Campo de Mayo* was located in the zone 4 compounded by the areas of *San Miguel*, *Vicente López*, *Tres de Febrero*, *Pilar*, *Escobar*, *Tigre*, *San Fernando*, *General San Martín*, *Exaltación de la Cruz*, *Zárate*, *Campana* and *San Isidro*. The zone was under the control of the *Comando de Institutos Militares* formed by all the schools of formation and the main responsible between September 1975 and the first months of 1979 was the General Santiago Omar Riveros.[440] Luis was not the only Jehovah's Witness in the dungeons of *Campo de Mayo* garrison waiting for the trial. Talking with the personal of the garrison, Luis discovered that there were also Jehovah's Witnesses in other places, Claudio the Mostro Maccarone, Carmody and Isaias Monsalvo in *Escuela Lemos*, Tetta, Fantasia, Kugnik and Gilardi in the *Escuela de Infanteria*, Marcelo Castañares in the *Escuela de Comunicaciones* and Meuzet in the *Colegio Militar*.[441]

There was a diversity of opinions among the military personal of *Campo de Mayo* regarding Jehovah's Witnesses. This diversity was directly related with the broadness, vagueness and lack of definition of the term subversive among the militaries. For example, a corporal of *Escuela Lemos* considered that Claudio Maccarone was paid by "the subversion" due to the fact that he tried "to burn out the barracks" because he produced a general short-circuit when he manipulated the electricity entrance of the guard and the headquarters. Moreover "he was reading books of psychology the whole day." "Such an individual had to be paid by the subversives," the corporal concluded.[442]

At the end of 1980, Luis met Lieutenant colonel Eric Keitel, when he was returning from accomplishing an order given by his chef, who asked Luis who he was. When Luis responded that he was a Jehovah's Witness, Lieutenant colonel Keitel stated: "Jehovah's Witnesses! Why are you not in the dungeon? Insane! I am going to make everything possible so you are no more walking

[440] comisionjuiciocampodemayo.wordpress.com, consulted on July 28, 2018.

[441] Jardiel, *Luz de Lampara,* 40, 41.

[442] ibidem, 41.

free!"[443] Anyway, the different opinions can be better exposed with the interchange of opinion within lieutenant Jorge Martínez and captain Centurión. The last one affirmed that Jehovah's Witnesses were affected by "simple paranoia with a huge profusion of paranoid fantasies." Martínez, on the other side, maintained that all those who stayed in the dungeon were "the source of all the problems in the universe, subversives, the scourge of the army, dirty and niggers."[444] The differences among the opinions of those who worked in *Campo de Mayo* reproduced the differences that existed in other spheres. Just to mention an example, the view of the military vicariate was that they were the worst subversives: mystic subversives, while the point of view of the intelligence service of the Buenos Aires police department was that Jehovah's Witnesses had merely a psychological problem but they were almost inoffensive. It reproduced also the differences that existed among the hierarchy of the regime. For Videla, the subversive were a mere military problem restrained to the guerrilla while for Menéndez subversion was not only a military trouble but an ideological one.

The stories among the different type of "subversives" were crossed over in the huge piece of land of *Campo de Mayo*. On a Saturday night, the lieutenant Goya called Luis to help him to keep the watch. Goya trusted only in Jehovah's Witnesses because they were the only ones who did not kill. Goya had fear, had a paranoia with the guerrilla and "saw subversive delinquents behind every tree." The first thing that they had to do once that they arrived to the guard was to close every door and window of the security building because, according to Goya, during this night as the service official, he was the "main target of a subversive attack." Later on, Goya left Luis in the guard alone in order to go across the different guarding points. When he came back, knocked the door and said: "Open up Witness! Open the door!" Once that Luis opened the door, Goya stated: "Animal! Do you want that they kill us? I told you not to open the door to anyone! Do not you know that the subversives want to capture the headquarters and kill me?" "But you have identified yourself lieutenant," responded Luis. Goya concluded: "Bullshit! The guerrillas can imitate my voice!"[4] Lieutenant Blobel, Sergeant Arief and Hamid hated Jehovah's Witnesses. The last two, Arief and Hamid, used to boast that they took part in "the war against subversion" where they were able to throw out the "communists" from the airplanes "in the waters of the Argentine sea so there were no vestiges and the sharks were feed."[446]

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[443] ibidem, 66.

[444] ibidem, 23.

[445] ibidem, 94-96.

[446] ibidem, 107.

According to Luis, the militaries in *Campo de Mayo* had even a museum dedicated to the guerrilla. The tour lasted 45 minutes. In the entrance hall there was a portable dungeon where it was possible to see the blood spots of a lieutenant colonel who was murdered in its interior. It was used in order to incarcerated "enemies of the people." There was also a section named "Bombs" where it was exposed the different kind of bombs employed by the subversion. There were also uniforms of the guerrillas captured and murdered in Tucumán. It was possible to see also different vehicles like a *Torino* that was destroyed by a bazooka at the *9 de Julio* Avenue. Pictures of different attacks made by the subversion, a machine to falsify documents and a library were also part of the museum.[447] Luis had also the opportunity of hearing the stories of Zacarías Cristofas, who was proud of taking part in *Operation Independence* in Tucumán. The stories went around how he had to kill the subversive "demons" among those there was a pretty lady that he had to shot down.[448]

Some of Jehovah's Witnesses that were imprisoned in *Campo de Mayo* were able to witness what happened in *El Campito*. Campo de Mayo was not the only place where the stories of prisoners of the clandestine system crossed over with Jehovah's Witnesses prisoners. *Campo de la Ribera* was opened in 1945 as Military Prison of Accused in the province of Córdoba. In 1975 it was moved to *La Calera* where it function a Clandestine Detention Center operated by the *Comando Libertadores de América*. Several Jehovah's Witnesses were incarcerated in this place and fulfill their sentences there.

The nineteen months that Luis was in the dungeon was part of the normal procedure that Jehovah's Witnesses had to go through. The first part of the punishment was this time in the dungeon when they usually had to be also in solitary confinement without contact with other prisoners and of course without contact with their families. It was the worst period of the whole sentence or process. Three Jehovah's Witnesses were murdered in all these years of imprisonment. Raúl Góngora died in the navy base of *Punta Alta*. The navy reported it as a suicide in his cell but later it was verified that he was murdered. Since then on, the navy started to systematize the treatment with Jehovah's Witnesses in the time that they had to spent under their control in preventive detention. Another case was the one of Juan Fontela of class 1953. He was incorporated in the *Agrupación Ingenieros Anfibios 601* in Santo Tomé, province of Santa Fe. It was reported that he died of Chagas disease and was handed over to his family in a closed and sealed coffin with the order to grave the body. The family decided to open up the coffin and they could verify that the

[447] ibidem, 119.

[448] ibidem, 120.

body had marked of tortures. Alberto Zanatta was also incorporated in this place where the militaries beaten him, immersed him in water, put a pistol in his head and then in his mouth and then exposed him naked to the public in winter. The third case of death was the one of Alfredo Fernández of the class 1960. It was during this first time in the dungeon that the tortures took place. They were beaten up, had to go through simulation of execution by firing squad, were exposed to cold weather, unchained and starved. Another typical practice was the beating with a rubber (*la goma* or *ser gomeado*).[449]

The first six months in the dungeon had not bureaucratic trace. The militaries did not open any judicial summary during this time so there was no registration of Luis imprisonment. On September, 7, 1980, a summary was initiated, the conditions where Luis were did not change but what did changed was his status. Since then on, he was in rigorous preventive detention and he was able to take free days and visit his family.[450] In March 1981, the case of Luis changed the examining magistrate. The new judge told him:

"You are a Jehovah's Witness and I do not like Jehovah's Witnesses. You are disgusting, you are against our fatherland and are also subversive. I tell you what, you want to have free days, don't you? Very good, you have no more free days. I have heard that you work in the post, you work there no more. Now you are going to languish in the dungeon… Where you all have to be! From the first one to the last one! Go to solitary confinement in the dungeon!"[451]

In the meantime, the lonely times of Luis in the dungeon were over. In autumn 1981, two new Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to the dungeon where Luis was. They were Franco and Roby. Roby did not have a good beginning, he was told by an official that there was a new law for Jehovah's Witnesses and they would have a sentence of twelve years. He was in shock when he arrived at the dungeon. Luis and Franco decided then to welcome him with a *mate cocido* and five slices of bread. He relaxed and asked if it was true that the sentences were now of twelve years. The response was a loud laugh.[452] Not everyone in *Campo de Mayo* had a negative attitude toward the Jehovah's Witnesses. Lieutenant Colonel De la Gamba, the chef in the post, liked Luis and wanted to maintain him in his department. When Luis was sent back to the dungeon due to an order of the new investigation judge, De la Gamba tried to convince the judge of leaving Luis with him.[453]

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[449] https://www.o-conciencia.org/torturados/ (checked on July 29, 2018)

[450] Jardiel, op. cit., 61.

[451] ibidem, 68.

[452] Ibidem, 70, 71.

[453] ibidem. 69.

Nazism had a constant presence in Luis' perception of reality. Describing the abusive behavior of Colonel Keitel, for example, Luis stated that he "thought that his true vocation was to be director of a concentration camp." But that was not the only remark in this direction. Once a new sergeant appeared, Edelmiro Silberbauer. Apparently he was translated from the prison of Magdalena due to abuses of authority that he committed there. A day that they were in the office, there was a magazine of the National Geographic with pictures of the Holocaust. Luis stated then: "What a horror, right?" Silberbauer looked once again the pictures and said: "Excellent! It is a pity that the Führer did not exterminate all the Jews." Ana, a secretary that was also in the office replied: "It is terrible to kill so many men, women and innocent children in this way!" "First of all, they were not innocents, they were Jews and secondly they were subhuman beings, there was no lost," Silberhauer replied.[454]

Another sergeant that had German origins and sympathy for Nazism was Sergeant Wolf. A Saturday morning, at 6:00, he appeared with a black uniform and an authentic German helmet. He started to blow his whistle and said: "Heil Hitler!" He did not like to be called sergeant but *Oberscharführer*. Sergeant Wolf was born in Entre Rios and his father had been in the *Wehrmacht*. He had a paranoia with the Jews and stated that no long before the Jewish had tried to buy the province of Entre Rios. Certainly, he believed in the Jewish conspiracy to conquer the world.[4] "Sergeant Wolf was Nazi, atheist and believe in the evolution" and that is the reason why Luis remembered his discussion about God, creation and evolution with this sergeant. It was to him that Luis had said that Jehovah's Witnesses were there in order "to witness." It was in the same conversation that emerged an element in the memory of these individuals during those years. This element was activated in every small sign or evidence from the militaries related to Nazism. The Nazi persecution was always present in the perception of the prisoners Jehovah's Witnesses. The conversation between Luis and Sergeant Wolf continued

Sergeant Wolf: "Jehovah's Witnesses are a bunch of ignorants, you do not even know where they stay. As a matter of fact, you are religious people and it explains everything. Moreover, the religion was invented in order to explain what we can not explain… science explains almost everything, and when it explains everything… religion will no longer exist."

Luis: "And how do you explain that in the XX century, the century of technology and the great discoveries religion played such an important role? How do you explain that so many Jehovah's Witnesses had lost their lives because they did not want to refuse their faith? You can not deny that we are living in a very religious epoch."

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[454] ibidem, 55,56.

[455] ibidem, 81,82.

Sergeant Wolf: "Bullshit! We are the mere product of the wise mother nature and natural selection. The stronger always triumph and the survival of the most capable is a fact. Nobody dares to deny this fact!"
Luis: "Maybe that is why in the same stadium where Hitler stated that he will eliminate this breeding (Jehovah's Witnesses) from Germany… a decade after we organized a national convention with an assistance of thousands while Hitler was already incinerated."
Sergeant Wolf: "You Jehovah's Witnesses are insane"
Luis: "Why?"
Sergeant Wolf: "Because you go against the flow, everybody believe in Darwin and the evolution."[456]

Luis Jardiel was the first Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina who published his experiences in a book. This source has a great value at the moment of understanding how he and other co-religionists interpreted their experiences. *Luz de Lampara* (Lamplight) is the name of Jardiel's memories.

On April 2, 1982, at 6 am, someone in the prison shouted: "Our infantry has just disembarked in the coast of Malvinas and hundred of soldiers are occupying the capital city!" Luis thought on this action of the regime:

"The Falkland Islands, or Malvinas, or whatever name they have, were invaded for pure and simple nationalism. The nationalism of the dictators was extreme powerful. After their fall, they were severely criticized by the people and they were judged and condemned. But the same people forget the whole support that they gave that Saturday when all gathered at Plaza de Mayo and were received by the president. They shouted nationalist slogans like "Death to the Englishmen! Death!" All were possessed and inflamed. I never saw so much popular enthusiasm and adhesion to a cause. There was few that opposed to the war. The war psychosis, nationalism and death had begun and now I was understanding what happened in the wars, how they begin and how the enthusiasm was maintained. I understood then how a massive German people supported Hitler manifestly."[457]

Luis Jardiel saw his function while he was imprisoned as a soldier of Christ who had to be a lamp, had to generate light but a light that was not of his own: "For it is you who light my lamp, Oh Jehovah, my God who lights up my darkness." Since the very first moment, at the age of 18 years old, Luis was committed to do everything that was at his hand in order to show to others this "light." As he explained to the sergeant Wolf while he was in the dungeon. The sergeant Wolf, who "was Nazi, atheist and had a strong belief in the evolution," asked him if he believed that he was created by God and after the affirmative response from Luis he asked: "Why then God allow that

[456] ibidem, 85,86.

[457] ibidem, 145.

you are imprisoned in this dungeon?" "He allows it so we can testify about him to governments, powers, authorities and jailers like you."[458]

As we may see in the case of Luis, there is always an active role of Jehovah's Witnesses at the moment of facing repressive measure. Like Luis, all the cases in Argentina were conscious that if they presented themselves at the military units to expose their refusal, they will be imprisoned. It was a conscious and individual decision to go there and express the militaries their refusal. How can we explain that these individuals look for being incarcerated. These kind of confrontation had a symbolic function in the individuals which has been described by Levi Strauss

"In both cases also, the conflicts and resistances are resolved, not because of the knowledge, real or alleged, which the sick woman progressively acquires of them, but because this knowledge makes possible a specific experience, in the course of which conflicts materialize in an order and on a level permitting their free development and leading to their resolution. (…) It is a matter of provoking an experience; as this experience becomes structured, regulatory mechanisms beyond the subject's control are spontaneously set in motion and lead to an orderly functioning."[459]

The fact of facing the militaries and saying no, like all the "brothers" who face a similar situation in Argentina or those who died in Germany "makes possible a specific experience" that is individual but at the same time collective.

One cold night of winter, the guard was in charge of three militaries that had no sympathy for Jehovah's Witnesses. They divided the sleeping time in two shifts, from 10 pm to 2 am the first one and the second one from 2 am to 6 am. The sergeant Arief, one who had taken part in the illegal repression, stated: "at 2 am, the hours of the tortures, they had special function for the Jehovah's Witnesses." They took all of them to form outside and then they ordered: "Now bunch of bitches, all of you have to run to the other side of the courtyard!" This order had two objectives, the first and obvious one was to torment the prisoners. A second one, related to Jehovah's Witnesses, it was to make them *transigir* (this word was used in order to describe the actions or the attitudes of renouncing their faith). It was a "little fact but significant." All the soldier prisoners ran to the other side of the courtyard while we walked. Once that we were there he gave the order to return and we continued to walk. "Now that I think, we could stay standing in one place, but as we were used to do this and that, we were doing it with the rest," Luis remembered. "It seemed a triviality but all knew that in this indefinite limit of action, it was the borderline between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the soldiers." The guards wanted to show that they did not have the strength and personality to

[458] ibidem, 85.

[459] Ibidem.

resist. After an hour the "situation was more and more tense and unpleasant" so the sergeant Arief shouted: "I want that all of you run! If not ALL of you run, nobody is going to sleep this night… See for yourself soldiers, it is because of the Jehovah's Witnesses that you can not sleep!" Because they were not able to torture or use physical mistreatment, Arief stated: "I want that all of you run! If someone that is not running is blowed or kicked, it is a mere accident." So they started to be beaten while Arief shouted: "The Jehovah's Witnesses are the responsible!" "You are responsible that no soldier can sleep! You only Arief!" responded Luis. But the soldiers started to share the opinion of Arief. At 4 am, the official of service arrived, saw the scene and ignored everything. That was the only hope, that the official stopped with this mistreatment. But it did not happen. In this hopelessness moment, Franco, quoting from the Apocalypse, said to Luis: "the devil will continue to put some of you in the prison, proof yourself loyal until the death." "I had many things running in my mind, but I never thought that our integrity (*integridad*) was in danger," Luis remembered from this moment. He decided then to go to the official and said to him that his judge had once questioned if he had received physical mistreatment. The official understood what Luis was meaning and a couple minutes later put an end to Arief procedure. "Those who ran are able to go to sleep! Jehovah's Witnesses must take a bucket and start to water the flower!" was the order. They had to do this task until 7 am.[460]

It was all a "question of loyalty." The most precious treasure that Luis and the other Jehovah's Witnesses had in prison was their *integridad*, their integrity, which means their loyalty to Jehovah and this example how they exerted this *integridad*. To run or to walk was "the borderline between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the soldiers." To run implied to obey the orders of the superiors like any other soldier. To walk, on the other side, was to show that they were different. It was a manner of showing their loyalty to Jehovah. By disobeying the orders of the guards, they were confirming their *integridad*. It was in this context that Franco quoted the Apocalypse, "proof yourself loyal until the death." It was a matter of life and death, it was a matter of being loyal to Jehovah or *transigir* (disloyalty to God).

From a functionalist perspective, we can ask ourselves what was the difference between walking instead of running and on the other hand being ready to water the flowers. They were both orders from the guards. If we think in terms of resistance to the order, in terms of showing the weakness of military power, the pattern of Jehovah's Witnesses seems to be illogical and contradictory. However, such a conclusion does not allow to understand their behavior. Such

[460] ibidem, 109,110.

perspective does not allow to understand them as human beings. Such conclusion is anthropologically feeble because it does not take into consideration the unconscious of the individual, it does not take into consideration the "symbolic function" of the individuals.

As it was already said, the abreaction was a collective phenomenon. On April, 19, 1981, together with Franco and Ruby, the other two Jehovah's Witnesses that were with Luis in the dungeon celebrated the memorial, the most important, the only important event in the year for the Jehovah's Witnesses. Two days before, Luis was able to go out of his cell, "Was it with the help of angels? Maybe," and he found a soldier who gave him as present a little bit of wine that he had found in the Officers Casino. Luis gave the wine to Franco so he could store it for the memorial. Afterwards, he went to the Officers Casino and asked to a soldier if it was possible to bake some small cookies. Once that they have the necessary material, they waited until the night of April 19 in order to remember the death of Jesus. Luis gave a small talk to his companions where he spoke about the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. It was clear that the examples of the past were the source of courage. Like the chosen people of God in the past were waiting for a liberation from captivity, Luis, Franco and Ruby were now the chosen ones who were waiting for a liberation. Their imprisonment had a purpose, they were not alone. Luis described his arrival in the dungeon and the first days there

"I was in lowest social level that a human being can be. It was Tartarus… however I was relaxed and calm, fresh and comfortable. Surely Jehovah was giving me comfort with his spirit. Everything seemed as a dream, an unreal dream that had been accomplished. I felt myself completely isolated, entirely isolated from the whole world, I was nothing and nobody, and with the hours going by this feeling seemed to intensify as the external world and my beloved ones, everything that I knew and loved, had disappeared. It was a very strange perception. I was there, the two silent walls and the invisible link of union with God… the prayer. They were not able to take from me the prayer, they were able to take everything, except the prayer. In just an instant of time I had felt down into the deepest and in the increasing shadows around me, a quotation of the Bible came to my mind once and once again: And they will be certain to fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for 'I am with you,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'to deliver you.'"[461]

In the dungeon, Luis tried to talk about his faith with the prisoners that were there. Once came an individual that was captured for desertion. He was taken from his house by the police and placed in the dungeon. His name was Romanich. Luis told him about the promised future when God will

[461] ibidem, 18.

bring peace in the earth and tried to be a good companion in the short time that Romanich spent in the dungeon with him.[462]

The behavior displayed by Luis in the dungeon was not an individual one, it was collective. The actions responded to a collective pattern. The isolation of Luis in the dungeon was seeming isolation, he was not alone under these circumstances. Beyond the strong ideological convictions of Luis, the reason why he was there, was a collective reason. Every Saturday, at two o'clock, Liliana visited Luis in the dungeon. The guardian took a wooden bench to the trees and there Liliana and Luis could talk until four or five o'clock. Liliana was his girlfriend.

"She continued to be my girlfriend and almost every weekend she came to visit me bringing her affection and love in the true sense of the word. She always brought little things that showed her love and preoccupation for me. The spiritual food came always on time due to her efforts. Due to her, I was able to have every *Watchtower* and even when it was not possible to have the mimeographed edition, I have the whole article, paragraph for paragraph, handwritten by her."[463]

The collective nature of Luis pattern was not only given by Liliana, this collective aspect was also constituted by the look of the others. Every visit of Liliana was "printed with fire in the mind of hundred and hundred of soldiers." It was a witness, a loyal girlfriend that went every weekend to visit his companion. Something completely rare to the point that some soldiers asked him if she was his sister. "Finally, they ended up to conclude that their relationship was related with the power and influence of God's word."[464]

In Argentina, 1980 was the year when the fragmentations and problems of the regime started to be more visible, that Luis Miguel Jardiel was imprisoned by the armed forces due to his refusal to be drafted in the military service. More specifically, the arrest of Luis took place on April, 2, 1980. There was no other option for Luis than to be arrested. He knew long before that at the moment of presenting himself in the corresponding unit and exposing his religious convictions to the military personal he would be imprisoned, he even knew that his final destination would be the prison of Magdalena where there were already a considerable number of his coreligionists. In spite of that, it was the only logical and self-evident way for Luis. It was impossible for him not to present himself before the authorities who had sent him a telegram where it stated that "the fact of overlooking the calling to be drafted would be serious crime." The impossibility did not rely in the punishment, it relied rather on the very essence of Luis, the same essence that did not allow him to be drafted in

[462] ibidem, 49.

[463] ibidem, 28.

[464] ibidem, 29.

the armed forces. Luis was already a soldier, a soldier of Jesus, who was already drafted in the army of Christ and "nobody can be drafted in two armies."[465] How is or should be a soldier of Jesus? What were the implications of being in the army of Christ? In a typical conversation of prisons, conversations that go around "small potatoes," that took place years later with one of his best friends, the *Mostro* Claudio Macaroni, Luis found out together with his friend a graphic image that represented what was the essence of a soldier of Christ. Luis had in his cell, like all the other prisoners, a kerosene lamp that he used in order to illuminate the place once that in the prisons the light were turned off. The *Mostro* and Luis, reflecting on the light generated by the lamp and the aroma generated by the kerosene, identified themselves, as soldier of Christ, with this lamp. Together with the other Jehovah's Witnesses that were at that moment imprisoned in Magdalena, around 200, they were lamps that generated light in the prison. The *Mostro* stated that he preferred "the calm and friendly light of a kerosene lamp" to "the electric, cold, aggressive light from the bulbs" while Luis considered these electric bulbs were a presentation and a sign of the "modern civilization." The *Mostro* stated than

"It is a symbol… a symbol of what can be accomplished in this medieval prison with our presence. Without boasting, Jesus stated "you are the light of the world" and with our obstinate presence in each of our two hundred cells we are shining in the darkness of the times… we are shining and many have been shining before us and many will be shining in the future… like this small lamp that give us its warm and nature light."[466]

In order to speed up the punishment procedure, Luis decided to write a letter to the general to see when they could be transferred to the Prison of *Campo de Mayo* where the conditions were supposed to be better as the one in the dungeon. A couple weeks later, the General decided to call Luis to his office. Once that Luis was there, the General stated:

"Jardiel, it has been one year and seven months already that you are imprisoned. I do not offer you free days or the transfer to another prison. I offer you the liberty. Your summary and judgement are annulled, the only thing that you have to do is to wear the green uniform and I make you my personal assistance, the assistance of the general."[467]

In face of this important decision that he had to make, in the presence of this new circumstances, Luis turned to the German experiences in order to interpret his reality.

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[465] ibidem, 12.

[466] ibidem, 247.

[467] ibidem, 124.

"In an instant, came to my mind the experiences of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the Nazi Germany. There was in the concentration camps a declaration where, once that it was signed, it was considered that the person was no more a member of the religious community. It was the only requirement to be free. This fact showed that they were not imprisoned because they were born Jews or because they were homosexual, they were not imprisoned due to their political ideas, not even for their race. It was because Hitler stated that he was the supreme and that his ideas were the only ones to be followed. It was a question of loyalty."

His response to the General was then

Luis: "General, I am Jehovah's Witness and we do not wear the uniform because it identifies us with another loyalty."[468]
General: "Always the same idiots! The only thing you have to do is to wear the uniform. Corporal Ramírez!"
A young soldier appeared
General: "Look! It is just an uniform like the one of the corporal. It is the last change, do you wear it or not?"
Luis: No
General: "Go back to the dungeon!"[469]

It was a question of loyalty, something that in the perception of Luis distinguished his behavior, like the one of their fellow believers in Germany, from a mere political question. The resistance to Hitler regime was fought in terms of a conflict of loyalties, not in political terms. It was this loyalty that determined the behavior pattern, the social behavior pattern of Luis.

On November 12, 1981, Luis was finally transferred to the Prison of *Campo de Mayo*. At his arrival, he was received by two other Jehovah's Witnesses, Omar Nieva and José Contreras. At that time, they were watching *Holocaust* and for Luis his physical appearance was similar to the one of the characters of this miniseries based on the script of Gerald Green. They took Luis to the dinning room where they introduced him Vicente Lucrezia and Daniel Tripaldi. There was a total of forty-five Jehovah's Witnesses prisoners in this prison at that time together with other forty regular prisoners incarcerated for "normal" causes as rape, theft and murder.[470] Following the normal procedure of Jehovah's Witnesses in prisons, Luis was judged by a military tribunal due to his "refusal to receive military training in order to defend the fatherland." The punishment was of three years and a half, which was the standard for Jehovah's Witnesses. His defender was a lieutenant from the cavalry who met with Luis a couple of weeks before trying to find an attenuating circumstance in the defense of Luis. The lieutenant was finally surprised that Luis wanted no

[468] ibidem, 124.

[469] ibidem.

[470] Ibidem, 145.

alleviation of the sentence because he did not regret of what he was doing. During the trial he was treated as a soldier and received a sentence of three years and a month of prison, life and complete disqualification and loss of citizenship.[471]

The documents related to the case of Rubén Mantello, belonging to the class 1959, are specially interesting at the time of analyzing the doctrinal grounds at the time of enabling a sentence. Mantello was an upholsterer of the city of Rosario. The judgement took place on March 29, 1979. One of the particularity of Mantello's case is that he was judged by the Air Force. Since May 3, 1978, he was under *Prisión Preventiva Rigurosa.* The case was considered by the *Consejo Permanente de Guerra para el personal Subalterno, Tropa y Alumnos de la Aeronáutica Militar*. Mantello received a sentence of 3 years and the *Inhabilitación Perpetua*. The crime committed was Insubordination and was judged according to the following regulation: articles 667, 668 bis, 589 and 539 of the Code of Military Justice, article 19 of the criminal code and article 41 of the Law N°17,531. Moreover, the resolution N°135/73 stated that once the sentence was fulfilled, the prisoners were not allow to return to the military units because they were considered "unworthy" of receiving military instruction. The refusal of Mantello to accept the orders of using military uniform due to his religious belonging took place between February 10 and 15, 1978. The crime of insubordination was described in the article 667 of the military justice code. The arguments used by Rubén Mantello in the court were based on the article 14 of the Argentine constitution where it states that the freedom of religion was guarantee. However, the resolution of the air force tribunal declared that "this right is conditioned to the laws that regulate its exercise." There was a difference between the "liberty of consciousness" which is absolute and the "liberty of religion" which is relative due to the fact that the first one "does not affect the moral, the public order or damage a third party. It is reserved to God and the judges have no authority according to the article 19 of the Magna Carta. The manifestations or consequences of a certain religion, on the other hand, transcend the private domain and concern the public order, attempt against the fundamental institutions of the country like the armed forces, manifestations that may and must be punished, like in the present case." Another argument used by the tribunal was that the rights and guaranties recognized by the Constitution do not mean that the inhabitants of the nation are allowed to damage the community due to the equality's principle that states in the article 16.

Different cases were mentioned for the legal basis of the decision. The first quoted sentence was pronounced by the *Honorable Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas* against Luis Dinaro

[471] ibidem, 142,143.

(class 1946) on March 21, 1968, where it was resolved that citizen was confronted with the Constitution and laws of the Republic because his refusal was a threat to the article 21 of the Constitution that considers the necessity of being armed in order to defend and maintain the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Nation. The request of the "soldier Mantello" to be considered in his religious beliefs was not contemplated in the article 515 of the military justice code the conduct had to be judged according to the legal norms and not according to the "subjective beliefs of the criminal." Another case to be taken into consideration was the sentence of the *Honorable Consejo Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas* on June 29, 1972, about the case of Hugo Omar Phol and the possibility of repayment services. The sentence against Jorge Luis Mignorance was also used in order to determinate that once the sentence was over, Mantello had to be considered according to the article 41 of the law 17,531 and be considered "unworthy" for the armed forces.[472]

On September 1, 1981, Emilio Vallejos was also judged by the court of the air force. At the time of the trial, Vallejos was under *Prisión Preventiva Rigurosa* and he was working in the regional workshop *Quilmes* of the Air Force. According to the military precedents, the conduct and moral of Vallejos was "bad." His pattern of conduct was also categorized as "rebel to the observance of the duties of the nationality." The sentence was three years and "complete and life disqualification."[473]

Luis Alberto Pott, entered on August 2, 1982, from the *1ra Brigada Aérea "El Palomar."* He served his sentence on April 22, 1985. He had two warnings: on January 26, 1984, for promoting disorder in the pavilion together with Jorge Da Silva and on April 3, 1984, for leaving his workplace without authorization. He was sentenced on June 17, 1982 to three years of *Prisión Mayor*. He was under *Prisión Preventiva Rigurosa* since February 25, 1982.[474]

Americo Adrian Alberto was enlisted on January 5, 1981, in the *Grupo 2 de Vigilancia y Control Aéreo*. Since March 6, 1981, he was under *Prisión Preventiva Rigurosa*. He became four warnings: on April 12, 1983, for not reporting with the director after a free day, on April 26, 1983, for having disorder in his bed, on November 17, 1983, for "unwillingly woking" and on November 18, 1983, for not reporting at the mourning formation. He was condemned to three years.[475]

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[472] Legajo N°4283 Rubén Mantello, Instituto Penal de las Fuerzas Armadas, Available online in https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/

[473] Legajo N°4824 Emilio Vallejos, Instituto Penal de las Fuerzas Armadas, Available online in https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/

[474] Legajo N° 4870 Luis Alberto Pott, Instituto Penal de las Fuerzas Armadas, Available online in https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/

[475] Legajo N° 4700 Americo Adrián Alberto, Instituto Penal de las Fuerzas Armadas, Available online in https://www.o-conciencia.org/legajos/

Federico Rosatti, class 1962, was incorporated to the army's *Compañia de Ingenieros* in Monte Caseros, province of Corrientes, in 1981. He was mechanic and lived in Posadas, Misiones. Since May 15, 1981, he was under the category *Prisión Preventiva Rigurosa* and was transferred to the *Prisión MIlitar de Encausados* in Córdoba in the same year. In this prison he met other Jehovah's Witnesses that were transferred from different military units of Córdoba, Santa Fe and other provinces. 2 Months later he was judged by the martial-court and condemned to three years and one month. The sentence of Rosatti included the *inhabilitación perpetua,* a kind of civil death that started to be implemented in 1977 throughout the law 21,528 that modified the military code of justice in its article 668. The modification was introduced in order to "punish the acts of rebellion of citizens that refuse to fulfill the obligations of the law 17,531 due to religious reasons based on the belonging to religious sects like Jehovah's Witnesses or Bible Students."[476]

This incident revealed once more the strong liberal element of the regime. Already at the moment of the ban against Jehovah's Witnesses, *Cabildo* had criticized how the regime had taken this decision. The measure against "the sect" was correct but the arguments were not. The government of Videla had justified the ban according to the constitutional principles. *Cabildo* stated that such principles were liberal and not enough in order to defend the "fair war" that had to be fought for the Catholic nation.[477] The fact that the regime came to defend the liberal and democratic fundaments of the republic enabled the Jehovah Witnesses to appeal to the Court of Appeals which declared that the dictatorial decree was unconstitutional. It was the Supreme Court that ended up to support the regime in the ban against the members of this religious group. *La Nación* published an editorial about the decision taken by the supreme court where it established a difference between the civil rights recognized by the constitution and the security problems generated by the religious activities of Jehovah's Witnesses. Even when the Argentine population was deeply rooted in the Catholic faith, the country was characterized by long liberal tradition. A tradition that started with the same birth of the nation in the May Revolution and then was reaffirmed in the Battle of *Caseros*. This liberal tradition allowed that the most diverse religious, political and philosophical thinkings could be expressed in the country with complete freedom. The Jehovah's Witnesses issue generated problems that were beyond freedom of worship and the tolerance to the religious diversity. Their activities generated serious problems to the civic and political order due to "a confusion that they have between the exact concept of religiosity and the due formal respect to the national symbols."

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[476] Quoted in https://www.o-conciencia.org/ciudadania-e-inhabilitacion-absoluta-y-perpetua/

[477] Cersósimo, *El proceso fue liberal,* 132.

The fragile situation generated by the social attitudes of Jehovah's Witnesses left no alternative to the State than the ban because it was its duty "to defend with tenacity the essential principles for the political order and the nationality survival."[478]

José Luis Romero conceptualized this kind of regime as a "liberal dictatorship," which seems to be a contradiction if we do not take in consideration the need of a strong power, even a dictatorial one, in order to avoid chaos and introduce an order based on liberal principles.[479] This contradiction muss be traced back to the XIX century, to the emergence of the Argentinean national State in 1880s throughout the "Organization Process." It is not a coincidence that the regime called itself "National Reorganization Process."

The "National Reorganization Process" was how the militaries baptized the new regime installed on March 24, 1976. They were inspired in the "Organization Process" that took place in the second half of the XIX century . The horizon of the armed forces was the successful regime of Julio Argentino Roca and looked for a re-edition of the Roquismo. In Videla's words, they wanted to take the nation "back to its principles, to its natural causes." But Videla was not Roca, and 1976 was not 1880. In the XIX century, the armed forces played a vital role in the construction of the national state but they were not alone. The elites were also there to support them and to command them. The armed forces were effective in establishing the necessary order, but only order is not good enough for a nation. A nation need also a destiny, something that does not belong to the military but to the political sphere. The destiny of the nation in 1880 was provided by the liberal elites whose ideological horizon can be found in the writings of Alberdi and Sarmiento and it has been denominated liberal conservatism.[480]

The great absence on the "National Reorganization Process" was this elite that, according to Mariano Grondona, had abandoned its hegemonic leading role in 1916 and had retired "to their ranches and to Paris." Since the *Sáenz Peña* law, the universal suffrage law, the elite mutated into an "empty subject." They were not totally absent but they transformed themselves into a "shell," they became a pure formality, "a class closed in itself" which renounced to "its natural role" of

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478 *La Nación*, 2/17/78

479 Romero, José Luis, (1981) "El liberalismo latinoamericano" in *Situaciones e Ideologías en Latinoamérica*, UNAM, México, 162.

480 Morresi, Sergio, "El liberalismo conservador y la ideología del Proceso de Reorganización Nacional," 106. For a treatment of this ideology during the XIX century see Gallo, (1980) *Entre el liberalismo y la democracia liberal: características y crisis del liberalismo oligárquico en sociedades meridionales* and (1987) "Tradición Liberal en Argentina", en *Estudios Públicos*, no 27; Gallo y Cortés Conde, (1986), *La República conservadora;* Botana, (1984), *La tradición republicana: Alberdi, Sarmiento y las ideas políticas de su tiempo*: (1991), *La Libertad política y su historia;* Halperín Donghi, (1987), *Argentina: la democracia de masas;* Botana, (1985), *El orden conservador: la política argentina entre 1880 y 1916*.

conducting the destiny of the country. The elite of 1880 were patricians who, according to the etymological root of the word, were fathers who represented the society and "were directly oriented to the greatness of the nation." After 1916, this class of patricians transformed themselves in a mere oligarchy, "a rule of a small number of people that represented just a part of the Nation."[481]

A number of intellectuals saw in the putsch of 1976 the chance of reestablishing in the elite its historical role of patricians. Jaime Perriaux, Mariano Grondona, Ricardo Zinn and José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz among others, tried through their participations in different spaces, like the media, to construct a hegemonic predominance among the ruling class.[482] The reasons why this construction of hegemony failed maybe help to explain why the whole regime failed. The regime that came "to take the nation "back to its principles, to its natural causes" ended up to be a "search of a constant equilibrium between different factions" that "did not allow to go forward in any directions."[483] The history of these factions went back to the time when the patricians transformed themselves into an oligarchy and the armed forces felt obligated to extend their role beyond the function of being just the guardians of order. Since then on, there was a pattern that was repeated in the saga of military regimes during the XX century. Every putsch was a "revenge of the defeated of the universal suffrage and the marginal extreme anti establishment right."[484]

The disdain for *el pueblo* is a fundamental characteristic of the whole political and ideological spectrum that can be identified with the Argentinean elites. The "defeated of the universal suffrage," which means the conservative liberals, had as intellectual reference the work of Ortega y Gasset. The diagnosis that they made about the Argentinean society was based in a negative anthropological conception of men and a total aversion for the mass.

In *The Revolt of the Masses,* the XX century was defined as the century of the masses. One of the main characteristic of the modernity was the entrance of the masses in the political scene, something that was extreme negative from the perspective of Ortega y Gasset. The previous condition for the participation of the masses in politics was the education. It was imperative then "to elevate" them, on the contrary it was quite possible the appearance of a "tyranny of the society." The concepts of liberty, democracy and republic had a limited significance. In the ideology of the conservative liberalism a concept that had the same centrality to freedom was order. The

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[481] Grondona, Mariano, (1967), *La Argentina en el tiempo y en el mundo*, quoted in Vicente, *De la refundación al ocaso*, 128.

[482] Vicente, op. cit., 83.

[483] ibidem.. 136.

[484] Quoted in Canelo, Paula,"Las "dos almas" del Proceso," 72.

maintenance of this order was possible throughout the conservation of a hierarchical society that functioned as an immunizer against the latent threats of the democracy or the manipulation of a populist.[485]

Vicente defined the conservative liberalism as an amalgam between liberal and conservative ideas based on a negative conception of the human nature. A religious idea that the earthly life is incomplete and inferior and the real life comes at the end of the biological life. The arrival of modernity and of the "century of the masses" of Ortega y Gasset increased this negative diagnosis. The democracy was an aim to reach by the elevation of the masses. Until then, the masses were a threat to the minorities. The solution to the problem of the masses relied on a limited concept of democracy, a restricted republic. The three axis of this liberalism were the citizen, the institutions and the relationship between both. Order and freedom were the two main objectives.[486]

The book of Ricardo Zinn, *La Segunda Fundación de la República* (The second foundation of the Republic), is one of the most clear example of this idea. It was published in August 1976. The most interesting point of this book was the structural and *long dureé* perspective taken by the author. We can take it as an explanation of the denomination taken by the actors to name the regime, Process of National Reorganization. This name had its historical reference in the time when the country reached its organization as a national state at the end of XIX century. The ideas of the generation of 1880, the responsible of this historical process, compound the only real national project that Argentina has had in his whole history. A national project was much more than just a plan. For Zinn, a project must have "great moral, political and geopolitical objectives." It must be general enough in order to function in different situations. Here Zinn finds the most important defect of the national project implemented in 1880, "it was a project for an empty country that became useless at the moment that the country was half filled."[487] This project had the simply task to create a country, task that was accomplished based on the central ideas of its constitution: republicanism, representativeness and federalization. The limit to this project, known as Agro-export Model, was the ending of the virgin lands which were not utilized more than its natural basic possibilities.

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[485] Vicente, op. cit., 44-47.

[486] Ibidem.

[487] Zinn, *La segunda fundación*, 116.

"The most important men, rulers as much as landowners, thought that it was all done. From Europe it was imported more perfumes than fertilizer formulas. It was bought more jewels than lathes, it arrived more hairstylists than physical teachers. They payed almost no attention to the diversification of the economy."[488]

The national heroes who designed and implemented this national project founded the Argentinean Nation on liberal principles. In Zinn analysis, one of the most important obstacle to this liberal principles was the comfort and the profits possessed by a landowning class who had assured its future for the next generations and made no efforts to improve their productivity. The political system generated was closed to this elite that did not allow a participation of the groups in ascension once that the country started to be populated. This ascending part of the society arrived to the government in 1916 with the presidency of Hipólito Yrigoyen, a time when the country shut itself in the domestic market. The consequence was an economic quietism and standstill that favored the landowning class. The crisis of 1930 allowed the consolidation of a protected industrial group that started to contend with the landowning class for the political hegemony. This industrial group was the ground for the industrialization that would have its golden years in the first Peronism. The style of the landowning class was a model in the construction of values for the rest of the community. It was in this time that in Argentina it became institutionalized "the standstill and the merrymaking." In the country it was installed the leitmotiv "in this country is all already done." The pattern was based on

"A selfish and centrist behavior that does not find the way, that does not allow the access to third parts to its own group. A suicide selfishness dedicated to the distribution of privileges that conceive an unhealthy decrease of the social mobility that led to an almost standstill."[489]

The liberal period of the Agro-Export model was insufficient for the increased population. What came next, it was governments with no project at all. The radical presidencies were concentrated just in the political institutions, and the same error was made by the Liberating Revolution (*Revolución Libertadora*) of 1955, Illia and Lanusse. They all had nothing to offer, no future, just the idea of a country that was fulfilled.

It was necessary to find a new future, a new national project that allows the country to go out of this standstill of a people that is centered in itself. A project that allows the country to recover its sense of signification based on the tradition of liberalism. A national philosophy, something

[488] ibidem, 122.

[489] ibidem, 126.

much more higher than just an ideology, that reestablishes liberty and order. The previous military putsches committed the error of just making an intervention without a clear political idea or project. The opportunity opened in March 1976 had to be used in order to install a new project similar to the one of the generation of 1880. 1977 was compared with 1853, an absolute moment when the destiny and the future of the country had to be planned.

The constitution of 1853 was always a reference for the conservative liberalism authors. These continuous references speak on the tradition that the regime came to defend, the liberal tradition. Alberdi and his *Bases,* was a much more important text than anyone else. Montesquieu was another of the reference author that was more than once quoted. It was quoted due to his republicanism. It was quoted because a constant in the hegemonic discourse of the regime was the maturation of the society in the republican values. A mature society where its members were capable of exerting democracy with responsibility. Once that the order was reestablished, it was necessary to teach the population to be free.[490]

Together with Ricardo Zinn and Mariano Grondona, the most important reference of this group of intellectuals that represented the Establishment was without doubt José Alfredo Martinez de Hoz. He was a lawyer member of the one of the most traditional and patrician Argentinian family. He represented the pro-free trade economical establishment that between 1930 and 1976 was a critical minority against the economical model based on the national industry. Martinez de Hoz had been secretary of agriculture and then minister of economy in the government of José María Guido. During the 1970s, these ideas started to be attractive for the upper class and part of the militaries due to the social critical situation in the country and also due to the successful economic examples of Chile and Brazil. Between 1978 and 1980, the re foundational intentions of the regime were intensified at the same time that the internal divisions and disputes increased. One of the central point of these disputes was the economic plan conducted by Martinez de Hoz.

The success of the economic plan was indispensable in order to reach the structural change and purification that the regime had as main goal in the political field. In spite of the relative success of the economic plan, it did reach the expectations that the militaries entrusted in it. First of all, because the plan needed a long time until the benefits could be visible and in the meantime there was a large part of the society that suffered due to the economic measures. Among the damaged sectors, there were the ascending middle class, the working class and trade unionism, the enterprising circles that were better organized, the public employees and the producers of the

[490] Vicente, op. cit., 141.

provinces. With the time, this need of time leaded to the estrangement of the regime with these sectors and in the worst-case scenario to the confrontation with them.

The delicate economic situation was even more exacerbated by the factionalism among the military sphere. In the middle of 1977, Martinez de Hoz introduced one of the most important changes of his management: the financial reform that came along with strong monetary contraction. The effects of this reform started to generate conflict between the economic cabinet and the militaries that agreed in changing the "populist-developmentalism model" but did not agreed in the social consequences of a model change. They wanted to discipline the working class but not the elimination of factories. Due to this pressure, Martinez de Hoz introduced some changes in April 1978 and at the end of this years the economic politics were completely reoriented.

The relevance of liberal ideas is not only important to understand how the military regime functioned in general, but also to understand how the issue on Jehovah's Witnesses was treated. On December 12, 1980, after the report of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, the regime decided to lift the ban. However, it did not mean that they became the legal recognition they needed. This recognition came in the first months of the new democratic government of Raúl Alfonsin on March 9, 1984.[491]

[491] *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 2001*, 185, 186.

8. Notes on Historiographical Comparison

After considering the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina, it is proper to dedicated a short chapter to the justify our comparison. One of the premise of a comparison is that one has to compare two or more comparable phenomenons. Comparable means that it is important to find a similitude which allow the comparison. Apples may just be compared with another apples. In our case we compare two periodization which are very dissimilar. The analysis in Argentina goes from 1950 to 1984 and the next case to be considered will took just 12 years: 1933 to 1945. To justify this point, we can take the argument used by Michael Geyer talking about the comparison between Stalinism and Nazism, which is also asymmetrical in matter of time. He stated on comparing "the debate is not so much about periodization as it is about the proper subject of comparison."[492]

We must also remember that it is memory which establishes parallels between different historical facts and this memory responds to political motivations. In the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina, it is important to remark the relevance of the Yearbook 1974 which contained the story of their coreligionists in the Nazism at the moment of facing their ban. In the case of Luis, he read this yearbook at the end of 1975. He did not agree with the attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses of facing and provoking the National Socialism. Even when he himself decided to face the militaries at the moment of being drafting by going to the military unit in order to refuse being incorporated, for Luis facing the Argentinean militaries and facing Hitler were two complete different things. The reasonable decision should have been migrating and avoiding the confrontation.[493] As we have seen in the chapter about the native category, this connection between Argentina and Germany was not an exclusivity of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

However, the issue about comparing apples with apples is still there. It is necessary to find a common ground at the moment of comparing these two different periodization. Marina Franco has remarked that the repressive measures in the context of the cold war and conterrevolution war had similtudes with the repressive politics against the anarchism and labor movement at the beginning

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[492] Michael Geyer, "Introduction. After Totalitarianism - Stalinism and Nazism compared" in Fitzpatrick, Lüdtke, *Energizing the everyday*, p., 28.

[493] Interview to Luis Miguel on January 4th, 2024.

of the XX century.[494] There is an intensity in both periods which has to be taken into consideration. Pontoriero has seen this parallel in his study about the Argentinean militaries between 1950s and 1970s remarking the importance of the concept "culture of war" coined by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker in their analysis of the first world war in Europe.[495] Christian Ingrao has also pointed out to the "culture of war" of 1914-1918 has the element which shaped the intellectuals of the SS who planned and executed the Shoah.[496] The discourse that legitimated the Shoah had an Utopian and a defensive element which emerged in 1914-1918 and in Germany was systematized and radicalized by the racial determinism and the nazi millennialism.[497]

One of the central element of the "culture of war" is a particular conception of time. According to Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau this conception of time of quite different to the conception that we have about time in peaceful context. Those who find themselves in a conflict are conscious that something in the time has changed. They feel and perceive a different kind of time.[498] The chapter II of this dissertation, 1950-1976, has shown how a different conception of time emerged in Argentina, and in the region, during those years. We can recall the idea of Horacio Tarcus who defined this manifestation with the term "absolute present." A term that makes allusion to "an orgiastic excitation climate" of a "radical immediacy" from "here and now."

> It is an attitude characterized by a tense expectation. It is always ready waiting for the proper moment […] "It only waits the critical conjuncture of the events and that the concatenation of the circumstances coincide with the ecstatic concern of his soul." The human redemption is only possible throughout a catastrophic and revolutionary act. The distance between the existing order and the new order, between Topia and Utopia, disappeared. The historic époques are understood according to the proximity of the final day like epochs primed with meaning.[499]

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin analyzed the concept of aura in connection with the works of art. He gave particular attention to the *Hier und Jetzt des Kunstwerks,* "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be." The relevance of the here and now, *Hier und Jetzt*. is a characteristic of this understanding of

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[494] Franco, Boholavsky, Elementos para una historia de las violencias estatales en la Argentina en el siglo XX, 218.

[495] Pontoriero, 34.

[496] Ingrao, Croire et détruire, 12.

[497] ibidem, 446.

[498] Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau, Interview in Politika, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LsUMk3Ewdc, consulted on April 7, 2024.

[499] Tarcus

time as an "absolute present." Benjamin defined in this essay the term aura as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be."[500]

In an interview for the BBC, Erich Hobsbawm explaining why he joined the Communist Party in those years stated: "You cannot understand anything about the first half of the twenty century, at least from 1914 until the Second World War without grasping that most people believed that the old world was coming to an end, inevitable. The whole world is crashing. We were living in the crashing of the old world."[501]

This dissertation is based on the idea that in Argentina, between 1950 and 1983, and in Europe, between 1933-1945, the social actors perceived, felt and lived a different time, product of a culture of war. A culture of war which was not an exclusivity of Germany in the interwar years, but a culture shared at least by most of the European countries. And a culture that neither was an exclusivity of Argentina during those years, but it was a culture shared by an important part of what we call today the global south. Something that it has already been mentioned by Franco and Bohoslavsky.[502]

One of the most irritating element of comparison for the historian is its strong theoretical element. In order to compare we need to generalize. It is necessary to use general concepts, in our case, for example, National Socialism and Dictatorship, which, at the end, are two abstractions. History is, on the other hand, dedicated to the micro analysis. It looks for what is particular. Quite contrary to other sciences like sociology, it describes the uniqueness of the historical processes. It is this tension one of the main reason why it is so difficult to compare in history.[503] In both cases, Argentina and Germany, this kind of theoretical comparison started pretty early. In Germany it started in the 50s and in Argentina it started in the 70s. These comparisons were dominated by philosophers, social scientists and public intellectuals. Talking about the comparison between Stalinism and Nazism, Michael Geyer remarked that "after a first round of totalitarian theorizing, we can now begin to think historically about Stalinism and Nazism."[504] The decades of historiographical production allow to do on an empirical level what political scientists and

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[500] Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, 13, 19-25.

[501] Interview to Erich Hobsbawm in Late Show October 24.1994, in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnd2Pu9NNPw (last time checked October 16, 2020)

[502] Franco, Bohoslavsky, op. cit.

[503] Haupt, Heinz- Gerhard and Kocka Jürgen, *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 9-45.

[504] Ibidem, 3

philosophers have done at the theoretical level half a century ago - and, if all goes well, revise, amend, improve, or overthrow what they argued in due course."[505] Comparison then has to be based on empirical questions, "rather than turning this book into a reflection on civilization and barbarism or into another controversy over the ideological or, respectively, religious nature of the regimes, we shied away from grand pronouncements and asked more specifically about the nature and the facets or the social project that emerged form these two regimes."[506]

To this theoretical element, we have to include the political-ideological one. In the chapter about the native category, we have already describe this aspect in the Argentinean case. "In the German context, the initial impetus - often under the rubric of the comparative study of dictatorships - originated out of the attempt to integrate the East German regime into German history. The notion of two dictatorships, a National Socialist and a Communist one, counterbalancing the relentless and ultimately successful Westernization and democratization of (West) Germany seemed plausible. The latter meant de-exceptionalizing and, in a way, normalizing the Third Reich, even if only fringe groups doubted the extreme character of Nazism. This internal German debate on the two dictatorships is particularly intriguing, as it quickly aims to define the most salient effort to revitalize thought on thought on totalitarianism. This effort is best known for rediscovering and highlighting "ideology" as a key component of Nazism (and Stalinism)."[507]

"The reason of comparison is that in understanding and making sense of the two, we gain a crucial vista into twentieth-century that on their own neither of the two national histories can produce. Both regimes set out to transform and overcome history and pursued what, on the surface, appear to be parallel strategies. In exploring this perceived parallelism, however, we discover profound differences- differences where thought on totalitarianism once presumed sameness. It is this puzzle of acute-difference-in-manifest-similarity that leads us to believe that comparison will not only help us understand the two nations and regimes better, but will also bring new insight to the question of what made these regimes such quintessential forces in twentieth-century history."[508]

In what is known as the Historikerstreit 2.0, one of the central point of the Nazism historiography which is criticized is its "provincialism." We can take the attempts to compare Nazism and Stalinism as an example to illustrate this point. "Their knowledge of the Soviet Union and its historiography was virtually nonexistent. German thought on totalitarianism was single-

505 Ibidem, 19.

506 Ibidem, 16.

507 Ibidem, 11.

508 Ibidem, 26.

mindedly national despite interwar entendres - an ironic move further exacerbated by the fact that the only thing that all totalitarian theorists agreed upon (and this separated their theories from ordinary or "vulgar" Marxist theories of fascism) was that National Socialism formed in one way or another an exceptional regime."[509] "But despite a tremendous wealth of research, neither of the two historiographies ever managed to sustain such encompassing metaphors, let alone employ them productively. History has for the most part remained national - and devoid of grand narratives or grand explanations. Unfortunately, this leaves us with an empirical history that is, by and large, parochial despite its broader ambitions. There is a price to pay for this self-limitation. With few exceptions, Soviet and German historians have not studied each other's work , although they have eyed each other from a distance, never quite losing the sense and sensibility that in a better and more transparent world, in which everyone knew each other's history, they might actually learn form one another - and in learning from one another might possibly achieve a better understanding of the tremendous fear and awe that both Stalinist and the Nazi regimes elicited in their time."[510]

We can recall the suggestions made by Henri Pirenne at the moment of transcending the national limitations. In the opening discourse to the V international congress of historical sciences in Brussels, Henri Pirenne addressed to the attendant historians with a talk about the comparative method in history. In this talk held in 1924, Pirenne pointed out, reflecting on the First World War, that during this conflict two sciences were specially requested: history and chemistry. The last one provided explosives and gas, the first one provided reasons, justifications and pretexts. This function of history was not new, in the XVII and XVIII centuries kings like Louis XIV had used history in a similar way. In the First World War history provided the ideological background of the conflict to the national states. The celebration of international congresses of historians was therefore an excellent opportunity to overcome the national limits of the historical science. Like any other science objectivity had to be the goal of historiography and in order to reach this goal it was necessary to "surmount the deepest prejudices, the strongest convictions and the most natural and respectable sentiments."[511] According to Pirenne, the comparative method was the *Königsweg* to resolve this problem. Comparison demand the historians to alienate from their own national or regional historical realities. An essential alienation in order to reach objectivity.

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509 Michael Geyer, "Introduction. After Totalitarianism - Stalinism and Nazism compared" in Fitzpatrick, Lüdtke, *Energizing the everyday*, p. 6.

510 Ibidem, 9.

511 Pirenne, 1001.

According to Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, comparison in history has four functions. An heuristic one: by comparing two or more cases it is possible to identify characteristics and peculiarities which otherwise will remain concealed. Comparisons have also a descriptive function. They contribute to gain a sharpened description of the elements which are compared. There is also an analytical function. By comparing it is necessary to explain different circumstances, conditions, backgrounds and contexts. The four function pointed out by Kocka and Haupt is the alienation. Like Pirenne, they call attention to the alienating effect of comparison. The historian who compare is faced to alternative processes which lead to question what until then was for the historian something natural and self-evident.[512]

One of the main question in a comparison is: what is the subject of comparison? Do we compare the similarities or the differences? Michael Geyer said that "we need to ask what difference "difference" makes in understanding the two regimes. This is not merely a question as to what, if anything, comparison achieves. Rather it involves explaining how and why two regimes did so many similar things in such different ways. What we ultimately aim to produce is a better appreciation of the problems and issues that moved the two regimes and of the strategies they employed to solve them."[513] The objective of comparison is then to solve "the truly puzzling thing" of "how two regimes that in many ways look so similar can be so fundamentally different."[514]

As it was stated at the introduction of the consideration on the Argentinean case, one of the objective of this comparison is to question the Argentinean native category of State Terrorism. However, the comparison with the Nazism also implies a questioning of the native categories on the studies on Nazism. As it was stated by Michael Geyer, it implies an "indigenizing" of the categories on Nazism.[515] An "indigenizing" process that take place in an axis South-North. In a conference called *Europäische Zäsuren 1914-1939-1989. Dominante Erinnerung Narrative in Europa* Dan Diner remarked that the comparison in European history had been shaped in a central axis which goes from west to east. He asked himself, however, what would happen if the direction of this axis

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512 Hort Jakob, "Vergleichen, Verflechten, Verwirren. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Methodendiskussion in der wissenschaftlichen Praxis: ein Erfahrungsbericht", in Agnes Arndt, Joachim Häberlen, Christiane Reinecke (Hg.), *Vergleichen, verflechten, verwirren?. Europäische Geschichtsschreibung zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Düsseldof, 324.

513 Ibidem, 18.

514 Ibidem, 21.

515 Michael Geyer, "Introduction. After Totalitarianism - Stalinism and Nazism compared" in Fitzpatrick, Lüdtke, *Energizing the everyday*, 26

is changed from west-east to north-south? Or even better to a south-north axis by including the colonial history of, for example, France?[516] Even when this dissertation had no relation to a colonial or postcolonial issue, the proposed comparison suggests a comparison which goes from south to north.

[516] Dan Diner, "Europäische Zäsuren 1914-1939-1989. Dominante Erinnerung Narrative in Europa" in the second Symposium der europäischen Einrichtungen, die sich mit der Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts beschäftigen, Berlin, 10-12. Oktober 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnCX-dbdc4U, consulted February 4th, 2024.

9. 1914: “The End of the World”

Erich Frost was born in Leipzig in 1900, a city located in Saxony, one of the German bastion of Socialism. In the first decades of the XX century, Saxony was not only the heart of the Socialist movement but also the place where the world largest population of Jehovah’s Witnesses was concentrated, after New York where they had their world center. In 1919 her mother became a Jehovah’s Witness and her activism convinced Erich Frost and his father to join her. He was baptized in 1923 and his full engagement took him to different cities throughout central Europe during the 1920s showing and playing music in the presentation of the “Photo Drama of Creation.” On June 13, 1935, he was arrested and taken to *Columbia-Haus*, the only official SS concentration camp within Berlin city’s limits, where he stated during five months. It was here that Erich Frost was interrogated, tortured and treated as a left revolutionary by the Gestapo. After his liberation, he engaged in the underground activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses until he was one more time arrested in the context of the last great raid organized by the Gestapo against this religious minority in March 1937. In 1939 Erich Frost arrived at the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen where he had the chance to witness the death of August Dickmann, who was executed due to his refusal of being drafted in the army. In Sachsenhausen Jehovah’s Witnesses had to coexist daily with other groups of prisoners, many of them members of the SPD and KPD. Among them, the Communists usually displayed a special scorn against Jehovah’s Witnesses. Some of them stated: “If we ever gain power, we will hang you bunch of comedians.” In 1942, Frost composed one of the most popular hymns of Jehovah’s Witnesses: “Stand fast.” As part of the “ringleaders” of Sachsenhausen, he was punished with 25 blows and deported to the labor camp at Alderney, Channel Islands. In June 1944, he was witness of the allied invasion and was taken back to Germany where he was finally liberated on May 5, 1945 by the American troops.[517]

The experience of Erich Frost under what he called a “Totalitarian Inquisition” is a good synopsis of the story of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany before 1945. They were hated, persecuted, mistreated and murdered by the NSDAP regime due to their “revolutionary” and “Jewish” elements. According to the ideologues of the Nazism ideology, since Dietrich Eckart to the Reich Main

[517] Frost, Erich, “Deliverance from Totalitarian Inquisition through faith in God” in *Watchtower* 4.15.1961, 244-249.

Security Office assessors, they were Bolsheviks and part of the Jewish worldwide conspiracy. On the other side, many communists considered them as "mere comedians" who had to be hanged.

The case of Eric Frost shows how confusing the Jehovah's Witnesses were for their contemporaries. The scholars who tried to study the social behavior of this group had also quite a similar difficulty. Reviewing what it has been written until today about Jehovah's Witnesses, Jolene Chu made the following statement:

"Many scholarly accounts favor narration over causation, describing the struggles of the IBSA/JW (Jehovah's Witnesses) in clashes with totalitarian states or in landmark court cases involving religious freedom. However, an approach seldom found in IBSA/JW studies is an analysis of causation based on a close examination of the role played by core religious concepts, individual motivations, and group identity. While scholarly literature may mention IBSA/JW doctrine, rare is the study that offers a thorough discussion of specific tenets as held by individuals in an actual setting."[518]

As Jolene Chu remarked, it is not possible to understand the behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses if we do not consider seriously their ideas which were mainly published in the *Watch Tower*.

The first German edition of the journal *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* in the United States appeared in 1987. Five years later, the Watch Tower Society established its first branch office in Elberfeld with the purpose of distributing the journal in the small groups that were formed in the Black Forest, Bergisches Land and Westphalia. This journal expressed the ideas of Charles Taze Russell, a former American businessman who in 1870s started to preach that the end of world was coming. Within the first followers of Russell in the United States were those who became disappointed with the Adventist church when this long-awaited end failed to come true in 1874 as the Adventists had been announcing. Russell reinterpreted this disappointment by saying that in 1874 Christ's return did took place but in a spiritual way which was naturally invisible to human eyes. 1874 was then the beginning of a unique time in the history of mankind. Based on his interpretation of the evangelical writings, Russell stated that in 1874 a "harvest period" of forty years had begun in which the invisible Christ would be gathering the faithful followers of the Lord." Russell dedicated his whole life and fortune to proselytism during this "harvest period" announcing that the thousand-year kingdom of Jesus Christ would start to rule on earth at the end of this period, 1914.[519]

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[518] Chu, "No creed but the Bible," 116.

[519] Garbe, *op. cit.* 29-32.

The first publication written by Russell appeared in 1877 with the title *The Object and manner of Our Lord's Return*. Two years later, in July 1879, the first number of the journal *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* came out. It was the start of an important publishing undertaking which led in 1896 to the foundation of the *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society* in Pittsburgh, state of Pennsylvania, and the *Peoples Pulpit Association* in New York in 1909. This last one became the international headquarters from where the publications, activities and ideas of Russell were spread in several countries including Germany.

The central writings of Russell were a series of books entitled *Millennial Dawn* whose name was changed later for *The Divine Plan of Ages* and finally *Studies in the Scriptures*. The first volume, entitled *The Plan of the Ages,* was published in 1886. Russell stated there that he had found a key to interpret the Bible. "There is a plan, a spirit, a goal, a purpose drew through the whole book."[520] The first part of the Bible showed how the fall of men happened and the last one how mankind would be recovered. Throughout the whole book we found "the Plan of God" to take mankind to its recovery. The history of humanity was divided in three periods. The age that went from the creation of Adam till the flood, the present world (which was divided in three parts: the time of the patriarchs, the Jewish time and the Christian one), and finally the future world (also divided in two parts: a period of thousand years and a coming era). The second volume was published three years later, in 1889, with the name *The Time is at Hand*. In this book, Russell pointed out that in 1872 six thousand years from Adam creation had been accomplished, so a new millennium, "the day of the Lord" or "the day of Tribulation" started in that year when all the kingdoms of the earth would be destroyed and the Kingdom of God would start to rule. Russell saw in the progress of socialism, nihilism and communism since 1873 the sign of a breakdown in mankind's political structure.

"The general condition of the world today, and the rapid development since 1873 of Socialism, Nihilism and Communism, whose avowed object is the overturning of the power that be, and the redistribution of the wealth of the world, are certainly not out of harmony with what we should expect, however much, in some respects, these things may be deprecated by those who love law and order and peace. Only those who see that the coming anarchy and trouble are God's agencies for the establishment of a yet more complete law and order, and a more lasting peace, will be relieved from overwhelming fear as they pass through it."[521]

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[520] Russell, *Der göttliche Plan der Zeitalter*, 53.

[521] Russell, *The Time is at Hand*, 41.

During this decisive time, the end of the "evangelical age," there was a harvest quite similar to the one that happened at the end of the "Jewish age." This harvest will last forty years in which there will be a separation of individuals between those considered "wheat" from those considered "weed".[522]

The exhibition of the *Photo-Drama of Creation* and the booklet *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* together with the designation of Paul Balzereit in November 1920 as the new responsible of the organization in German territory gave a new impulse to the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Weimar Republic.

"Beginning in 1921/22 the increase number was remarkable. Within a short period of time, the number of Bible Students as well as their popularity increased significantly. Between 1918 and 1926 more than ten million tracts and other publications of the Watch Tower Society were distributed in Germany. During this period an almost sixfold increase in the number of Bible Students took place. In 1926 a total of 22,535 proclaimers of the Kingdom were organized in 316 groups. In the cities, the Bible Student teachings met with even greater response than in rural areas. (…) During this period, the group of Bible Students in Dresden represented the largest local IBSA group in the world."[523]

On a four special days in 1922, the total attendance was of almost 250,000 people.[524] The first facilities of the *Magdeburg Bible House* were obtained in 1923. Throughout the twenties this property was in several times extended which was a clear evidence of the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The leadership of Balzereit was the sign of a new stage in the history of Bible Students. "At the beginning of 1914 the Bible Students were certain that the end of the world had arrived. Several of them even began distributing their material belongings, abandoning their places of employment, and eagerly anticipating the future."[525] However, their hopes were not accomplished and the end of the world did not come in 1914, as Russell and his followers had been announcing. Russell did not have the chance to reinterpret the events of 1914 because he died in 1916. Joseph Franklin Rutherford, who took the vacancy left by Russell, was the responsible of finding the significance of the "Great War." According to the new interpretation, 1914 was the moment of the enthronement of Christ in heavens and the beginning of the kingdom of thousand years. Of course that it was an

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[522] ibidem, 15,16.

[523] Garbe, *op. cit.* 45.

[524] ibidem 47.

[525] ibidem 32.

invisible event impossible to be seen from the earth and only noticeable with a "spiritual vision" which only the Bible Students had. "In the near future (that is, during the lifetimes of many people living today) it would be established also on the earth."[526] The changes introduced by Rutherford were not exclusively in the doctrinal level. Detlef Garbe pointed out that during these years the Bible Students groups of Russell were transformed into a "hierarchically structured, strictly centralized" theocracy.[527] This "theocratical" reorganization implied a kind of purge at a worldwide level where "about four thousand people withdrew from the association, forming new, independent Bible Student groups."[528] The nomination of Paul Balzereit must be seen as part of this reorganization.

After the First World War, the decision of opening a bureau for central Europa was taken in November 1920. It should function in Switzerland, a neutral country, and had the supervision of France, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Netherlands and Italy.[529]

In 1921, Rutherford published an overview of Russell's *Millennial Dawn* named *The Harp of God* which became a kind of handbook for Bible Students and specially for new comers. This "harp" was compound of ten "strings" that represented the "ten fundamental truths or doctrines of the divine plan: Creation, Justice manifested, Abrahamic Promise, Birth of Jesus, Ransom, Resurrection, Mystery Revealed, The Lord's Presence, Glorification and Restoration." The divine plan was defined as "the arrangement made by Jehovah for the creation of everything that has been created and for carrying out his purposes with reference to his creatures." This plan was kept a secret during "the first four thousand years of man's history" and once for the first time understood by Jesus when God began to reveal it to those "who have consecrated to do his will".[530]

In the section dedicated to the "eighth string" or basic doctrine of God's plan, the "Lord's Return," Rutherford explained the meaning of the greek word *parousia* which according to him should be translated presence and make reference to the "invisible presence of the Lord."[531] In the chapter 24 of Matthew Gospel the disciples asked Jesus: "What shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the *end of the world*?" The answer was: "Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All

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[526] ibidem 36.

[527] ibidem 41.

[528] ibidem 35.

[529] Besier, Stoklosa, Band 3, 591.

[530] Rutherford, *The Harp of God*, preface, 18, 20,21.

[531] ibidem, 225,226.

these are the beginning of sorrows." In Rutherford's exegesis these words clearly predicted "a great world war would ensue, in which the nations and kingdoms of the earth should be involved (…) and its destructiveness of treasure and human life is unparalleled in any other time of man's history."[5] The war would be accompanied by "famine and pestilence," something that happened in Europe where "thousands have literally starved to death. Another important signal in Jesus' words were "earthquakes." In order to explain the meaning of these, Rutherford explained that Jesus "often used symbolic language or dark sayings to conceal the real meaning until the due time should come" so "in Biblical symbology earthquake means revolution." After the war "the spirit of revolution" was everywhere as the cases of Russia, Germany, Austria and Hungary confirmed. The "accomplishment" of these prophecies showed that "the old world legally ended in 1914 and the process of removing the worn out systems is now progressing, preparatory to the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom".[533]

Rutherford also introduced a radicalization in the discourse of Bible Students. They started to denounce that the commercial, political and religious power were in the hands of Satan and they were the tools that he used to dominated the world. Their activism was now denouncing and challenging the "supporting pillars of contemporary society." He even "accused unfaithful preachers, conscienceless profiteers, and unscrupulous politicians of having joined the conspiracy of Satan." If the world and its political system was under the control the Devil than the Bible Students should abstain from any contact with such "demoniacal" institutions like political parties or practices like voting.[534]

In the fifth chapter of the *Harp of God*, entitled "the ransom," we find the following statement: "For thousands of years divine wisdom has been working out his plan concerning man; and the ransom sacrifice is the very pivotal part of that plan. (…) It is the gateway that leads to life and happiness. It is the means of bringing back man into harmony with God".[535] The seven chapter, "The Mystery Revealed", added: "The mystery is the Christ, the great one through whom redemption, deliverance and blessing will ultimately come to all mankind who receive Christ and obey him."[536] In order to receive the benefits of this redemption it was necessary "an understanding and appreciation of the fundamental truths of repentance, consecration, justification, spirit-

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[532] ibidem.

[533] Rutherford, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, 17-19.

[534] Garbe, *op. cit.* 39,40.

[535] Rutherford, *op. cit.* 116.

[536] ibidem 186.

begetting, and sanctification." Three were the necessary steps that the people had to take: 1. Faith in God and his promises, which is exercised and proven by making a surrender of ourselves to the Lord; 2. To receive the merit of Christ, and his presentation to the Father; and 3. The determination by Jehovah God that the one thus presented is right."[537]

The congress that took place in 1922 was the starting point of an important preaching and propaganda campaign for "the Kingdom." Rutherford maintained the interpretation of history stated by Charles Russell where there was three worlds all along mankind's history. The first one ended with the flood of Noah's days. A second world started "at the time of the deluge" and it lasted until the XX century. It was defined as "the present evil world" that in 1914 had "legally" ended. So "within the time of the present generation" this world would be completely destroy and a "new order" would be establish. "Therefore there are millions of people now living on earth who will see them take place, to whom everlasting life will be offered and who, if they accept it upon the terms offered and obey those terms, will never die".[538] Jehovah's Witnesses were living in a unique time, a time of reconstruction. "A reconstruction that was not only of a few things, but of all things. The reconstruction will not consist of patching up old and broken down systems and forms and arrangements, but the establishment of a new and righteous one under the great ruler Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace."[539]

The booklet *Millions Now Living Will Never Die,* which was published in the early twenties, came with a new calculation regarding the fulfillment of prophecies that showed the year 1925 as the moment of restoration.

"The Sabbath system" was instituted "the year that Israel entered the land of Canaan, which was 1575 years before A.D. 1." Since then "every fiftieth year should be unto them a year of jubilee". Using the prophecy where Jeremiah predicted 70 years of desolation in Jerusalem, Rutherford concluded that it should pass 70 jubilees, 3,500 years, until "a full restoration" take place. In the fall of 1925 should be "the beginning of restoration of all things. The chief thing to be restored is the human race to life; and since other Scriptures definitely fix the fact that there will be a resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other faithful ones of old (…) we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected and fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representatives of the new order of things on earth." [540]

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[537] ibidem 195, 199.

[538] Rutherford, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, 10-12.

[539] ibidem 90.

[540] ibidem 88.

1925 will be specially important for the Jews. This same year Rutherford wrote *Comfort for the Jews* where he stated:

"But now the day of jubilee has come and the day of Israel's warfare is done. The time has come for her blindness to be removed and for her to see what wonderful provisions God has made for the salvation of the Jews and for the establishment of them again in their homeland."[541]

The fact that in 1925 nothing happened, introduced one more time divisions within the Bible Students and around two thousand of them left the Association. Between 1928 and 1930 the members of this religious community started to decrease in Germany but they would experience an important increment in 1931 and 1932. An increment that can be compared with the one experienced between 1922 and 1925. "In 1926 the denomination had a total of 22,535 members organized in 316 groups; in 1931 this number had increased to a total of 24,135 believers organized in approximately 395 groups."[542]

In her analysis of Russell's activities, Jolene Chu has pointed out that in the base of Jehovah's Witnesses doctrines is to take into consideration the classless character of the members. In the United States, Russell's writings were considered dangerous by the religious elites because Bible Students were encouraging the lower class to read the Bible and their publications. In order to do that, one of the main characteristics of Bible Students was to make their publications and Bibles accessible to the poor. Whether they sold the literature at very low cost or it was simply given. To this point we have to add that those who read the writings of Russell were encourage to leave their churches or once that they were discovered reading such publications, the churches themselves expelled them. That is one of the reason why new congregations and meetings were formed. These two elements, the spreading among the lower classes and the fact that they were on the margins of the religious institutions, had an important impact on the doctrine.

Speaking about the growth of Bible Students after the First World War, Detlef Garbe stated

"By the end of World War I, the religious denomination in the German Reich had a total of 3,868 "publishers" or "Kingdom proclaimers" organized in approximately one hundred groups. During the three years following World War I, the denomination had a considerable increase in the number of believers. As early as 1919 the number of believers amounted to 5,545. However, beginning in 1921/22 this increase was even more remarkable. Within a short period of time, the number of Bible Students as well as their popularity increased significantly. Between 1918 and 1926 more than ten million tracts and other publications of the Watch Tower Society were distributed in Germany. During this

[541] Rutherford, *Comfort for the Jews*, 123.

[542] Garbe, *op. cit.* 62.

period an almost sixfold increase in the number of Bible Students took place. In 1926 a total of 22,535 proclaimers of the Kingdom were organized in 316 groups."[543]

The millenarian conceptions which constitute the essence of Jehovah's Witnesses ideology were not a novelty in middle Europe. At least since the time of the Reform, we find in the German territory, a tradition of millenarian movement. Thomas Munzer is one of the example that we have to take into consideration. Friedrich Engels remarked about him

"Munzer's political doctrine followed his revolutionary religious conceptions very closely, and as his theology reached far beyond the current conceptions of his time, so his political doctrine went beyond existing social and political conditions. As Munzer's philosophy of religion touched upon atheism, so his political programme touched upon communism, and there is more than one communist sect of modern times which, on the eve of the February Revolution, did not possess a theoretical equipment as rich as that of Munzer of the Sixteenth Century. His programme, less a compilation of the demands of the then existing plebeians than a genius's anticipation of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletarian element that had just begun to develop among the plebeians, demanded the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God, of the prophesied millennium on earth. This was to be accomplished by the return of the church to its origins and the abolition of all institutions that were in conflict with what Munzer conceived as original Christianity, which, in fact, was the idea of a very modern church. By the kingdom of God, Munzer understood nothing else than a state of society without class differences, without private property, and without superimposed state powers opposed to the members of society. All existing authorities, as far as they did not submit and join the revolution, he taught, must be overthrown, all work and all property must be shared in common, and complete equality must be introduced. In his conception, a union of the people was to be organised to realize this programme, not only throughout Germany, but throughout entire Christendom. Princes and nobles were to be invited to join, and should they refuse, the union was to overthrow or kill them, with arms in hand, at the first opportunity."[544]

As we may seen in this quotation, we can find already in the first texts of Engels a reference to the millenarian conception of history and "communism" and "the emancipation of the proletarian element" and "the establishment of the of God, of the prophesied millennium on earth."

E.P. Thompson has also underlined the relevance of the millenarian conceptions

"The communication tradition was sometimes found in association with another underground tradition, that of millenarianism. The wilder sectaries of the English Revolution - Ranters and Fifth Monarchy Men - were never totally extinguished, with their literal interpretations of the Book of Revelation and their anticipations of a New Jerusalem descending from above. The Muggletonians (or followers of Ludowic Muggleton) were still preaching in the fields and parks of London at the end of the 18th century. The Bolton society from which the Shakers originated was presided over the Mother Jane Wardley who paced the meeting-room "with a mighty trembling," declaiming: "Repent. For the Kingdom of God is at Hand. The new heaven and new earth prophesied of old is about to come… And when Christ

[543] Garbe, 45.

[544] MEW 7, 353,354.

appears again, and the true church rises in full and transcendent glory, then all anti-Christian denominations - the priests, the church, the pope - will be swept away." Any dramatic event, such as the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, aroused apocalyptic expectations."[545]

Making allusion to the reference book about such millenarian movements, the work of Norman Cohn, E.P. Thompson remarked that "the attention to millenarian movements and fantasies, their significance has been partly obscured by the tendency to discuss them in terms of maladjustment and "paranoia." The question posed by Thompson is then: "Given such a phenomenon, however, the historical problem remains - why should grievances, aspirations, or even psychotic disorders, "coalesce" into influential movements only at certain times and in particular forms?"[546]

"What we must not do is confuse pure "freaks" and fanatical aberrations with the imagery - of Babylon and the Egyptian exile and the Celestial City and the contest with Satan- in which minority groups have articulated their experience and projected their aspirations for hundreds of years. Moreover, the extravagant imaginary used by certain groups does not always reveal their objective motivations and effective assumptions. This is a difficult question; when we speak of "imagery" we mean much more than figures of speech in which ulterior motives were "clothed." The imagery is itself evidence of powerful subjective motivations, fully as "real" as the objective, fully as effective, as we see repeatedly in the history of Puritanism, in their historical agency. It is the sign of how men felt and hoped, loved and hated, and of how they preserved certain values in the very texture of their language."[547]

It is the "unconscious," the "symbolic function" of these individuals the center of our interest. What is important here "is not to attribute confused and disorganized states, emotions, or representations to an objective cause, but rather to articulate them into a whole or system."[548] Their experiences "remain intellectually diffuse and emotionally intolerable unless they incorporate one or another of the patterns present in the group's culture."[549] The pattern of Jehovah's Witnesses culture was determined by a utopian element, the Kingdom of God. We can recall the words of Karl Mannheim: "It is the utopian element, or the nature of the dominant wish, which determines the sequence, order, and evaluation of single experiences. This wish is the organizing principle which even moulds the way in which we experience time."[550] The Kingdom of God was an "organizing principle" of their experiences. The "hopes, yearnings and purposes" of a coming Kingdom ruled by

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[545] Thompson, *op. cit.* 47,48.

[546] Ibidem, 49.

[547] Ibidem

[548] Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 171,172,182,202.203

[549] Ibidem

[550] Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 188.

Jesus Christ on Earth was the element that permitted Jehovah's Witnesses to structure their past, present and future. The social behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany since 1934 on can only been understood if we take into consideration this "ordering of meaning" which is, according to Mannheim, "the most primary element in the comprehension and interpretation of events."[551]

Josep Fontana made an interesting remark about the category "Utopian". This category was used by the historiography to classify some of these revolts as the ones which were considered primitive and not part of the social development to capitalism in contrast to those considered mature or proto-bourgeois.

"It is logic that the academic historiography recognizes a progress sign in everything that anticipated the victory of capitalism. Now then if one is not concerned in the legitimization of the present, there is no reason to agree with this narrow sight which overvalue the proto-bourgeois elements and discredit the rest. It is required to uncover the inherent logic of these social projects."[552]

As I have already mentioned, Engels was interested in the first Christians and considered them as a "religion of the poor, the banished, the damned, the persecuted and the oppressed," people who were declassed, slaves or poor peasants. He even established different parallels within the first followers of Jesus and the modern Socialism. Both were mass movements, both were oppressed and persecuted and both were activists in preaching a future redemption and liberation from slavery and misery. This tradition englobed from the Taborites of John Zizka ("of glorious memory") and the Anabaptists of Thomas Münzer to the French revolutionary communists after 1830 and the partisans of the German utopian communist Wilhelm Weitling. However, the central different between Christians and Socialists was the question: Where and how should deliverance how to take place? In this earth or in the hereafter? Anyway, specially in the case of Thomas Münzer, Engels saw "a brilliant anticipation of future proletarian emancipatory aims" who announced a millenarian Kingdom of God without class differences, private property and state authority.[553]

Ernst Bloch was another Marxist author who was interested on the "underground, subversive and heretical religion of the Albigensians, the Hussites, Joachim of Fiore, Thomas Münzer, Franz von Baader, Wilhelm Weitling and Leo Tolstoy." He defined religion as "one of the most significant forms of utopian consciousness, one of the richest expressions of the principle of

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[551] Ibidem,188,189.

[552] Fontana, *Historia. Análisis del pasado y proyecto social,* 38-40.

[553] Löwy, *The War of Gods.*, 7-9.

hope." The eschatology pattern of though of these groups has implicit an "imaginary space of the not-yet-being." This idea was later considered by Max Horkheimer who considered religion as "the record of the wishes, nostalgias (*Sehnsüchte*) and indictments of countless generations."[554]

"The decisive turning-point in modern history was, from the point of view of our problem, the moment in which "Chiliasm" joined forces with the active demands of the oppressed strata of society," stated Karl Mannheim. Mannheim recognized that since its formulation in the Bible, the millennial kingdom on earth had always a revolutionizing nature which until Joachim the Fiore had been successful in neutralizing by the Church. Joachim the Fiore resurrected this nature but it was a resurrection that took place strictly in the ideological sphere. However, the Hussites and then Thomas Münzer and the Anabaptists came to show the power this ideas when they were "transformed into the activistic movements of specific social strata." Mannheim defined this social process as an "spiritualization of politics," a process that gradually throughout the centuries would have its most complete manifestation in the "proletarian self-consciousness."[555] No every Chiliasm ideology lead to a social revolution but in every social revolution there was a Chiliasm spirit that come with and "When this spirit ebbs and deserts these movements, there remains behind in the world a naked mass-frenzy and despiritualized fury."[556]

"Chiliasm had its period of existence in the world of the decaying Middle Ages, a period of tremendous disintegration. Everything was in conflict with everything else. It was the world of nobles, patricians, townsmen, journeymen, vagabonds, and mercenaries, all warring against each other. It was a world in upheaval and unrest, in which the deepest impulses of the human spirit sought external expression. In this conflict, the ideologies did not crystallize quite clearly, and it is not always easy to determine definitely the social position to which each of them belongs. As Engels clearly saw, it was the Peasant Revolt that first reduced to simpler and less ambiguous terms the spiritual and intellectual whirlpool of the Reformation. It becomes more apparent now that the Chiliastic experience is characteristic of the lowest strata of society."[557]

It was in the pioneering investigation made by Zipfel, *Kirchenkampf im Deutschland*, where we find that Jehovah's Witnesses are considered as a "religion of the poor." Detlef Garbe criticized this conception, concentrating his critique on the place that they had in the social structure by saying

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[554] Ibidem, 15,16.

[555] Mannheim, *op. cit*., 190,191.

[556] Ibidem, 195,196.

[557] Ibidem, 204.

[558] Garbe.563

that they "occupy primarily the social status of the middle class."[558] We can object the commentary made by Garbe with the remarks made by Thompson about the class

The class "is a *historical* phenomenon. I do not see class as a "structure," nor even as a "category," but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships. (…) Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different form (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born–or enter involuntarily." (…) "Class is a relationship, and not a thing." (…) "We cannot understand class unless we see it as a social and cultural formation, arising form processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period." (…)"If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition."[559]

This definition of class is based on, among others, the example of the Methodists who were the "responsible for a growth in the self-confidence and capacity for organization of working people." They were "a religion which found a place for humble men, as local preachers and class leaders, which taught them to read and gave them self-respect and experience in speaking and in organization."[560] Thompson identified in the religious "plebeian movements an exceptionally high valuation upon egalitarian and democratic values."[561]

"In matters of church organization the Dissenting sects (Independents, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Quarkers, and Baptists) often carried the principles of self-government and of local autonomy to the borders of anarchy. Any centralized authority –even consultation and association between churches– was seen as "productive of the great anti-christian apostasy."[562]

However, more important than a definition of class, the attention should be focused on the term class-consciousness. Understanding this concept as follows

"Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not. We can

[559] Thompson, 11

[560] Ibidem, 40,42.

[561] Ibidem, 13.

[562] Ibidem, 28.

see a logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law. Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way."[563]

In order to understand the importance of class-consciousness, we can quote the classical remarks of Georg Lukács

Thus the situation in which the bourgeoisie finds itself determines the function of its class consciousness in its struggle to achieve control of society. The hegemony of the bourgeoisie really does embrace the whole of society; it really does attempt to organize the whole of society in its own interests (and in this it has had some success). To achieve this it was forced both to develop a coherent theory of economics, politics and society (which in itself presupposes and amounts to a *Weltanschauung*), and also to make conscious and sustain its faith in its own mission to control and organize society. The tragic dialectics of the bourgeoisie can be seen in the fact that it is not only desirable but essential for it to clarify its own class interests on every particular issue, while at the same time such a clear awareness becomes fatal when it is extended to the question of the totality.[564]

Looking at the experience of the bourgeoisie, Lukács concluded that the consciousness of the proletariat was "the sense, become conscious, of the historical role of the class. This sense will objectify in particular interests of the moment which may only be omitted at the price of allowing the proletarian class struggle to slip back into the most primitive Utopianism."[565]

As Thompson had already remarked, this "primitive Utopianism" have been usually underestimated. However, it is in this Utopianism where the power of the ideology relies. This particular philosophy of history provided the agencies with "a sense, a historical role" to fulfill, a faith. The history and the whole society made sense throughout this ideology.

"General increase of knowledge, resulting in discoveries, inventions, etc., paves the way to the coming Millennium of favor, making ready the mechanical devices which will economize labor, and provide the world in general with time and conveniences ,which under Christ's reign of righteousness will be a blessing to all and aid in filling the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. And it is a day or period of preparation in another sense also; for by the increase of knowledge among the masses, giving to all a taste of liberty and luxury, before Christ's rule is established to rightly regulate the world, these blessings will gradually become agencies of class-power and will result in the uprising of the masses and the overthrow of corporative Trusts, etc, with which will fall also all the present dominions of earth, civil and ecclesiastical. And thus the present is a day of preparation (through such an overthrow) for the establishment of the universal dominion of the Kingdom of God so long prayed for."

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[563] Ibidem, 10.

[564] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 51,52.

[565] ibidem, 73.

This short introduction to the ideological elements of Jehovah's Witnesses and also the remarks made by social scientists about such kind of elements are useful to understand, the ideological framework that sustained the social behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses once that Hitler seized the power in 1933.

10. The Female Jehovah's Witnesses (1933-1939)

For Charles de Gaulle, 1933 was just one more moment of a long war period against an aggressive neighbor who held the Alsace and Lorraine since 1870s. This war started in 1914 and ended in 1945.[566] For Adolf Hitler, however, the same year represented the beginning of a revolution the German people had been waiting for decades. In the following months the institutions and the whole society went through a process of *Gleichschaltung,* which was perceived by many as the starting point of a new era, which was expected to last thousand years.

For Charlotte Müller, 1933 was the year of her baptism as a Jehovah's Witnesses, the name adopted by Bible Students just two years before, in 1931. She was part of the congregation located at Chemnitz in Saxony. This region had experienced a rapid and important growth during the 1920s. Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz were among the most active groups. In 1902 Bruno Oswald Micklich, a master-workman of the railroad, started the preaching activity in Dresden. Dresden became, during the 1920s, the biggest congregation in Germany with more than thousand members, reaching the 1,400 visitors at the memorial celebration of Christ's death in 1932.[567] In 1925, the parents of Charlotte, Oscar Müller and Mina Döppin, became active members of the, at that time, Bible Students, becoming then part of a religious community which was rapidly growing not only in Saxony, but also in Germany. When Joseph Rutherford visited Germany for a lecture campaign entitled "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," a series of discourses that were given in hundreds of German cities during four special days in 1922, the total attendance was of "almost 250,000."[5(
At the beginning of 1930's there were 195 groups of Jehovah's Witnesses operating in the whole German territory with a total of 24,135 members.[569] Käthe, Charlotte's sister, was incarcerated in the first concentration camp for women at Moringen in December 1936. Charlotte was sent to the concentration camp at Lichtenburg, where she later met Käthe. On May 19, 1939, Charlotte and Käthe, together with around 400 other female Jehovah's Witnesses, were part of the 900 women who were sent from Lichtenburg to the new concentration camp for women at Ravensbrück.

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[566] Matthias Waechter, *Geschichte Frankreichs im 20. Jahrhundert*, C.H.Beck, Munich, 2019, p. 113.

[567] Gerhard Besier, "Jehovas Zeugen in Deutschland" in Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stoklosa (Ed.) Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2018, p. 138.

[568] Garbe, 47.

[569] Garbe, 64.

For Klaas and Maria De Vries, 1933 was a big opportunity for preaching. “In 1933 many people believed that a great man was needed in order to solve the problems. It was a good time to preach. We used this need for a strong man and show that God will bring the solution that they needed.”[570] These both active Jehovah’s Witnesses used to walk down the streets of Rotterdam using a series of advertising placards. They used to walk in a line. In the first placard, one could read the question: “Who will rule the world?” and in the next ones, appeared the name of Mussolini, Hitler and Anton Mussert, the leader of the Dutch National Socialist Movement. At the end, in the last placard, it stated: “God’s kingdom would rule the world.”[571] Just a couple of years before, Maria was walking down the same streets but with a red flag as part of the socialist Dutch movement. She became a Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1931. It was Klaas, who introduced her to this organization. At the age of 16, he was removed from his church due to his “uncomfortable” questions like: Where did Cain get his wife?. He moved then to Rotterdam where he met the Jehovah’s Witnesses who showed him a satisfactory answer to his many questions. Klaas and Maria got married in 1937. Maria ended up in Ravensbrück and Klaas in Sachsenhausen.

Living in Prague, the year 1933 was for Max Hollweg, the year when the hate against Germans increased. He was born in Ramscheid in 1910 and his parents were among those who were able to meet personally the founder of the Bible Students, Charles Taze Russell, when he visited Barmer in 1903. In 1933 Max was working as a missionary in Czechoslovakia. He was arrested in a travel from Prague to Zlim by the Czechoslovakian police. They took him to the border and delivered to the Gestapo, who put him in detention at Glatz, today Klodzko. After a while the Gestapo left him alone in the forest, without any money because the Czechoslovakian police had taken everything he had. With the help of the Jehovah’s Witnesses from Glatz, he was able to get in touch with his mother who sent him the money to travel the 1,100 kilometers way back home to Koblenz.[572]

For Horst Schmidt, 1933 was a huge break in his childhood. He was 12 years old at that time. Left by his biological parents, he was raised by his aunt Emmy Zehden, a Jehovah’s Witnesses who was married with a Jew and lived in Berlin Spandau. When Horst was nine years old, the parents reappeared and wanted to take him back. The case was taken to the justice several times.

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[570] Oral history interview with Maria and Klaas de Vries, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 September 3, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.13 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0013.

[571] Ibidem.

[572] Oral history interview with Max Hollweg, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 April 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.22 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0022.

The parents, who were part of the nationalist scene, argued that it was inconceivable that a Jew, Emmy's husband, raises an aryan child. In all these occasions, the judge decided against the parents and Horst continued to live at Emmy Zehden's home. The situation changed in 1933. Once more, the case was taken to the justice and the judge this time paid attention to the argument of the parents. The child had to leave his foster family and return to his parents. Emmy Zehden and Horst Schmidt would later be sentenced to death for the crime of "demoralizing of armed forces." Emmy was executed in 1944 at Berlin Plötzensee. Horst was sent free by the Russian army while he was waiting to be executed at a prison in Brandenburg.[573]

As we may see, 1933 had multiple meanings for the contemporaries. The state of Saxony, where Charlotte Müller lived, decided to ban the Jehovah's Witnesses on April 18, 1933. In comparison with other states, Saxony went deeper in the measures that were taken. According to Garbe: "In contrast to the ban in the state of Bavaria, the ban issued by Saxony's State Ministry of the Interior placed not only the preaching activity, or any kind of advertisement of the Bible Students, under threat of punishment, but even any efforts of upholding the association of providing support "in other ways.""[574]

A couple of days before the ban was declared in Saxony, Jehovah's Witnesses had organized a campaign to distribute the brochure *Crisis*. Konrad Franke, who took part on this campaign, recalled

"In view of the possibility that the government might suddenly ban our work, we made extensive arrangements for putting out the Scriptural booklet *Crisis* from April 8 to 16, 1933. Everyone had the feeling that it was just a matter of days before the work would be suppressed. This stimulated the Kingdom publishers to even greater activity. Our congregation distributed 6,000 booklets within the first three days. Similar results were reported throughout the country. This proved too much for the new rulers."[575]

Together with Georg Krautwurst, Konrad Franke was among the first Jehovah's Witnesses who were sent to the first concentration camps. They were sent to Osthofen. They were among the 2,036 Jehovah's Witnesses who were sent to concentration camps between 1933 and 1938. 8 were in Bad Sulza, 23 in Colditz, 20 in Columbia-Haus (Berlin), 297 in Dachau, 243 in the Emsland camps. 17 in Hohnstein, 599 in Lichtenburg, 394 in Moringen, 5 in Osthofen and 130 in Sachsenburg.

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573 Oral history interview with Horst Schmidt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 July 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.88 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0088.

574 Garbe, 75.

575 Konrad Franke, "Jehovah is my shepherd. I shall lack nothing" in *Watchtower* 1963, March 15 p. 181.

Comedians of heaven (*Himmelskomiker*), Bible-worms (*Bibelwürmer*) and birds of paradise (*Paradiesvögel*) were among the most common insults used against them in those places.[576] After being released from Osthofen, Konrad Franke continued with his religious activities.

Between 7 and September 9, 1934, Rutherford organized an international convention in Basel in order to organize the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses at an European scale and also take the lead in the activities in Germany, undermining the power of Balzereit. The motto of the convention was "Fear them not." Among the central points of this convention were: the distribution of a resolution on October 7, 1934, the resuming of the preaching activities in Germany and the organization of an underground structure.[577] Almost thousand Jehovah's Witnesses from Germany attended to this convention, whose attendance was around the 3,500.

Since the arrival of Hitler to power in January 1933, it was not clear for the Jehovah's Witnesses what it had to be their attitude toward the regime. There were basically two lines. Paul Balzereit, who was the responsible of the German branch, worked hard for maintaining an open dialogue and negotiation with the regime avoiding unnecessary confrontations. On the other side, for many Jehovah's Witnesses the right attitude was to confront the regime and make no concessions at the moment of practicing their faith. The convention of September 1934 was a decisive moment. Since then on it was clear which should be the path to be followed in the coming years: to fight for their faith without fear. They were resolved to continue with their activities, meeting and preaching, and also denouncing the actions taken against them.[578] A central decision taken at this convention was the distribution of a resolution throughout whole Germany. Konrad Franke took also part in this action:

"October 7, 1934, was a day to be remembered. I had long realized that my mail was being intercepted by the Gestapo and my home watched. Nevertheless, since no other convenient place was available, arrangements were made to have a meeting in our small home that morning at nine o'clock. Similar gatherings were being held throughout the city and the rest of Germany. The evening before, under rather peculiar circumstances, I received a letter containing information about the following day's meeting. There was little doubt that the Gestapo knew what we had planned. Would they come? In view of the seriousness of the situation, we began the meeting with a discussion of Deuteronomy 20:8: "Who is the man that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, that he may not cause the hearts of his brothers to melt as his own heart." It was touching to see how everyone present, including women with opposing husbands and children to care for, declared their willingness to stay. A resolution was then enthusiastically adopted. It

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576 Hans Hesse, "Von Anfang an ein "besonderes Hassobjekt"Zeugen Jehovas in den frühen Konzentrationslagern" in Jörg Osterloh, Kim Wünschmann (Hg.), *„der schrankenlosesten Willkür ausgeliefert" Häftlinge der frühen Konzentrationslager 1933-1936/37*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 2017, pp. 276, 277, 278, 280.

577 Garbe, 110, 111.

578 Ibidem, 110.

declared, in part, that we would obey God's commandments at any cost, that we would meet together for the study of his Word, and that we would worship and serve him as he has commanded. If Hitler's government or officers should do violence to us because we were obeying God, then our blood would be upon them and they would have to answer to Almighty God. While this resolution was being adopted, our brothers from other countries were sending thousands of protest telegrams to Hitler warning him to refrain from persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses, or God would destroy him and his national party. Two hours after the meeting was over, the Gestapo came. Two weeks later I was thrown into a concentration camp once more, this time for two months. Upon being set free, I immediately began pioneering again. Meanwhile, my field of activity had become larger. I now served as a district overseer with a large territory to look after. Although having to report to the police every other day, I was able to fulfill all my ministerial duties, often doing so at night."[579]

Paul Balzereit was arrested in May 1935. Martin Harbeck, the leader responsible from Bern, introduced a restructuring in the underground organization. Fritz Winkler was appointed as the main responsible for Germany and the whole territory was divided into 13 districts which were supervised by a new generation of members who were much more loyal to the instructions that came from Brooklyn. Konrad Franke took the leadership of the district of Palatinate-Baden.[580]

In the middle of 1936 the Gestapo formed a special command to take care of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The raid of August 24, 1936, was an important blow to this underground organization. The arrest of Fritz Winkler was followed by the capture of Georg Bär (district overseer of Schleswig-Holstein), Johann Köbl (responsible for Bavaria), Josef Zissler and Konrad Franke. The groups of Berlin, Bremen and Munich were disbanded. Those who escaped the raids managed to attend the international general assembly in Lucerne in the first days of September 1936.

The international convention in Lucerne from September 4 to 7, 1936 had as main speaker Rutherford whose lecture was "Armageddon - The Battle of Almighty God."[581] In this assembly they reorganized the underground activities. Five district overseers were among those who went to Switzerland and became the base of the new restructured organization: Walter Friese (district overseer of Thuringia and Hannover), Georg Rabe (eastern Prussia), Albert Wandres (Rhineland, Southern Hessen), Heinrich Dietschi (North-Western Germany) and Eric Frost (Saxony). Frost, a thirty-five-year-old musical director from Leipzig, was appointed by Rutherford as the new leader of the organization and he was supposed to work in close cooperation with Heinrich Dwenger, who was in exile at the branch office in Prague.[582]

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[579] Konrad Franke, "Jehovah is my shepherd. I shall lack nothing" in Watchtower 1963, March 15 p. 182.

[580] Garbe, 214.

[581] Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 1987, 147

[582] Garbe 231,232, 234,235

Heinrich Dietschi, a forty-six-year-old locksmith from Bochum, was appointed as the successor of Erich Frost in case of Frost's arrest.[583] His function in the organization was district overseer. On March 21, 1937, Erich Frost was arrested by the Gestapo. The arrests which took place at this time marked, according to Garbe, the start of a second action organized by the Security Office of the Reichsführer SS against the Jehovah's Witnesses. They even formed an special command for this task. Dietschi then had to overtaken the reorganization of the underground activities, something that he did by using for the first time female Jehovah's Witnesses as "regional service directors." Auguste Schneider was in charge of the districts of Baden, Saarland and Palatine. Frieda Christiansen supervised Schleswig-Holstein. Elfriede Löhr was in charge of Bavaria while Gertrud Pötzinger of Silesia.[584] Lieselore Dietschi, his daughter who was born in 1922, recalled that the Gestapo "was always at home and watching everything they did. In 1936 they even took her mother during a research they did in the house looking for literature. The mother was taken to the police station where she was strong beaten during an interrogation. The Gestapo wanted to know where her husband was. She was then left in a clinic where she was picked up by a aunt six weeks later.[585]

Heinrich Dietschi was able to be present at the general assembly held at the Maison de la Mutualité in Paris from August 21 to 23, 1937, which Rutherford also attended. When he returned from France, Dietschi was arrested by the Gestapo. Between August and September of 1937 a wave of arrests took place: Albert Wandres and Gertrud Pötzinger were caught up in Dresden, Elfriede Löhr was arrested in Berlin and Auguste Schneider in Bingen. Frieda Christiansen, Walter Friese, and Ludwig Stickel, all important cadres of the underground organization, were arrested. The groups of Freiburg, Baden-Baden and Karlsruhe were destroyed.[586] Heinrich Dietschi was taken to the prison in Berlin- Moabit where he stayed until April 1942, when he was released.[587]

Ernst Wauer was born in 1902 and worked as a businessman in Dresden. He was member of the most important congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe, whose meetings had an attendance of 1000 persons. He recalled

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[583] Garbe 231,232, 234,235

[584] Ibidem 243,244.

[585] [585] Oral history interview with Lieselore Dietschi, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 July 20, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.14 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0014.

[586] Garbe 246, 247.

[587] Oral history interview with Lieselore Dietschi, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 July 20, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.14 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0014.

"The year before Hitler came to power, when I was 30 years old, I first met Jehovah's Witnesses in Dresden. In January 1935, I dedicated myself to Jehovah and expressed my desire to be baptized. Our work had already been banned in 1933, so I was asked: "Do you realize what your decision means? You are putting your family, health, work, freedom, and even your life at risk!""I have counted the cost, and I am willing to do God's will and to die for it," I replied."[588]

He was active in those years in the preaching work from house to house. In two occasion he was confronted with supporters of the regime. At those moments he used the argument that he was just talking about the Bible, a book which had not been banned. Working at a hotel he met once an *Ehrensturmführer* of the SS, those who were in the putsch of 1923 and had the privilege to visit Hitler whenever they wanted. He asked Ernst Wauer to be a member of the party because they need people in the economy field. Ernst responded: "No, I cannot because I am a Jehovah's Witnesses." The SS replied: "you are a coward, because you do not want to fight for your country". Ernst Wauer asked then: "am I coward now? by saying no to you? instead of saying yes just because I want to please you?" The SS responded: "you are right." They keep talking about the Bible and the Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs. At the end, the SS gave him the hand and said: "keep doing so." In 1936, after returning from the assembly in Lucerne, Ernst Wauer was denounced to the Gestapo by a spy, taken to jail and then to a special court. He was sentenced to prison for 27 months. He spent one year in solitary confinement at the penitentiary in Bautzen.[589]

The *Photo Drama of Creation* was a four-part audiovisual presentation produced under the direction of Charles Taze Russell and released in 1914. In the introduction to the film, Russell explained that the *Photo Drama of Creation* present the seven days of creation as seven epoch, each seven thousand years long, and the seventh day as not yet completed."[590] According to this interpretation, they were living in the last day of the creation, a day which started with the creation of Adam. According to Bible chronology, six thousand years passed from Adam`s creation and it was time for the thousand years kingdom of the Messiah. This kingdom had to complete and the creation restored to the original paradise. The viewers were conscious then that the creation had not been completed and that they had the chance to play an active role in the fulfillment of the creation.

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[588] Ernst Wauer, "What a joy to sit at Jehovah's table!" in *Watchtower* 1991, August 1, p. 25.

[589] Ernst Wauer, "What a joy to sit at Jehovah's table!" in *Watchtower* 1991, August 1, p. 26, 27 and Oral history interview with Ernst Wauer, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1988 October 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.68 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0068.

[590] The Photo Drama of Creation Part 1 of 4.

An important number decided to join the Jehovah's Witnesses after watching the *Photo Drama of Creation*. That was the case of Margarette Niklasch who was born in Breslau in 1910. She was baptized in 1935. Her husband died in a concentration camp. In 1937 together with other Jehovah's Witnesses she was in a meeting at the basement of a restaurant which functioned as a cinema. The owner of the restaurant reported them to the police. The women were arrested for 3 months and the men for 4 months. She remarked that the treatment given by the normal police was quite different to the treatment of the Gestapo. Being incarcerated she met Gertrud Pötzinger, who was also arrested in those days and taken to Breslau police station. Margarette remembered that together with Gertrud, they were the whole time singing religious songs.

Gertrud's man, Martin Pötzinger, had already been arrested on December 12, 1936, while he was taking part of the pamphlet campaign throughout whole Germany intended to distribute 300,000 copies of the resolution taken in the assembly in Lucerne.[591] Gertrud had also taken part in the campaign but she was not discovered. When she returned to her house, the Gestapo was waiting for her. When Gertrud saw them, she thought that now she will be arrested. "I calmed myself and prayed: help me, please assist me so I can do everything right and proceed with wisdom. Help me!" Singing, I went up the stairs and two policemen were there waiting for me." They searched the house looking for literature but they did not find anything. Two days later, on December 14, the Gestapo came back at 6 am to take her for interrogation. During the interrogations, she had to be taken to a doctor due to problem in her stomach. The doctor sent her to Stadelheim prison in Munich which was the only place that had the treatment she needed.

"Everyday I prayed six, seven, eight times: "Lord Jehovah, let me one more time to be free. I would like to speak with my mother one more time. Just one more time. I will make the most difficult assignments in your organization, just if I can go home one more time. You said that we have to honor father and mother. I want to accomplish this law because my parents deserve it. Help me please to go home one more time". […] Short afterwards, they closed the doors of the cells in Stadelheim and I heard a voice throughout the door that said something interesting: "Everything is transitory, lifelong too." I still remember these words which in such a moment of my life invaded me with hope. For me it was the hand of Jehovah that encouraged me."[592]

In order to be released from prison, Gertrud tried to cheat the Gestapo. On January 1, 1937, Martin Pötzinger had sent her a letter saying: "My darling! I know that you are a very trustworthy, honest and loyal partner." The Gestapo saw in this words an indication that she was informed about the

[591] Ibidem 238.

[592] Gertrud Pötzinger in Hans Hesse, Jürgen Harder, *Und wenn Ich lebenslang in einem KZ bleiben müßte…,* 388.

underground activities of her husband. So she wrote back: “My dear, If I am so trustworthy to you, why did you not tell me what you were doing behind my back?” Ten days later she was liberated.

After visiting her parents, she planned to leave Munich due to the many difficulties that she had there and move to Czech going throughout the Bavarian Forest in her bike. The same day that she had planned to start her travel, Heinrich Dietschi knocked at her door in order to give her the assignment as regional service director in the territory of Frankfurt (Oder), Liegnitz, Breslau, Oppeln, Schweidnitz, Waldenburg, Dittersbach, Hirschberg, Görlitz, Bautzen and Dresden.[593]

In other interrogation, that started before 7 a.m., she was taken to basement where there was a phone, a table, two chairs and a bed. She thought immediately that she would be raped but the officer said to her: “What you are thinking, I can do it but I won’t. I have a wife. Now, you have to tell me the true.” He ordered her to sit in one of the chair, he sat on the other and put her legs between his. Then he started to knock her face, her eyes, the nose, the ears. In break came another prisoner who told her: “Sister Pötzinger, why you make your life so difficult? You can say that the work is already done. Now come Armageddon and the work will not continue. You can that easy declare!.” The inflexible attitude of her was evident when she responded: “You can say what you consider right and what you know. But I answer what I can. I have nothing to do with you!” The torture continued after that but during the whole process she was saying to herself: “Do not say anything, just say nothing, do not betray anyone!”[594] Even when during the interrogations she realized that some of her workmates had revealed information about the organization of the underground activities, she continued with her inflexible posture of thinking that disclosing any kind of information would be a betrayal to her “brothers.” On March 3, 1938, she was tried and received a prison sentence of three and a half years in the Kletschkau prison in Breslau.

In March 1941, Gertrud Pötzinger was sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp where there were a total of 600 Jehovah’s Witnesses. Her number was 5901. During the entrance procedure, one of the prisoners came to her and asked why she was there. After her response, the prisoner told her that she was also a Jehovah’s Witnesses, something that gave her courage. Pötzinger remembered quite well the insults employed against them: “fools, crazy Bible worms, Bible bees, stupid girls, stupid fanatics and comedians of heavens.” She described the situation at Ravensbrück as follows

“It meant to take no position neither for the prisoners nor for the camp commanders due to the fact that the brutality that ruled the place was many-sided. Because of a piece of bread that a prisoner had stolen he could be accused of thief. We

[593]Ibidem. 390, 391.

[594] Ibidem. 395.

have seen such false things but we did not say anything so we were not traitors. We muss maintain neutrality, however we have to display courtesy through tout a good word, a conversation or a piece of bread. Though we have observed the camp orderliness and its rules and instructions. Many prisoners did not see with good eyes this last point. I tried very often to have conversation with Jewish girls. Unfortunately, they refused Jehovah God or they said that if God existed he has to be very cruel. Some of the prisoners were very depressive. Others tried to do anything in order to keep life, even stealing. They established "friendships" with the prisoners that were in the kitchen of the SS cafeteria in order to obtain material benefits. Others became lesbian. Others quarreled, cursed or brawled. Others remembered written poems. In 1941, it was opened a bordello in the men camps so they looked up for girls. Some of them saw it as a chance to obtain more and better food. The situation was so bad that the prisoners started to whip others. Many people were alone and sometimes very cruel. Many became senile and saw that everything had no sense."[595]

The region of Saxony had experienced a rapid and important growth during the 1920s. Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz were among the more active groups. In 1902 Bruno Oswald Micklich, a master-workman of the railroad, started the preaching activity in Dresden. Dresden became, during the 1920s, the biggest congregation in Germany with more than thousand members, reaching the 1,400 visitors in the memorial celebration of Christ's death in 1932.[596] In 1925, the parents of Charlotte, Oscar Müller and Mina Döppin, became active members of the, at that time, Bible Students, becoming than part of a religious community which was rapidly growing not only in Saxony, but also in Germany. When Joseph Rutherford visited Germany for a lecture campaign entitled "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," a series of discourses that were given in hundreds of German cities during four special days in 1922, the total attendance was of "almost 250,000."[5] At the beginning of 1930's there were 195 groups of Jehovah's Witnesses operating in the whole German territory with a total of 24,135 members.[598] Käthe, Charlotte's sister, was incarcerated in the first concentration camp for women at Moringen in December 1936. Charlotte was sent to the concentration camp at Lichtenburg, where she later met Käthe. On May 19, 1939, Charlotte and Käthe, together with around 400 other female Jehovah's Witnesses, were part of the 900 women who were sent from Lichtenburg to the new concentration camp for women at Ravensbrück.

The concentration camp of Moringen, one of the first camps which had the particularity of being a concentration camp for women had a story that went back to 1732, when it functioned as an orphanage. Since 1838 it was the police workhouse. In 1885 the name was changed for provincial workhouse. The main concept of the institution since the Prussian times was "education throughout

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[595] Pötzinger, in Hesse, Harder, *Und Wenn Ich lebenslang.*. 404.

[596] Gerhard Besier, "Jehovas Zeugen in Deutschland" in Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stoklosa (Ed.) Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2018, p. 138.

[597] Garbe, 47.

[598] Ibidem, 64.

work." The early NS concentration camp responded also to this logic and it may be seen as a continuation of a long tradition.[599] The first two female prisoners of the camp were communists: Marie Peix and Hannah Vogt.[600] Since October 1933, prisoners from whole Prussia were taken there and with the closing of the section for women in the Brauweiler concentration camp in the near of Cologne in March 1934, Moringen became the central camp for women in Prussia. In October 1935 women of the following regions started to be sent there also: Saxony, Thuringia, Hessen-Darmstadt, Bremen, Hamburg and Braunschweig. In February 1936 women from Bavaria were also sent there. During the years that this women concentration camp functioned, the two main groups were communists, with 145 prisoners, and Jehovah's Witnesses, with 310 prisoners.[601] The female Jehovah's Witnesses started to arrive massive to the camp in 1935. Almost 50 pro cent the arrivals took place on 22, 28 and 29 August.[602]

The *Photo Drama of Creation* marked the life of Charlotte Müller. Her father, together with his wife and six children, left the Protestant Church on March 2, 1923. He was a locksmith and a "free thinker" who, according to Charlotte, "was searching for Bible truth and for a righteous government." When he saw the *Photo Drama of Creation*, "he found what he had been searching for—the Kingdom of God."[603]

The *Photo Drama* had a great impact in the urban zones of Saxony being one of the main factors in the formation of the congregations in Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz. For Charlotte, who was very interested in history, the interpretation provided by the Photo Drama meant a turning point point in her life. Three of her brothers and sisters converted also to the new faith. She, together with her sister Käthe, were part of a group of Christian youths who received specially instructions on Sunday. Konrad Franke was also part of this group. Those meetings encouraged Charlotte to be resolute to fight for her faith. Some *Watchtower* articles were specially important for her, like "Blessed Are the Fearless" (1919) and "Who Will Honor Jehovah?" (1926). "I wanted "to honor Jehovah through courageous activity, so I distributed many of Brother Rutherford's books and booklets,"[604] she stated later on her biography.

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[599] Hesse, Harder, Um wenn ich lebenslang in einem KZ bleiben müssen, 28,29.

[600] Ibidem, 29.

[601] Ibidem, 34.

[602] Ibidem, 42.

[603] Charlotte Müller "God is my refuge and strength" in *Watchtower* 1997 May 1st, pp. 24,25.

[604] Ibidem.

During Charlotte's baptism speech, a Bible text was read which was taken by Charlotte as a preparing step for the things to come. It was Revelation 2:10: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil will keep on throwing some of you into prison that you may be fully put to the test, and that you may have tribulation ten days. Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the crown of life." She recalled: "I took this verse to heart, having no doubt that arduous trials awaited me."[605] 1933 was not an easy year for her. For the political elections of that years, a delegation of uniformed Nazi troopers stood at the front of her house calling out: "Traitors live here!" At the end of that, however, she was specially encouraged to maintain her main attitude towards the new regime. This encouragement was an article published in the German edition of *The Watchtower* in December 1933 entitled: "Fear them not."[606]

The next year, 1934, Charlotte had the first chance to prove that she did not have fear and she was resolute to fight for her faith. Even when Chemnitz was one of the stronghold of the the Socialist and Communist parties Charlotte had until 1934 no problem at her working place. The situation changed with the introduction of the new trade union politics. It became mandatory to join the *German Labor Front* (Deutsche Arbeitsfront or DAF). All of her co-workers joined the new labour organization being Charlotte the only who refused. Due to her refusal, she was about to be sent to a concentration camp, but it finally did not happen.[607]

Together with Ilse Untedorfer, Charlotte was in charge of the distribution of literature in Chemnitz and its region. In 1935, Charlotte and Ilse wanted to attend a congress in Brussels but they ended up in Utrecht. In Utrecht they met some pioneers who were working in the Netherlands and asked them if they can send an invitation for the congress that was about to take place a year later in Lucerne. Back in Germany, Charlotte received the invitation she was waiting for per mail. However it was not her invitation but Ilse's. The same happened to Ilse, who received the one of Charlotte. At this moment they realized that something was wrong. They were under Gestapo's surveillance. Ilse Untedorfer moved then to Bayern and Charlotte remained in Saxony.

In August 1936, Charlotte was picked up in her home and put in detention, where she awaited for her trial. In February 1937, 25 "brothers" and 2 "sisters", including Charlotte, of the Chemnitz congregation faced a special court in Saxony. It was claimed that the organization of

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605 Ibidem.

606 Ibidem.

607 Oral history interview with Charlotte Müller, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 June 20, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.44 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0044.

Jehovah's Witnesses was subversive. The male Jehovah's Witnesses received five years in prison. Charlotte became 2 years sentence. She experienced the process as an action they were taking against God, something that convinced her even more strongly in her resolution of not fearing. The two years sentence was to be served in Cottbus, where she had to work in an outside commando. There were two group of people in the commando: 7 female Jehovah's Witnesses and 7 women who either had an abortion or were political prisoners. They worked together in the fields and received a lot of help of the local people who provided them with food and other things. For Charlotte and the other Jehovah's Witnesses it was a chance to show that they were different to the other prisoners. They tried to be diligent and hard workers, something that was appreciated by the local people.

The sentence was accomplished in August 1938. Charlotte was sent back to the presidium in Chemnitz where she had been two years before. The old officer who dealt with her at that time was replaced by a new one, but he stayed at the room, looked at her and said: "the Lotta had not changed." "The new officer offered me the declaration stating that I would no longer be active as a Witness of Jehovah. I steadfastly refused, upon which the official became furious, sprang to his feet, and issued a warrant for me to be placed in detention. Without being allowed to see my parents, I was immediately taken to a small concentration camp for women at Lichtenburg on the river Elbe,"[608] Charlotte recalls. It was September 1938.

In Lichtenburg, Charlotte rejoined her sister Käthe who was imprisoned in the concentration camp at Moringen since December 1936. In 1938, when the women camp at Moringen was closed, the female prisoners were transferred to Lichtenburg. Charlotte remembers how it was to see her sister again

"I was not permitted to join the other female Witnesses straightaway, as they were being punished for something or other. In one of the halls, I observed two groups of prisoners—women who usually sat at tables and the Witnesses who had to sit the whole day on stools and were given nothing to eat.
I readily accepted any work assignment, in hopes of coming across Käthe somehow. And that is exactly what happened. She was on her way to work with two other prisoners when our paths crossed. Overjoyed, I gave her a big hug. But the female guard reported us straightaway. We were questioned, and from that time on, we were deliberately kept apart. That was extremely hard."[609]

Hitler's birthday in 1938 offered Charlotte once more a chance to show that she had no fear of defending her faith. Together with Gertrud Oehme and Gertel Bürlen, they got the order of

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608 Charlotte Müller "God is my refuge and strength" in Watchtower 1997 May 1st, pp. 24,25.

609 Ibidem, 26.

decorating the commandant's headquarters with lights. "We refused, recognizing Satan's tactics of trying to maneuver us into breaking our integrity through compromises in small things. As punishment, each of us young sisters had to spend the next three weeks alone in a small, dark cell."[610] Every four days they were able to have some light and fresh air for only 15 minutes. Due to the long time in darkness, they were not able to see anything. Charlotte was realized from the punishment two hours before the rest because the guards needed the place for an SS who had committed a robbery. The female officer who was in charge told her that she will have to pay for being released earlier. Being separated from Kathe was part of this "payment." This female officer will met Charlotte and Kathe once more, when all of them were transferred to Ravensbrück.[611]

When Charlotte Müller were transferred to Ravensbrück, a first block was for the political prisoners and the rest for Jehovah's Witnesses, she was the last one to be called of 200, and it was said that one sister goes to the A wind and the other to the B wing. Among all the things that they refused to do for the army was the blood donation. The female officer of Lichtenburg than sent her to the punishment company for more than a year there. The worst men were there in the company among them many Jews. She had the job to keep this block clean. The high offenses were punishment with three months in this block, but she was more than a year there.[612]

In the case of Margarette Niklasch, she was transported from the police prison in Breslau to Moringen, then Torgau and finally Ravensbrück. They were the first one, who helped to construct the camp. She was happy that she met the fellow sisters there. They refused to perform some jobs and then they were able to smuggle a Bible and a sister wrote a poem about Goliath, a poem which gave encourage to the fellow believers. The others were allowed to have a Bible, but they had to use the Bible in secret because it was not permitted. She worked in the garden work, she belonged to his commando, she came from the commando at 9 pm back from work. They refused to perform a work, bags for the soldiers, and she together with seven coreligionists were punished with house arrest during 3 weeks. During the day they have to stay at the Appelplatz and during the night in the

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610 Ibidem 26.

611 Oral history interview with Charlotte Müller, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 June 20, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.44 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0044.

612 Ibidem.

dark and without food. In winter, it was very cold. She said always the Psalm 83 at the roll call in the morning, loud because she can read at nights while there was light.[613]

A similar situation took place when "all prisoners were to assemble in the courtyard to listen to one of Hitler's political speeches on the radio. We Jehovah's Witnesses refused, since patriotic ceremonies were involved. So the guards turned the fire hoses on us, spraying us with the powerful jet of water from a hydrant and chasing us defenseless women from the fourth floor down to the courtyard. There we had to stand, saturated." Hearing Hitler speeches at the camp was part of the reeducation program which was implemented in order to regain these women to *Volksgemeinschaft*.[614] However, the effect was completely different. For Charlotte, all these difficulties made her stronger in her convictions. "But Jehovah stayed close to us and, even in such a dreadful place, proved himself to be a refuge."[615]

Emmi Lehrbach, another Jehovah's Witnesses who was in the same situation, related how they were able to remain strong. They were able to get a Bible and they tried to memorize many Psalms and Proverbs, specially Psalm 37 and 83.[616]

Keep not thou silence, O God:
hold not thy peace, and be not still,
O God.
For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.
They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: (…)
O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.
As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.
Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.
Let them be confound and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, *art* the most high over all the earth.[617]

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613 Oral history interview with Josef Niklasch and Margarette Niklasch, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.45 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0045.

614 Hesse, *Moringen*, 102.

615 Charlotte Müller "God is my refuge and strength" in Watchtower 1997 May 1st, p. 26.

616 Hesse, *Moringen*, 113, 114.

617 Psalm 83, *King James Version*.

In May 1939, the female Jehovah's Witnesses were the main population of the new concentration camp in Ravensbrück. They were around 800. A total of female Jehovah's Witnesses were in Raavensbrück: 39 from the Netherlands, 5 from Belgium, 18 from Czechoslovakia, 80 from Poland and 3 from the Soviet Union.[618]

Garbe has pointed out that after 1937, the underground organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany was complete destroyed. The three raids organized by the Gestapo: August/September 1936, March/April 1937 and August/September 1937 had liquidated the organizational structure.[6] Now it was the time of Austria. When Hitler marched on Austria in 1938, there were 549 Jehovah's Witnesses in this country. Around 500 of them where in the coming years incarcerated and 50 were executed. However, at the end of the war the number of active members increased being 730.[620]

Hubert Mattischek was born October 21, 1919, in Hamburg. In 1933 he was living in Upper Austria. The first detention in the family was the one of his father at the memorial of 1939. They took seven or eight persons at that night. His father was taken to Buchenwald. His oldest brother refused to be drafted so he was sent to a military prison in Rheinland and then transferred to Berlin. In November 1939 he was beheaded. Hubert and his other brother were imprisoned in 1939 and around 6 months later the mother was also imprisoned while his youngest brother was still at school. He was sent to work in a farm. Hubert was six months in a prison in Linz and than sent to Dachau. The Gestapo came to his house to look for literature and he said that all literature they had it was already distributed in the population so they did not find anything. They asked him if he would be willing to serve in the army. When he said no, the Gestapo told him to pick up a jacket because he had to come with. When he arrived at Dachau there were already arond 150 Jehovah's Witnesses, some of them were already 5 or 6 years there. The Jehovah's Witnesses were separated in the *Strafkompanie* in Dachau, which was a particularity of this camp. He was there between May and September 1939 then all Jehovah's Witnesses were transferred to Mauthausen in a transport with 1500 prisoners. In Mauthausen they were taken down from the wagon by beating. In Mauthausen The groups of prisoners in Mauthausen were: political prisoners (the majority), criminal (the greens), asocials, homosexuals and some Jews. Describing how the camps worked, Hubert Mattischek remarked that the treatment to prisoners were not the same in all the camps. In

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618 Ravensbrück Memorial's Main Exhibition at SS Headquarters: "The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp. History and Memory"

619 Garbe 249, 250.

620 Gerti Malle, *„Für alles bin ich stark durch den, der mir Kraft verleiht" Widerstand und Verfolgung der Zeugen Jehovas in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus in Kärnten*, Kitab-Verlag Klagenfurt - Wien. 2011, p. 37.

some camps, the political prisoners were privileged, in other camps, the privileges went to other groups. In Dachau the political were the privileged while in Mauthausen the privileged were the greens. He and his brother had to work in the stone quarry. Those who had a profession had a better job in Mauthausen. The population of the barrack was constantly changing between 150 and 300. For example, when the transport with Jews came, there were 300 in a barrack. When the Jews were killed in the stone quarry, the population was minor and there were more places. In time, a SS officer pressured him to sign the refusal of his faith and menaced him to trow him from a wall. It was just a menace. However, Hubert received a task which took all his strength. He was able to endure just due to the help that Martin Poetzinger and the other Jehovah's Witnesses who were there provided him. They took care of him bringing food illegally. After two weeks, Hubert was able to return to the stone quarry. There were some Jehovah's Witnesses who signed up the declaration renouncing her beliefs offered by the SS. The Jehovah's Witnesses of Mauthausen have a Bible in 66 different parts of the camp. They had a daily text and from time to time they received a *Watchtower* that they had to memorize. They have witnesses cards in different languages to preaching to other prisoners. They organized a hidden memorial. They have to be careful because if they were caught, they became wether 25 stocks or they had to hang in the wall. One time, the SS came and said: "We know that you have a Bible, where is it? We have seen that you read. A brother then took a piece of a newspaper, showed it and said: "here is what we read. A page of an English newspaper where stated that Jehovah's Witnesses of all nations refuse to take part in the war. Then the brother said to the SS: "you see, when all had the attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses, Hitler wont need to fight this war." The SS let them in peace then.[621]

After the Austrian Jehovah's Witnesses the next group was the one living in Czechoslovakia. Josef Niklasch remembered that on March 15, 1939, the Germans entered in Prague. The coordinator of Prague told them that they had to dismantle the machines, which were property of the Society and transported to Holland. Three German Jehovah's Witnesses and some Czech dismantled the machine before the Gestapo arrived in Bethel. Niklasch, Schoen and Krause were the Germans. The Gestapo wanted to take them. They did not have place to take them and Gestapo asked for a new car at the central in order to take them. A neighbor allowed them to escape through the window and escape the surveillance that was posted. They had to go now to Holland in order to

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621 Oral history interview with Hubert Mattischek, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 02, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.40 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0040

build the machine there. On the way to Holland, the Gestapo arrested Krause. Niklash and Schoen arrived to the border and a Dutch coreligionist took them to the branch office. The responsible of Switzerland came also to meet them and communicate that they were reassigned to the Netherlands. However, the one responsible in the Netherlands made a mistake by sending them to the police in order to be registered. The police arrested and sent them to Germany. July 1939, they were taken to the border but the police had no authorization to give the prisoners to the Germans so they were freed at the border. They went then to Vienna and met Cyranek Finally, they were arrested in a big raid that took place in June 1940. They were judged by a special court accused of demoralization of the armed forces. They received a sentence of 8 years in a penitentiary. Joseph Niklas was sent to the KZ Moors in the near of the Netherlands (a complex which Esterwegen was also part) Niklas remarked that he would never forget the first day in the concentration camp, by the inscription there were staying and while the officer register then, they were able to see the commandos outside and how they looked like skeletons, then the officer said, in four weeks you all will look like that. In the morning a cup of coffee and a slice of bread, no food midday and night a liter of cabbage soup. When he entered in the camp, he had 74 kilos, one month later he had 49 kilos. The life standard was one year in this camp. 20 deaths pro day. His task was to grab 20 meter daily. Those who did not accomplish the daily task, did not receive food or water and the next day had to grab the double. After three days, it was impossible to reach the quote and the prisoner was transferred to the punishment company, which was practical a death sentence. Finally, a Jehovah's Witnesses who worked as *Kapo* at the camp, took both of them to an external camp which allow them to survive.[622]

One of the main aspect to be remarked during the first years of the Jehovah's Witnesses under the NS Regime is the role of the women. Talking about the role of women in the concentration camps, Nikolaus Wachsmann pointed out that the opening of Lichtenburg as the first SS camp for women in December 1937 is interesting because "it had taken Theodor Eicke three years to establish such a camp, highlighting the peripheral place of female prisoners in his vision; for him, the "enemies behind barbed wire" were men."[623] Even when Lichtenburg, in comparison with Moringen, was part of the camp system ruled by the SS, Wachsmann stated clear that as a women camp, there were differences with the rest. "The differences started with the camp's

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[622] Oral history interview with Josef Niklasch and Margarette Niklasch, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.45 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0045.

[623] Wachsmann, 132.

appearance. The old castle of Lichtenburg, with its large dormitories, was quite far way from the SS ideal of a modern barrack camp. More generally, the Lichtenburg women face less terror than male KL prisoners. Forced labor was not yet all consuming, violent excesses were infrequent, and punishments were less severe (according to the official regulations, there was no flogging, for example). As a result, the death rate was very low, with two confirmed prisoner deaths -both of them Jehovah's Witnesses- between late 1937 and spring 1939, when the SS closed down the KL Lichtenburg."[624]

Once that the camp at Ravensbrück was opened, the female question was still relevant. Wachsmann stated: "When the SS first decided to open a concentration camp for women, it faced a dilemma. Until now, the Camp SS had been conceived as an exclusive male club, resting on hypermasculine values. But the deployment of men in women's camp was problematic, as the sexual abuses in early camps had shown. In the end, Himmler opted for a compromise. In Lichtenburg and Ravensbrück, SS men acted as sentries and occupied the senior positions in the Commandant Staff, starting with the commandant himself. The guards inside, however, who had most day-to-day contacts with prisoners, were women, though Himmler balked at admitting them into the SS; although female guards were part of the Camp SS, they were never full SS members."[625]

Even with the existence of Ravensbrück, "women remained marginal in the KL system, both as guards and as inmates. True, the overall proportion of female prisoners was rising fast -from around 3.3 percent in late summer 1938 to 11.7 percent one year later- but Ravensbrück still lagged far behind concentration camps for men, both in size and severity. Nonetheless, its creation was significant, concluding the shift from the more traditional detention of women to the new forms of SS domination."[626]

Beyond the reasons why Charlotte and Käthe were incarcerated, the importance of their experiences relies on the fact that they were not only Jehovah's Witnesses, but they were women incarcerated in the first years of the concentration camp system. Hans Hesse compared them with the female members of the Communist party who were also located at Moringen. In 1937, while 239 Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned in this camp, the Communists were just 68.[627] Jane

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[624] Ibidem, 133.

[625] Ibidem, 133, 134.

[626] Ibidem, 134.

[627] Hesse, *Moringen*, 34.

Caplan, who also compared both groups, stated that since 1935/6: "Proportionally more women were active in the resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses than in any other persecuted of oppositional group. (…) Their social profile was distinctive: in Moringen their average age of 45 was higher than that of other inmates (for communist women, for example, it was 37), they were mostly married women with children, and often came from villages and small towns."[628]

Talking about the use of female Jehovah's Witnesses in leading positions, Detlef Garbe pointed out that they were much more radicalized than the male coreligionists. After the arrest of Erich Frost, Heinrich Dietschi, the new leader on the Reich level appointed women as "regional service directors."

"Previously, only men had occupied leading positions in the Bible Students Association. Jehovah's Witnesses base this arrangement on the statements of the apostle Paul regarding the subordinate position of women in the Christian congregation (1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34). From mid-1936 on, an increasing number of women occupied positions of leadership as, for example, group or cell leaders. These women performed their responsibilities with great determination, and in this regard, they certainly did not lack the courage and fearlessness of the men. On the contrary, they administered their assignments even more radically because of their strong conviction."[629]

Here we find a great difference with the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina which is strongly shaped by men. The role of the female Jehovah's Witnesses in the previous years to the establish of the concentration camp has to be remarked from the perspective of genre studies. When the regime banned the Jehovah's Witnesses and dismantled the organization in 1937, the role of the female Jehovah's Witnesses appeared as an unexpected problem. The repressive system was not prepared for such challenge. It would take some years until they find a appropriate dispositif to such kind of problem: Ravensbrück. Jane Caplan suggest: "True to the perverse logic of the Third Reich, the moment of greatest equality was achieved when mass killing became integrated into the camps from 1942: at that point, women would be no more protected than men from elimination."[630]

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628 Caplan, 88.

629 Garbe 244.

630 Jane Caplan, "Gender and the concentration camps in Concentration Camps in Jane Caplan and Nilolaus Wachsmann (ed.) Nazi Germany. The New Histories, Routledge, London and New York, 2010 ,p. 99.

11. “Armageddon” (1939-1942)

According to Timothy Mason, “loyalty to the Führer and the willingness of the leaders of state and party organs to accept Hitler’s decisions often seemed to be the barrier standing between the “Thousand Year Reich” and anarchy.”[631] 1940 and 1941 were the zenith of Hitler’s power. The triumph over France was specially spectacular. The reception that Hitler received at his arrival in Anhalter Bahnhof after this military triumph was even greater as the one received after the *Anschluss* of Austria.[632] After the outstanding success of the Regime, the social ambiance can be resumed with a Hitler’s photo that circulated with the phrase: “My will is your faith.” Hitler was a kind of thaumatuge king who was performing miracles, “a providential man, the vocational leader of masses, the head whose pretended exceptional qualities made him appeared as a savior on the critical periods.”[633] It seemed as if Max Weber had been inspired by Hitler at the moment of formulating his description of the *Charismatic Authority*

> Around him, a charismatic community is built up who, united by an almost religious sentiment and faith in his extraordinary qualities, submit to his will. Like the first christian communities who were founded around the figure of Christ, the dictatorships that came out of the First World War claimed for an extralegal legitimation centered more in the nature or the history than in the right. They distinguished themselves then from the traditional power where the legitimation was given by the force of the customs and from the modern forms of dominations founded in the rational contract of the laws. The main characteristic of this kind of leaders is that the people obey not due to the customs or the laws but due to the faith on them.[634]

Hitler was completely aware of this charismatic role that society had given him. He represented the national unity. Moreover, he fomented the internal politic struggles in a way that only he could be the central integrating vector. For example, the number of meetings of ministers descended from 12 in 1935 to 6 in 1937 and “after February 5, 1938, the cabinet never met again. During the war, Hitler would even ban his ministers getting together occasionally over a glass of beer.”[635] Franz

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[631] Mason, 73.

[632] Kershaw, *Hitler II*, 286. 300.

[633] Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience,* 145.

[634] See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 320-325, and *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 103, quoted in Traverso, *1914-1945*, 122.

[635] Kershaw, *Hitler I*, 530,532,533.

Neumann described the role of Hitler as the "top leader. He combined the functions of supreme legislator, supreme administrator, and supreme judge; he is the leader of the party, the army, and the people. In his person the power of the state, the people, and the movement were unified."[636]

This relationship between the leader and his people was ruled by the *Führerprinzip* which was incarnated in the daily life throughout the Hitler Salute. From the very early, a decree of July 14, 1933, it was established that the traditional greetings had to be replaced by the "Heil Hitler" in the public and private life.[637] Since then on, Jehovah's Witnesses had problems in this respect due to their refusal on using this greeting. In December 21, 1934, for example, the Reich Disciplinary Division in Liegnitz ordered the dismissal of an official because he had refused to take "the new oath for official in its requested form, despite repeated admonitions." The judges considered it as a "refusal to accept the basic foundation of the new state: "The National Socialist State is based on the leadership principle and on allegiance to the Führer, the accused is actually rejecting what the new state has to require from all national comrades and from its civil servants in particular."[638] The punishment against Jehovah's Witnesses were increasing in the course of the years. Firstly, they were just punished with some hours in detention and afterwards many of them were taken to concentration camps of the mere fact of not performing the salute.[639]

The invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, was, according to Martin Broszat, the start of the second stage of National Socialism revolution.[640] The hard core of the NSDAP movement was fixed by war. As Ernst Nolte said: "For Hitler wars were the revolutions of healthy people, war was the strongest and classical value of life."[641] The occupation of Poland was the begin of a *völkischen* war, an adjective construction that show how this "biologization of the enemy" started to gain more and more importance.

On September 22 and 25, Hitler visited the suburbs of Warsaw to see the destruction of the city. The surrender of Warsaw took place on the 27th. Around 700,000 Polish soldiers were taken as prisoners of war.[642] In the course of a year, the Jews have to be displaced to the "foreign-speaking Gau" which would later be called General Government. Heydrich had also planned to take Jews and

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[636] Neumann, *Behemoth*, 73,74.

[637] Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience,* 71.

[638] Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom,* 152,153..

[639] Ibidem*,* 144.

[640] Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, 380, 381.

[641] Nolte, *Der Faschismus in Seiner Epoche* 494.

[642] Kershaw, *Hitler II*, 236.

30,000 Gypsies from the Reich to this territory.[643] The destruction of Polish leadership and resistance was in charge of Eicke's three *Totenkopf* regiments: Oberbayern, Brandenburg and Thuringen.[644] The actions taken by these units "provoked an attitude of shock, disgust, and uneasiness among responsible senior officers of the German army."[645] The violence displayed in the Polish territory was taken to a scale which was not seen before. Ian Kershaw stated that it was a kind of training-ground to the stage that would start in the summer of 1941 during the campaign in Russia.[646] Forster was assigned to the administration of Danzig-West Prussia, Greiser to Warthegau and Frank to the General Government. "Greiser saw his task as working to put into practice the Führer's "heroic vision" for the Germanization of the Warthegau, to turn it into the "model Gau" of the "New Order". He was given full scope to do so".[647]

The worst years for the Jehovah's Witnesses, 1939 and 1940, coincide with this moment.[6] Even when the Jehovah's Witnesses started to have problems with the reestablish of the military service in 1935, the beginning of the "*völkischen* war" made re-emerge an old problem generated by Jehovah's Witnesses during the First World War: their refusal to be drafted in the armed forces. At that time, we find an interest in the medicine discipline on the case of those Jehovah's Witnesses, Mennonites and Quakers who refused to take part in conflict. Two Jehovah's Witnesses were diagnosed as insane due to "a basic thought disorder in a sense of paranoia." R. Gaupp was one of the specialist who criticized this diagnose saying that instead of a metal problem, this people were "just fanatical representatives of their naif faith in the Bible who without any historical sense or critical capacity took the Bible as a whole as being the revelation of God."[649] In another of the intervention in the same medical article that published the opinion of R. Gaupp, we find that Herr Müller found a parallel between this conduct with the one displayed in the past by the Waldensians, the Unity of Brethren, the english sects of the XVII century, the Social Democrats and the Anarchists. All of them had a "powerful effective worldly and social political chiliasm that engulf all other motives and cancel the national patriotism."

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[643] Ibidem, 243,244.

[644] Sydnor Jr., *Soldiers of Destruction*, 41,42.

[645] Ibidem, 42,43.

[646] Kershaw, *Hitler II*, 249.

[647] Ibidem, 250,251.

[648] Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom,* 404.

[649] Gaupp, R, and Herr Müller, "Die gerichtsärztliche Beurteilung der militärischen Dienstverweigerung aus religiosen Gründen," in *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift, Organ für amtliche ind praktische Ärzte 64* (1917), 950, 951.

The war unleashed a wave of executions of all those Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to participate in the war and those who were charged of "demoralizing the armed forces." Bruno Bettelheim stated that "the SS were usually successful in preventing martyrs or heroes from being created, through its consistent suppression of all individual action or, if this was not possible, by changing it into a group phenomenon."[650] This idea can helps us to think what happened with the execution of August Dickmann. The day of mobilization, August 26, 1939, a decree in which "increased penal regulations during periods of war and states of emergency" was enacted. A couple of months later, on November 25, a special legal regulation was issued related to Jehovah's Witnesses: the "amendment of penal regulations for the protection of military strength of the German people." Article 3 of this regulation decreed that people who "supported, or were involved in, an anti-military association" would be "punished with a prison sentence, in less serious cases with jail."[651] On September 3, Reinhard Heydrich had already issued a secret interoffice decree to the leaders of all regional State Police offices where the first regulation stated: "Every attempt to undermine the unity and military strength of the German nation has to be ruthlessly suppressed." Two weeks later, on September 15, the SS prepared the first public execution which was intended to be an example and a message to the whole *Gemeinschaft,* showing what will happen to those who refuse to come along in the new phase of the Reich. The chosen one was August Dickmann, a Jehovah's Witness born in Dinslaken and sent to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen in October 1937. Ernst Wauer described the execution as follow:

"On September 15, 1939, our labor detachment had to march back to camp earlier than usual. August Dickmann, one of our young brothers, was to be publicly executed. The Nazis were confident that this would convince a large number of Witnesses to renounce their faith. After the execution, all other prisoners were dismissed. But we Jehovah's Witnesses were hounded back and forth on the parade ground, kicked and beaten with sticks until we couldn't move anymore. We were ordered to sign a declaration renouncing our faith; otherwise, we also were to be shot.
By the next day, nobody had signed. In fact, a new prisoner, who had signed upon arrival, now retracted his signature. He preferred to die with his brothers rather than leave the camp as a traitor."[652]

Three days later, Heinrich Dickmann, August's brother, was taken to the political department where two Gestapo officers from Berlin were waiting to see how was the reaction of Heinrich after his brother's execution. "What did you learn of what happened to your brother?", they asked. Heinrich

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[650] Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, 139.

[651] Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom,* 342.

[652] Ernst Wauer, "What a joy to sit at Jehovah's table!" in *Watchtower* 1991, August 1, pp. 28

answered: “I am and I remain to be a Jehovah’s Witness”. “Than you are the next one to be executed.” Heinrich started to quote several biblical text in response to the Gestapo thread so one of them said: “I do not want to know what it is writing, I want to know your opinion”. They brought to him the *Erklärung* so he can sign it. But Heinrich refused saying: When I recognize the State and leadership by signing, it will means that I approve and subscribe to the death of my brother. I can not do that”. The officer’s answer was: “Then you can start figuring out how much longer you will be alive.” [653]

The repertoire of tortures employed by Richard Bugdalle and his staff of the isolation blocks of Sachsenhausen was specially recalled. They used “drowning, running the gauntlet, forcing a prisoner to climb a tree and then shaking him down. It also included directing a water jet at a prisoner’s heart until he died, inserting a water hose into body openings, and letting drenched prisoners stand outside until they froze to death.” Another practice that was remembered by former prisoners consisted on trying to kill them by suffocation. The SS “locked about twenty-five prisoners into a broom closet. These were tiny rooms of approximately 3 feet by 10.5 feet (about 1 meter by 3.5 meters). Near the top of the room was only a small window. The SS plugged the keyholes from the outside with paper. They sealed the window and the door with blankets. The door was kept closed for twelve hours.” One of the religious mate, Willi Lehmbecker, said: “We could hear the people scream, but there was nothing we could do to help them.”[654]

Ernst Wauer also remarked that in Sachsenhausen the Jehovah’s Witnesses were not demanded to make the Hitler salute because they were considered unworthy to do it. He recalled also that one of the most used insults against the Jehovah’s Witnesses was *Bibelkommiker*. He also mentioned Hermann Baranowski, the SS of Sachsenhausen that executed August Dickmann. Some time after the execution of Dickmann, Baranowski suffered a stroke “maybe because of the drinking and when he was in bed, he said that it happened because of the Jehovah’s Witnesses who were praying against him.”[655] Afterwards Barownoski became cancer and he had to walk in the camp with crutches. According to Ernst Wauer, “when the Jehovah’s Witnesses came from the outside commandos he always avoid to meet them.”[656]

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[653] J*ahrbuch der Zeugen Jehovas 1974*, 167,168.

[654] Ibidem 408-410.

[655] Oral history interview with Ernst Wauer, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1988 October 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.68 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0068.

[656] Ibidem.

The winter of 1939 and 1940 was particular hard for the 400 Jehovah's Witnesses who were in Sachsenhausen. 100 of them died due to the conditions. Ernst Wauer remarked however the solidarity and the community ties among them. He remembers the case of "an old brother who was dying. He was sent to the toilet to die, and while he was there he refused to eat and send the portion to someone else because he accepted his destiny and died in peace." He also remarked how they encouraged to each other:

> On many occasions we had to stand on the parade ground for hours on end. Sometimes one of us would sigh: "Wouldn't it be nice to have a really good meal?" Another would reply: "Don't fix your mind on such things. Just think what an honor it is to stand up for Jehovah's name and his Kingdom." And somebody else would add: "Jehovah will strengthen us!" In this way we encouraged one another. Sometimes just a friendly nodding of the head was sufficient to say: "I want to be loyal; you do too!""[657]

In one occasion Heinrich Himmler visited the camp and asked all Jehovah's Witnesses to stay on a row. The SS reported to Himmler that they had tried everything to change them but they still remain in their rebel attitude. Himmler then took one of the Jehovah's Witnesses and asked him if he did not think in his family, because if the things continue so he will never leave the camp. The man responded: "you can kill some of us but as people we will remain loyal." Ernst Wauer recalled that "the other officers were trembling because of Himmler's reaction." Himmler said: "complete insane!"

According to Ernst Wauer, the discussion about the Jehovah's Witnesses in Sachsenhausen continued between the SS and Himmler. The SS remarked that the Jehovah's Witnesses had the proper attitude toward working. They wanted to work. For Wauer, it was this moment when the conditions for the Jehovah's Witnesses changed in Sachsenhausen. The mistreatment decreased and they assigned to the Außenkommandos where they had to make different kind of jobs like picking up potatoes. In the spring of 1940, Ernst Wauer was transferred to the Neuengamme concentration camp.[658]

The execution of Jehovah's Witnesses did not take place just in the concentration camps. In September 1939, Johann Pichler and Josef Wegscheider were executed in the city of Salzburg. According to the account of Jehovah's Witnesses "when the command was given, the soldiers refused to shoot. Not until the soldiers had been warned emphatically that they would face disciplinary measures themselves if they failed to obey, and not until the order had been given a

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[657] Ernst Wauer, "What a joy to sit at Jehovah's table!" in *Watchtower* 1991, August 1, pp. 26,27

[658] Ibidem, 28

second time, did the soldiers shoot those innocent men." During the trial the judge tried to make that the accused change their mind but he did not succeeded. He said: "These people are not criminals or traitors but, rather, a company of believers whose number is not limited to two or three but goes into hundreds and even thousands!" The day before the execution, the judge visited their cell and "asked if they had one last wish. They wanted to have a Bible, which was brought to them personally by the judge. He watched them in their cell until midnight and then went away remarking: "Both of those men in their last hour were united with their God; they are indeed holy men!" The bodies were delivered for private burial. At the funeral there was an attendance of 300 persons. While the coffins were lowered, one of the assistant called out: "Till we meet again in Jehovah's Kingdom!"[659] Due to the events surrounding this execution in Salzburg, the regime decided to change the place of execution: Berlin-Plötzensee.

In the case of Heinrich Dickmann, we can see how he was touched by the execution of his brother. The case of Franz Wohlfahrt from Velden am Wörthersee in Austria is quite similar. He said that once the Nazis took the power, a strict surveillance was introduced to see who refused to make the Hitler Salute. He was reported by several people who looked for on purpose to expose that he did not make the Hitler Salute. Due to the fact that his father, Gregor Wohlfahrt refused to serve in the army, he was put in military jail in Vienna and three months later was transferred to Berlin where he was sentenced to death together with another 20 Jehovah's Witnesses. The execution took place on December 7, 1939. One of his brother was also sentenced to death because he refused to be drafted in the Air Force. In this case, they waited five months for the execution, waiting for the sentenced to sign the refusal of his faith. In Franz's opinion, the severe measures against Jehovah's Witnesses were the result for their "neutrality" and the fact "they did not want to take participation in Hitler's goals in the war." After the execution of his brother, his two sisters were taken from his mother and sent to institutions directed by nouns. His father warned him to be prepared for the difficult times to come. "After his execution I took stand against the work service because it was a preparation for the army." He remembered that specially the German officers were irritated with his refusal attitudes. When he explained to the soldiers how he can refuse to salute the flag or endure the punishment, for example to be in a dungeon for 33 days, he said that it was due to the "spirit of God." That happened in 1940. He was sentenced to 5 years of hard labor by a court. He was researched by a Professor from Graz and 8 students who were investigating criminal cases. They found interesting his suicide tendencies. He was sent to a labor force camp in the near of Frankfurt

[659] Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 1989, 121.

am Main, Allweiter Rodgau in the province of Hessen-Nassau. The majority of the prisoners in this camp came from Austria. All of them political prisoners, there were catholics and a priest who heard to BBC. To this priest, Franz helped him with his work because he had more energy. It generated such a great respect of this priest for Jehovah's Witnesses that when he was realized, he visited Franz mother in Austria and tried to influence in some German priests and even Gestapo people so Franz would not be executed. He was used in experimental farms as model, like several Jehovah's Witnesses were. When he came back to his congregation: 12 were gassed, 3 survived and died short after and about 3 or 4 survived. His cousin was in Flössenburg, he worked at the crematorium. He could not resist his job as assistance for the experiment they made in young pregnant Jewish girls. His uncle was sent to Auschwitz in 1944 because he was old and invalid. He had a Bible which was sent back from Sachsenhausen. It belonged to his brother-in-law. After his execution, they sent the Bible to his relatives. When he was waiting for his execution, he received from his family a sign with the Proverb 3:5,6.[660]

August Dickmann and Gregor Wohlfahrt were just two of the more than hundred cases sentenced to death penalty.

"Of the 1,087 cases held on the charge of "demoralization of the armed forces" (Special Penal Regulations during War, article 5), a total of 152 were cases involving Bible Students (14%). Of the 117 death penalties that were pronounced on the charge of "demoralization of the armed forces," a total of 112 (95-7%) were pronounced against Jehovah's Witnesses. This shows that only 40 of the 152 Bible Student cases did not result in a death penalty (26.3%). In 73.7 percent of the cases, death penalties were pronounced: Consequently, during the first year of the war, in three out of four cases held at the RKG, Jehovah's Witnesses were sentenced to death."[661]

Among the executions "on the charge of demoralization of the armed forces in concurrence of involvement with an anti-military association," we have to mention the case of Ludwig Cyranek, who was sentenced by Special Court I at the Dresden Regional Court on March 18, 1941. After the imprisonment of all the responsible for the organization in 1936 and 1937, Cyranek was one of the cadres who, together with Julius Engelhard, Narciso Riet, Wilhelm Schumann and Franz Fritsche, tried to reactivate Jehovah's Witnesses cells after 1939. They had a relative success in the eastern and southwestern parts of Germany.[662] Cyranek had been working for the organization in several countries and had a fluid net of contacts in the Netherlands, France, Yugoslavia, Austria and

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[660] Franz Wohlfahrt Interview on Oral History Archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

[661] Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom,* 366.

[662] Ibidem, 334.

Switzerland. His role in supporting the group in Vienna was specially noted. Afterwards he returned to Germany and joined those Jehovah's Witnesses in southwestern and western regions that were still active. For example, in the Ruhr District, by 1940, there was around 240 active faith mates. After his arrest, Narciso Riet and Julius Engelhard (southern and western parts of Germany, Austria and the protectorates of Bohemia and Moravia) and Wilhelm Schumann and Franz Fritsche (Magdeburg, Berlin) continued the supervision of the underground activities under the direction of the office located in Bern.[663] On July 3, 1941, just a few hours before his execution, Cyranek wrote his relatives the following letter:

"My dear brother, sister-in-law, parents, and all other brothers included,

"Fear God and attribute to him the honor! I must write you the painful news that when you receive this letter I no longer will be alive. Please do not be overly sad. Remember that it is a simple matter for Almighty God to raise me from the dead. Yes, he can do all things and if he permits me to drink this bitter cup, then it certainly serves a purpose. Know that it was my attempt to serve him in my weakness and I am completely convinced that he has been with me right up unto the end. I put myself into his keeping. My thoughts during these last few hours are with you, my dears. May your hearts not be dismayed, but, rather, maintain your composure, for it is much better than for you to know that I am suffering in prison, which would have been a continual worry for you. And now, my dear mother and father, may I thank you both for all the good things you have done for me. I can only stammer out a weak thank you. May Jehovah repay you for all you have done. My prayer is that he may protect and bless you, for his blessing alone makes rich. Dear Toni, I can only too well believe that you would have done everything possible to rescue me from the 'lions' den,' but this in vain. I received notification tonight that the petition for clemency has been rejected and that my sentence will be carried out tomorrow morning. I have made no plea of any kind nor asked for mercy at the hands of man. I appreciate your good will, however, to help me and thank you as well as Luise from the bottom of my heart for all the good things that you have given me. Your lines of sympathy did me good. Many greetings to you all and may I send you all a kiss. I especially have a place in my heart for Karl. May God be with you until we meet again. I put my arms around you in departure.

[signed] Ludwig Cyranek."[664]

The prison in Alt Moabit and Plötzensee in Berlin were the central place of these executions. Franz Mattischek was among those who were executed there. In the last letter that he wrote to her mother before being executed, he stated "he felt in a tight relationship with God who would back him up until the end. All the sufferings helped him to learn to be obedient and he did not regret it. "It is Friday, at 9 p.m. and I seat in my cell and wait my last hours. I leave all in the hand of the

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[663] Ibidem, 325,326..

[664] *Jehovah's Witnesses Yearbook 1974*, 180,181.

most high. […] who had also called Christ from death to everlasting life ".[665] Karl Endstrasser, who was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Graz in September 10, 1939, then to Vienna and then to Berlin Moabit, before being executed, he said: "we are a spectacle for the angels and the humans".[666]

On July 27, 1938, Martin Poetzinger, joined this group of Jehovah's Witnesses in Dachau. After the arrest of Otto Lehmann, in April 1936, and Johann Kölbl, in August of the same year, Martin Pötzinger became the responsible of the group in Munich. He was arrested in December 1936 while he was delivering the resolution taken in the assembly of Lucerne. His description of Dachau was: "It is a madhouse of the demons." Once Pötzinger was punished in the *Baum*. Pötzinger stated:

"One had to go up a stairs of five steps, then they bonded the hands backwards with an iron chain. The hands were taken up so one had to step on his toes. The stairs were taken away so both arms were dislocated backwards and the body stretched slowly which caused an enormous pain. All the prisoners cried tremendously, which is understandable, and some of them died.
They payed special attention to what we, Jehovah's Witnesses, were going to do. If we cried due to the pain, the tormentor started to blaspheme the name of Jehovah saying that he does not want to help us. They boasted in many opportunities that Jehovah does not exist, otherwise he would show his power. In an intimate prayer, I asked Jehovah to assist me, to give me the power so I make any cry of pain. From the beginning I started to concentrate myself in the biblical drama of Abraham and Isaac. I was so deep concentrated in this thought that I believed that I had to give a public talk about this subject. Besides the howling of the other prisoners that were hanging at my back, I was lent strength to endure the pain. When the tormentor realized that I, as Jehovah's Witnesses, was the only one who did not make any cry, a SS officer kicked me with his boots so I started to move like a pendulum clock which incremented the pain. The SS officer waited for an outcry. He heard nothing because Jehovah helps his witnesses in such situations."[667]

This kind of reactions in face of the torture methods employed by the SS had attracted the attention of more than one person who had the chance to witness what was happening. Eugen Kogon, for example, stated

"Unfortunately I cannot here deal at length with every individual type. I must confine myself to such psychological phenomena as had some degree of generality. It would be fascinating, for example, to write a psychology of Jehovah's Witnesses. As a rule they stemmed from middle-class trades with relatively simple modes of thought and emotion, though in the concentration camps they unfolded a veritable spectrum of mental reactions and outward behavior patterns, ranging from the extreme of lofty anticipation of the hereafter down to thoroughly earthy appetites."[668]

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[665] Hartmann, Hartmann, *Kriegsdienstverweigerung im Dritten Reich*, 63,64.

[666] Ibidem, 57,58.

[667] Klein, *op. cit.* 146,147.

[668] Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, 301.

The group of Jehovah's Witnesses that Kogon met were the ones at Buchenwald, a concentration camp that was constructed in 1937. There were about 270 Jehovah's Witnesses in Buchenwald in fall 1937, a year later the number ascended to 450.[669] In August 1937, the first Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to the punishment battalions, a practice that was employed with the second-offense political prisoners but started to be usually for the Jehovah's Witnesses who at the arrival at the camp were sent up to three or nine months in these battalions.[670]

Jehovah's Witnesses who were imprisoned in Dachau and Buchenwald were the two groups that Bruno Bettelheim observed in his analysis of the concentration camp experience. He stated that what he saw at Dachau and Buchenwald helped Bettelheim to reach "the nature" of men. He realized that "those persons who, according to psychoanalytic theory […] should have stood up best under the rigor of the camp experience, were often very poor examples of human behavior under extreme stress." On the other side, those persons who "according to the same body of theory and the expectations based on it, should have done poorly, presented shining examples of human courage and dignity." Jehovah's Witnesses were among the second group, they "not only showed unusual heights of human dignity and moral behavior, but seemed protected against the same camp experience that soon destroyed persons considered very well integrated."[671]

The description made by Bettelheim about this group stated

"Members of this group were generally narrow in outlook and experience, wanting to make converts, but on the other hand exemplary comrades, helpful, correct, dependable. They were argumentative, even quarrelsome only when someone questioned their religious beliefs. Because of their conscientious work habits, they were often selected as foremen. But once a foreman, and having accepted an order from the SS, they insisted that prisoners do the work well and in the time allotted. Even though they were the only group of prisoners who never abused or mistreated other prisoners (on the contrary, they were usually quite courteous to fellow prisoners), SS officers preferred them as orderlies because of their work habits, skills, and unassuming attitudes. Quite in contrast to the continuous internecine warfare among the other prisoner groups, the Jehovah's Witnesses never misused their closeness to SS officers to gain positions of privilege in the camp."[672]

In the analysis of his memories, Bettelheim pointed out the "initiation to the camps" as the most difficult situation to go through. The "initiation" took place in the transport to the concentration

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[669] ibidem., 33.

[670] Garbe, *op. cit.,*. 402.

[671] Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, 14,20,21.

[672] Ibidem, 123.

camp and consisted of physical punishment: ”whipping, kicking (abdomen or groin), slaps in the face, shooting, or wounding with the bayonet.” Moreover the SS tried to produce an extreme exhaustion by “forcing the prisoners to stare for hours into glaring lights or to kneel for hours.” They also forced the prisoners “to hit one another, curse their God, to accuse themselves and one another of vile actions, and their wives of adultery and prostitution.” There was a systematic propose behind all these practices that were beyond “the fantasy of the particular SS man in charge of a group of prisoners.”[673] The purpose was to change the personality of the prisoner by “forcing them to adopt childlike behavior, forcing them to give up individuality and merge themselves into an amorphous mass and destroying all capacity for self determination.”[674]

According to Bettelheim, the SS efforts tried to take the individual from his adult stage back to the “anal sphere […] the level they were at before toilet training was achieved.” This goal explains why the normal term to speak with a prisoner was “shit” or “asshole.” Some of the tasks given to them can be interpreted as going in the same direction. For example, “carrying heavy rocks from one place to another, and after a while back to the place where they had picked them up. Or they were forced to dig holes in the ground with their bare hands although tools were available.”[6] The aim was accomplished when the prisoner internalizes his child role and the SS father role. Jehovah’s Witnesses were in this sense a little bit special, because they already had in themselves a kind of child role. Once and again we found in their accounts a constantly reference to their father, Jehovah. Mostly in asking for help under difficult situations. This characteristic may explain, according to Bettelheim, why the SS behaved the way they did with this group. Unlike the other prisoners, here they did not have to take over the father role, they had to replace the father role that Jehovah’s Witness subjectivity had before coming into the camp. The following example can illustrate this point

In a secret report written by the journalist and political prisoners Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz during his imprisonment at Dachau, such an incident of an SS officer ridiculing a Bible Student is described: “You and your God! Why does he not come and help you? Because he is a fool, your God! Because he is not able to, this piece of shit!” While hurling these abuses at the Bible Student, the SS officer was laughing and shaking his fist heavenward: “God-God- I am your God, do you understand me, you comedian of heaven?” And with those words he punched the man, just for the sake of reinforcement, as it were.”[676]

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[673] Ibidem. 124.

[674] Ibidem. 130,131.

[675] Ibidem. 132,134.

[676] Garbe, *op. cit.,* 400.

Bettelheim has also found the difference between Dachau and Buchenwald, the first one found in 1933 and the second one in 1937. In contrast to Dachau, in Buchenwald "it was nearly always the group that suffered, not the individual." The punishment was always apply to the group and not to the individual as it happened in Dachau during several years. The purpose was to create a peer pressure that depersonalize the individual and create a mass behavior. Jehovah's Witnesses presented also here difficulties to the SS because they were already functioning as a mass in many aspects. The strong solidarity is a proof of that.

For instance, Jehovah's Witnesses formed "funds for the collection of money and packages." Once a month at the concentration camps, the Reich German prisoners and sometimes also the foreigners were allowed to receive a maximum amount of money (e.g., thirty Reichmark) with which they could increase their meager food rations by buying additional food at the camp dining hall."[677]

Max Liebster born February 15, 1915 in Reichenbach. His father repaired shoes. He was 8 years in the school, then he had a business in the near of Mannheim until the war started. He was imprisoned in September 1939. He was raised in a Jewish family. His family Oppenheimer left the country, they went to USA. The SS took him and his friends from the synagogue and put them in prison for 4 months. He was stolen and destroyed his business in the Kristallnacht. He was taken to Sachsenhausen in February 1940. From 900 prisoners in the train to Sachsenhausen there was only one Jehovah's Witness and he was put with this person in the cell in Frankfurt. They were together 14 days on the way. Max Liebster recalled: "The Jehovah's Witnesses had peace in mind, enjoyment." The Jehovah's Witness told him that because he did not make the Hitler salute, his children were taken from him and he was sent to Sachsenhausen. He explained the prophecies which referred to the time they were living and gave him an explanation about why the Jews were persecute and it also gave him hope for the future. On the way to Sachsenhausen, the SS asked every prisoner why they were there. When he said that he was a Jehovah's Witness, the SS beaten him harder as all other. He was a Jehovah's Witness from Karlsruhe. He died. In Sachsenhausen, everyone who approached to the Jehovah's Witnesses was beaten with 25 strokes. Max Liebster was in the camp as a Jew, not as a Jehovah's Witness. 2 years later he was transferred to Neuengamme where he was able to be in the barrack with the 100 Jehovah's Witnesses who were there. He was

[677] ibidem. 426.

six years imprisoned in five different camps. In Sachsenhausen the Jews were isolated. His father died in Sachsenhausen. [678]

Feliks Borys was born in France in 1923 and then they went to Poland. In 1933 he was in Poland. The parent came in contact with the Jehovah's Witnesses in France. They lived in Chojnice, Poland, the German Konitz. This was maybe 60 miles from Danzig, Gdansk. Feliks Borys was a member of the 800 Jehovah's Witnesses active in Poland at that time. His congregation had 35 members. When the German came in 1939, "they took over this town and started to persecute first the Jews. They took them in fields and shot them." Because of his French citizenship, the Germans wanted to draft him in the army. Due to his refusal, the Gestapo took him to the main office and started to interrogate him. They wanted to know how many Jehovah's Witnesses were active in this town and how he got baptized. They also wanted to know who was in charge of the congregation. Feliks Borys confessed that he was the responsible of the congregation. The Gestapo responded: "then you know how many there are here and also their names." He replied: "I will never give you the names." So they continued asking if his mother and his sister were also Jehovah's Witnesses. He answered that it would be better if they ask themselves. Finally, the officer put a document on the table and told him to sign the resignation of his faith otherwise he would be sent to a concentration camp and die there. The Gestapo officer said: "You remind me my son who were sent to the front and now is fighting against the Soviet Union. I do not really know if I will see him again. If you are sent to a camp, you will also die." Feliks Borys remained in his words. Someone else came then and put him in a dark cell. Feliks Borys remarked that he was prepared for this kind of situations because before him three coreligionists had already been arrested. Two of them were murdered and the third one sent to the Stutthof concentration camp. Feliks Borys used to send him some packages there. He once received a message: "I'm still alive, and I'm thankful for the package." When Feliks Borys was arrested, he rejoiced thinking that if they sent him to Stutthof, he would meet "his brother" again.[679]

We also find Jehovah's Witnesses in Auschwitz. Elizabeth Abt was born in 1914. Her father died in the First World War in 1917. She married her husband, who was engineer, in 1938. In 1939 the Germans came and said that they needed engineers who collaborate with them. They gave them

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[678] Oral history interview with Max Liebster, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 February 05, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.34 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0034.

[679] Oral history interview with Feliks Borys, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1994 April 13, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.74 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0074.

two weeks to think over. In this time, Elizabeth and her husband decided to leave everything and escape to Lodz, in the old bureau of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland. Half a year later, they were arrested in Lodz. Elizabeth was sent free because she had a little baby. Two years later, in 1942, she left her 2 and a half years old daughter when she was taken by the Gestapo. The Jehovah's Witnesses of the congregation took care of the child. When she arrived to the Gestapo office, there were plenty of Jehovah's Witnesses there. Wiktor Schnell was one of them. It was May 7, 1942. A day when a massive roundup took place and the Gestapo was able to capture an important number of Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere. From Lodz, she was transported together with 11 female Jehovah's Witnesses to Auschwitz. Their assignment was to work in the homes of the SS. They received a pass with a picture which allowed them to go everywhere. Only Jehovah's Witnesses were used to such works. Elizabeth Abt was worked in the house of a high official who was the head of the whole camp administration. She lived there and slept in the basement. One day she was left alone in the house so made a quick visit to the female Jehovah's Witnesses who were working in a nearby SS hotel. It was encouraging to talk with them and to strengthened to each other in secret. In another occasion they were cleaning the windows of the SS hotel and saw a group of women passing by and greeting saying: "we are sisters too. We are from Silesia. Go quickly to the washroom." They met there and were able to smuggle some literature.[680]

In the Netherlands, the Jehovah's Witnesses were banned on May 29, 1940. Tineke Piersman reported 468 arrests. 72% were men and 28% women. 40% of the arrests took place in the province of South Holland and 16% in North-Holland.[681] The persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses was in charge of the Referat IV B 3 under the supervision of the SS-Scharführer Friedrich Engelsmann and the Dutch detective Van Dijk.[682] There were 501 Jehovah's Witnesses in 1939 and 1940 in Netherlands. At the end of the war, they reached the number of 3125.[683]

Max Henning was among the active Jehovah's Witnesses. He was born in Berlin in 1909. His foster parents were baptized in 1919, when Max was 10 years old. He described this moment as

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[680] Oral history interview with Elizabeth Abt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 August 01, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.89 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0089.

[681] Tineke Piersma, 63,64.

[682] Ibidem, 36.

[683] Ibidem, 98.

"the star of an spiritual paradise."[684] At that time there were around 500 Jehovah's Witnesses in Berlin. Due to the crisis of 1929, one of his friend encouraged him to be a pioneer. Together with a friend they became pioneers in 1933.

"Werner and I started pioneering on May 5, 1933. We would bike to a town about 100 km out of Berlin, where we stayed and preached for two weeks. Then we returned to Berlin to care for necessary matters. Afterward we went back to our preaching territory for another two weeks. We applied to serve in another country, and in December 1933 we received an assignment to what was then Yugoslavia. However, before we could leave, our assignment was changed to Utrecht in the Netherlands. (…) Not long after arriving in the Netherlands, we were reassigned to the city of Rotterdam. The father and a son in the family with whom we stayed were also pioneers. A few months later, a big house in Leersum, a town not far from Utrecht, was purchased as a residence for pioneers, and Werner and I moved there. While living in that pioneer home, we traveled by bicycle to territories nearby and used a seven-passenger car for territories farther out."[685]

A couple of years later he was sent to the south of the country

"In 1938, I was assigned to be a zone servant, as circuit overseers of Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. So I left the *Lightbearer* and began visiting congregations and isolated Witnesses in three southern provinces. The bicycle was our only means of transportation. It often took a whole day to travel from one congregation or group of interested ones to the next. Among the cities I visited was Breda, where I now live." [686]

Another Jehovah's Witnesses who was very active in the Netherlands at that time was Truss Heindyk Kamp. She was born in Rotterdam in 1917 and became a Jehovah's Witnesses in October 1940. She was catholic and her husband introduced her to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Her underground preaching method was asking the people if they have interest in the bible. If someone responded: "Yes, but please wait a minute" and the person went inside, she knew that she had to leave the house. They had meetings always in different places to avoid being caught. Her husband was a Belgian and used to smuggle literature. He was arrested in 1943 and taken to Sachsenhausen and then to Neuengamme. She has a daughter and the government could support her with money when the man left them. So the functionary told her to say that her man left them. She refused a couple of times because she did not want to lie, but afterwards she did receive the money. She continued preaching and she was able to support other Jehovah's Witnesses. Finally her husband

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[684] Oral history interview with Max Henning, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 February 02, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.20 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0020.

[685] Max Henning, "Jehovah Proved to Be With Me" in *Watchtower* 1996 June 1, p.20

[686] Ibidem.

died in the hospital of Buchenwald in February 1945. He was brought there because he had stomach problems. She had at that time no idea what was happening with her husband. [687]

Max Henning described how the underground activities of the Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses were organized. There were five persons in Bethel who worked in empty garages because many could not afford anymore to have a car. Max's work was to print *Watchtowers* and brochures. They also had a printing center at Harlem. In October 1941 the Gestapo arrested the owner of the printing place, who was not a Jehovah's Witnesses and reported who were involved in the underground activities. The Gestapo was able then to arrest Wilhelmina, Max's wife, who was born in Indonesia and became a Jehovah's Witnesses in 1940. She worked as a currier. She was in jail from October 1941 until summer of 1942. In this time she was placed among the prostitutes who were there and also were very interesting in the beliefs of Wilhelmina. She was finally isolated because she started to vomit blood and they thought she had tuberculosis and did not want to infect others.

Arthur Winkler was also arrested at the same time. In the interrogation, the Gestapo asked Wilhelmina for Max, who was quite searched. Arthur Winkler heard the interrogation and wrote immediately a message in a piece of paper that a guard took and give it to Max. In the message stated that he had to leave Amsterdam and go to The Hague. Arthur Winkler was very bad mistreatment. The underground printing continued in Haarlem. In a pub located at the border between Belgium and the Netherlands, two Jehovah's Witnesses used to meet each other and drink beer. The one from Belgium provided the original exemplar and the one of the Netherlands gave him the copies to be distributed in Flandres.[688] Finally Max Henning was arrested on March 29, 1943.[689]

For those who were living in the regions of Alsace and Moselle, 1940 meant the integration to the German Reich. The Jehovah's Witnesses had already problems in France before that year. In 1932 the french government decided to expel all foreign Jehovah's Witnesses who were in the country. Pierre Laval, the minister of interior, put in effect this measure. Many Polish Jehovah's

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[687] Oral history interview with Truus Heindyk Kamp, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 September 12, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.26 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0026

[688] Oral history interview with Max Henning, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 February 02, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.20 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0020.

[689] Max Henning, "Jehovah Proved to Be With Me" in *Watchtower* 1996 June 1, p.22,23

Witnesses who were active in the north and middle France were expelled. After the declaration of war to Germany, the Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in France.[690]

This integration to the German Reich implied to erase every aspect of the French culture. They initiated a force germanization of these regions. In July 1940, Robert Wagner ordered Gustav Adolf Scheel, the responsible of the security in Alsace, to open the camp of Schirmerck-Vorbruck. In the regions of Mosel and Alsace, those who were suspected of being part of the resistance to the regime were sent here. Since 1942, prisoners of war of other countries also came to this camp. The brutality of the camp was compared with Natzweiler-Struthof, another concentration camp of the region. The prisoners of both camps used to meet each other when they were working. However there was an important difference between both camps. The one of Schirmerck-Vorbruck had a pedagogical function. Those who were interned there had to be reeducated.[691]

Simone Arnold was around 10 years old in 1940. According to her memories, those who lived in Alsace used to said: "Germany is our fatherland and France is our motherland." She recalled when she saw Hitler for the first time

> It was late spring of 1940. My friend Hélène and I were riding our bicycles between the towns of Oderen and Mulhouse, near the border between France and Germany. (…) We threw ourselves under a large bush. As the car drove by, we held our breath. Two officers sat in the back seat of the topless car. Next to the uniformed driver stood a man - it was Hitler. He was holding on to the front windshield with both hands. Slowly he turned his head in our direction. Terrified, I froze. Hitler was long gone before I had the strength to crawl out from under the bush. That evil look of his went down deep inside me. I knew that I had seen demon eyes."[692]

Her father, who was designer and colorist, was arrested by the Gestapo at his workplace on September 4, 1941. The Gestapo appeared in her house at 2 p.m., the time when the father used to come back home. They sent Simone to her room and then interrogated her mother during four hours trying to find out who were the other members of the congregation.

> "If you want to see your husband, remember that he is in our hands," the taller man (Gestapo) said. The shorter one added: "You and your daughter will have the same fate. We're going to come back and arrest you." Their heavy boots stamped downstairs. Mother stood at the landing. A cold voice came up the stairs, "You ´ll never see your husband again, never!" Mother calmly replied, "Life is not in your hands but in God's. (…) I burned with anger at what the

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690 Régis Dericquebourg, "Jehovas Zeugen im Frankreich des 20. Jahrhunderts" in Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stoklosa (Hgg.) *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 1, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2013, p. 71.

691 Robert Steegmann, *Das Konzentrationslager Natzweiler-Struthof und seine Außenkommandosan Rhein und Neckar 1941-1945*, La Nuée Bleue, Straßburg, 2005, pp. 25, 26.

692 Simone Liebster, *Facing the lion*, p.1

Nazis had done to our family. But Mum kept telling me that our enemy was, not the people, but their ideology. Didn't we know that our greatest enemy is Satan? Mum had to say it over and over again."[693]

Adolphe Arnold was taken to Schirmeck and then, in December 1941, to Dachau. In Dachau together with Fernand Saler, another French Jehovah's Witnesses, he was used as guinea pig for medicine experiments with malaria and typhus. Adolphe was infected with typhus. Later on, he also was used to experiments related to the sleeping sickness. In August 1944, he was transferred to Mauthausen and sent free on May 6, 1945, in the Außenkommando Ebensee.[694]

The congregation of the Arnolds played a central role in the underground organization. Together with the congregation in Freiburg, they smuggled literature throughout the border. Alphonse Koehl was the main responsible for this task in the congregation of Simone. The father of Simone was not the only one to be arrested, four more Jehovah's Witnesses were caught at that time. The Gestapo got to introduce informers in this group.

Immediately Simone started to have problems at school because she refused to make the Hitler salute. In her memories, Simone recalled how she was able to remain stand in her convictions

That evening Mum gave me one of her precious lessons. She knew that this incident was only the beginning. "Whenever you have to face a mean person, stay calm, be polite, and look into the person's eyes. But in your mind, fix your heart upon Jehovah, Jesus, and the angels. Imagine their approving smile each time you stand up for what is right." (…) That evening Mother's warm voice once again brought to life the story from the book of Daniel, the one about the three Hebrews. The golden image, the music, the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar - I was right in the scene. Mother's calm voice reflected the courage of the three young men when they stood erect while everybody else bowed down to the image. They feared, not men, or even death by fire, but God. And an angel rescued them. In the peaceful moonlight of that night, I finally fell asleep. Child, you have made your own decision - a wise one. You have to stick to your decision to be at peace with yourself. Remember how often your dad used to say to you, "Listen to the voice of your conscience." Recall the three Hebrews. Never forget that their God is our God too. He is almighty, and he will give you strength."[695]

The director of the school, Mr. Zipf, had a conversation with her

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[693] Ibidem p. 38, 40.

[694] Angela Nerlich, "Und plötzlich waren die Deutschen da. Die Verfolgung von Jehovas Zeugen in Frankreich und in Luxemburg" in Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stoklosa (Hgg.) *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 1, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2013, pp. 181, 186, 187, 188.

[695] Facing the Lion, 49, 51, 54, 55, 58

Again he told me how much he liked me. He said that he didn't want to see my whole life ruined. "Simone, you have read Jesus' words, Be cautious like a serpent and innocent like a dove. That's the way a Christian has to be. As a Christian, I also do not agree with the Heil Hitler salute. I'll tell you what you should do," he continued. "Follow my example. I do not heil either. Haven't you noticed that I never lift my right arm, the arm I swear with? That arm is for God. I lift the left one, and in my heart I pray for forgiveness. I'm just cautious like the serpent. Simone, God does not want you to destroy your future and maybe even your life. God forgives our sins. He is like a father - fathers forgive." "I can't do that" "And why not?" "Because that would be compromising. If someone found out what I was doing, I'd be viewed as a liar. I do not want to be taken for a liar." Mr. Zipf blushed slightly. "Simone, you worry too much about doing what's right. You still have another full day to finish visiting the classes. Think about our conversation, and remember - a Christian has to be cautious like a serpent. A serpent doesn't willingly confront its enemy. Whenever it can, it sneaks away."[696]

Simone continued refusing to make the Hitler salute. The next day, the parents of Simone received a letter from the school. During the week, the letter was read in the different classes. On Saturday, the director and two teachers came to the class and had a speech about freedom in the National Socialism. After five minutes

"The supervisor checked his watch. His arm shot up, "Heil Hitler!" his shrieking voice jolted the other two teachers. The whole class responded immediately, amplifying as with one voice the shrill sound of the salute. I held my breath. I felt the blood, which had flushed my face, suddenly leaving. I snatched the papers, clutched them tight to my heart, and ran out of class. I stopped under the shade of the same tree where my troubles had begun. What a delightful feeling came over me! I felt that I had pleased God. I wanted to shout for joy. (…) Mr. Zipf again hailed Germany as a land of freedom, saying that I had been given the freedom to make my own choice. With sadness in his voice, he added, "Simone Arnold has chosen to leave this school. We all feel sorry about her choice. We'll miss her. She has been a good student, and we love her." Then he sat down. He swallowed hard and drew a deep breath. His emotion brought tears to my eyes - the only tears I shed in this school."[697]

Simone had to change school, where she had to deal with the same problem. The director of this school tried another methods therewith Simone changed her behavior. He hit the other children and blame Simone saying that it was due to her. The strategy was to put her schoolmates against her. Her schoolmates however responded quite different. They took the side of Simone and encouraged to continue doing so. Finally Simone ended up before a judge who told her that if she does not change she would be sent to a penitentiary and then to a concentration camp. The judge showed the declaration of refusing her convictions. Under the pressures she had to deal with, she always received encouragement with the letters of her mother, father and Alphonse Koehl, whom she

[696] Ibidem

[697] Ibidem

helped to smuggle literature. Her mother told her that "love to God was the way to show love to men, because love to God implies to follows his commandments and they were always positive." Simone recalled that her mother used to made a difference within resistance and integrity. She used to say: "If you can visualize the satisfaction of God, Jesus and the angels, you will not see the ugly faces anymore."[698]

Emma Arnold, the mother of Simone, was also arrested on September 1, 1943. She was taken to the Schirmeck camp. In April 1945, she was liberated while she was in a transport on the way to Ravensbrück.[699] Adolphe was in Dachau when he was informed that his wife and his child were arrested. he recalled: "I was totally downhearted and wavering in despair. Standing in line for a shower, I kept asking myself, "Why?" At that moment, I heard a conversation behind me. Someone asked: "What Bible text was given to you at your confirmation?" The other replied: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Adolphe recalled: "Those words were to me like an angel's voice. It was just what I needed to rise out of the depths of despair."[700]

On August 8, 1943, Adolphe wrote to his family

Dachau , August 8, 1943

"Dear Emma, as far as I know, you are presently with your parents. Please give them my deepest regards. May they also get to know that which brings true peace and also grasp the meaning of the grand times we are living through - and get a firm hold on the real life. (…) And now you, my most dearly beloved child (…) Now I truly know that reminders and guidelines are not necessary for you anymore, since you are yourself old enough and God has helped you and formed in you a pure heart; he will also further guide you. As long as we follow our heart, we won't lose our joy that guarantees that our identification of what is good is the right one. It is also the anchor of our lifeboat, and it will bring us safely through the stormy sea. (…) Let us endure in prayer and faith, for large is the reward of the Lord for those who love him. With his help we can endure things we once considered insurmountable; yes, we even find joy in it. All this will enable us to stay strong; united in love, let us aim for the same goal. (…) Your Adolphe"[701]

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[698] Oral history interview with Simone Liebster, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 February 05, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.35 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0035

[699] Angela Nerlich, "Und plötzlich waren die Deutschen da. Die Verfolgung von Jehovas Zeugen in Frankreich und in Luxemburg" in Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stoklosa (Hgg.) *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 1, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2013, pp. 181, 186, 187, 188.

[700] Adolphe Arnold in Facing the Lion p. 166.

[701] Facing the Lion p. 182.

In the case of Simone, it is possible to see the efforts made by the state in order to "reeducate" her and made her part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The following situation took place in November 1943, when she already was in a reformatory in Constance, Germany

"We turned to a building; *Bezirksamt* (District Court) was written in big letters. Going upstairs Fräulein Messinger said again: "Be wise. The choice is in your hands; you make your destiny!" A handsome, elderly judge waited for me at an elegantly carved and highly polished desk. He flattered me in a fatherly tone. he was happy to read to me all the reports from Fräulein Lederle. (…) The judge explained that the court in Mulhouse had made the decision to take me away from the erroneous teaching of the Bible Students because I was being mentally corrupted. The life in the Wessenberg home had given me the opportunity to develop all those positive qualities! By this schooling, I could find my place in the *Volksgemeinschaft* and have a brilliant future. (…) He said I was smart enough to understand that resisting legal authorities has no future. (…) "See where your father and mother have ended up!" he said. "It was their choice, and by making it they sacrificed your future." He blamed my parents for my being sent to Constance.. They had blinded me, he claimed, and the National Socialist State had saved me. (…) "Now months of freedom from their control have allowed you to think, so that you can make your personal choice today." (…) "But in order that your choice will be an informed one," he continued, "I'll read the outcome of a stubborn decision." I had heard it before: At age 14, the juvenile leaves the home to become a maid or to go to prison, or even to a concentration camp. "Whoever doesn't bend, will break," he said, a favorite Nazi proverb. "A wrong choice will lead you to where your parents are." (…) "You have two documents - you can sign this one and be free today, or you can sign that one stating your decision to stay a Bible Student." I picked up the paper stating that I would stay a Bible Student and signed it in front of the judge. "She is the brood of her parents, shrewd and bold!" the old judge hollered, losing his temper. "She is definitely corrupted!" (…) That evening, in my cold bed back at the home, a warm feeling of well-being made my heart sing. That feeling must be what Dad had written about. In one of his letters, Dad had explained that we have a judge inside us - our heart. The joy we feel is the best guarantee that we have done what is good, and the joy becomes the anchor of our hope, keeping our life's boat stable through the stormy sea. Reflecting on Dad's letter, I knew that I had made the right choice that morning. Much later I learned that shortly after this, my father was called in to the commandant's office at Dachau and shown the paper I had signed. They held him responsible for my decision. (…) Dad related how he was called to the camp headquarters each time I had refused to Heil Hitler and how he reacted when he was held responsible for my decisions. "I felt such a powerful uplift when I heard the SS blaming me for your conduct," he told me. "This news gave me proof of my family's faithfulness."[702]

She wrote to her father one year later, on August 5, 1944.

Dear Father,

How important is the time we live in and how great are the events! (…) As our Lord has lead us so wonderfully until this day, for sure he will continue to lead us and if it is to be his will we may be reunited again this year. Let us keep our confidence in Jehovah and keep on in his work and he will surely sustain us. I still have good courage and will keep it up."[703]

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[702] Ibidem pp.115-118, 166

[703] Ibidem p. 184.

Maria Koehl, who played a very important role in the life of Simone, was born in 1903 in Mulhouse and she got in touch with the Jehovah's Witnesses when her husband attended the projection of the *Photo Drama of Creation* in 1925 and then came back home saying the he had found God and the true. She was baptized in 1936 or 1937. Her husband was the only one who knew the way to get the literature in the mountains. One time in month he received in the mountains a copy of *Watchtower* from Paris. They translated the copy into German and sent the copies to Freiburg and Strasbourg. They had a lot of pressure from the Gestapo because they had a barbershop, they were always saying that they will arrest them.[704]

The case of the family Artz from Mühlhausen, Alsace, is particular because the three children were taken away from their parents. On July, 1943, Charles, born on January 3, 1927, was taken to an orphanage in Sinsheim, Pierre, born on July 6, 1929, to Pforzheim and Louis, born on March 11, 1930, were taken to Weingarten in the near of Karlsruhe.[705] The parents became Jehovah's Witnesses in 1941. The beginning of the war and the coming of the Germans to the region was interpreted by the family Artz as the beginning of the awaited "Great Tribulation." A phrase of difficulties which had to take place before the unleashing of Armageddon. This was the reason why, they decided to baptize and refused to take part in war. When the teacher of Louis got to know that they were Jehovah's Witnesses, she did not react good. The Gestapo came to the house of family Artz to search for publications. The father fought so they could keep at least a Bible. The Gestapo did not only took the publications but also the three children. Recalling that moment, Louis said that he did not know why he was doing it. The family had a barely knowledge of Jehovah's Witnesses beliefs because the parents had started to study just a couple of weeks before becoming to the new religion. In order to take the children away from the parents, the Gestapo came along with a judge. The same judge helped later family Artz to get the children back. The father asked the Gestapo to take him instead of the children but they replied: "we are interested in the children, not in old people." At the orphanage in Karlsruhe, Louis had two or three hours schooling. The half of the time was politics and the rest working in the field. The director of the institution, mister Baumgartner, saw that Louis did not make the Hitler salute so he hit him until a point that Louis

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704 Oral history interview with Maria Koehl, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1992 November 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.116 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0116.

705 Angela Nerlich, "Und plötzlich waren die Deutschen da. Die Verfolgung von Jehovas Zeugen in Frankreich und in Luxemburg" in Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stoklosa (Hgg.) *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 1, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2013, p. 151, 152.

was not able to take a seat. The next day, the director treated him kindly and said to him that if he makes the Hitler salute, he will put him in a train and in a couple of hours he will be with his mother. Louis recalled that this proposal was for him much more difficult and painful than the beating. After nine months, the judge of Mühlhausen, helped Louis to return to his family.[706]

Ruth Danner, born in 1933, also had to face problems at school. Her father started to study the book *The Harp of God* with the Jehovah's Witnesses in 1925. He worked in Joinville and was the congregation servant in a congregation that had 25 members and were very active in smuggling literature into Germany. Her parents prepared her for the persecution by saying that at school she had to trust on Jehovah. They also explained why they refused to make the Hitler salute: "Heil meant salvation and salvation comes only from Jesus." With the arrival of the Germans in May 1940, the father refused to be drafted in the reserve army and the mother and sister of Ruth refused to sew cloths for the soldiers. The Gestapo used to come to her house looking for literature and pictures of other Jehovah's Witnesses. They also used to take his father for interrogations. Ruth recalled that the people in Joinville was divided. Those who were pro Germans did not like them and those who were anti Germans helped the Jehovah's Witnesses. On January 28, 1943, at 3:30 the whole family: Jacques, Augustine, Helen and Ruth, boarded a bus to the Metz train station and there were putted on a train together with "people from around" and political prisoners. All of them were sent to labor camps in the near of Katowice: Kochlowitz, Schwientochlowitz, Wolfsdorf and Frankenstein. "The Gestapo agents allowed the neighbors to steal the Danners' possessions "because" they stated, "they won't ever need them again."[707] The travel took three days.

Since 1943 the regime enlarged these labor camps like Kocklowitz for prisoners of war. Since September 1944 the majority were Jews from Auschwitz. The objective of the camp was to "reeducate" the people who were sent there by changing their mind. After two months, they offered them to sign the resolution of refusing their faith. The father refused so they told him that they would never come back to France. Most of the prisoners who were there came from Alsace and Lorraine. Many of them were the parents of people who refused to be drafted in the armed forces so

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[706] Oral history interview with Louis Artz, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1992 November 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.117 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0117.

[707] Profile The Danner Family in https://alst.org/en/education/biographies-en/purple-triangles-profiles/ seen 24.12.2022

as punishment the NS Regime took their parents to such camps. They even used to sing *La Marseillaise* in front of the SS, who then beat them as punishment.[708]

Together with the Danner family there was also a family of Jehovah's Witnesses: the Jungs from Thionville: Emile, Anne and six children. In October 1943 they were transferred to the camp in Frankenstein where almost 60 prisoners had to sleep all together in an attic. From there, they had to started a death march of 240 km on February 19, 1945. The march ended one month later in Steinfels. The 12 Jehovah's Witnesses survived the march, even the little children. On May 5, 1945, they were all back in Lorraine.[709] Ruth recalled that all this time they were awaiting for the coming of Armageddon until they received a *Watchtower* where they read that after the war, there was a lot to do in the preaching work. Then they realized that the Second World War was not Armageddon.[710]

Another Jehovah's Witnesses of Moselle, Charles Schuster was taken as prisoner to different places in Germany: Marne, Rellingshausen, Münster and Essen. He was born in 1920 in Algrange, Moselle. Finally, he was sentenced to four year of hard labor in the labor camp in Langenberg. He recalled a conversation he had with a Gestapo officer. After quoting Acts 4:12 where it said that the salvation come only from Jesus, he said: "You are loyal to your regime and ideas but you expect that I am disloyal with my ideas." He was finally liberated on April 1, 1945.[711]

Among the most active Jehovah's Witnesses in France were those who had Polish background. Louis Piechota was one of them. He was born on August 19, 1917, in Germany. After the war, the parents decided to move to the new republic of Poland but due to the unemployment, they moved to work in the mines in northern France.

"My parents arrived in northern France with many other Polish miners in 1922. Like most of these immigrants, they were good Catholics. However, when I was about 11 years of age, my father and mother withdrew from the Catholic Church and became Jehovah's Witnesses, or Zloty Wiek ("Golden Agers"), as the Polish Catholics scornfully called them. That was in 1928."[712]

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[708] Oral history interview with Ruth Danner, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 August 01, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.9 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0009.

[709] Angela Nerlich, "Und plötzlich waren die Deutschen da. Die Verfolgung von Jehovas Zeugen in Frankreich und in Luxemburg" in Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stoklosa (Hgg.) *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 1, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2013, pp. 173,174.

[710] Oral history interview with Ruth Danner, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 August 01, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.9 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0009.

[711] Oral history interview with Charles Schuster, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1994 May 17, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.70 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0070.

[712] Louis Piéchota, "I survived the "Death March" in *Watchtower* 1980 August 15, p. 5

In 1926 he saw the *Photo Drama of Creation*. In 1933 he started to preach and four years later, in 1937, he was baptized. In 1939 he was arrested for the first time

"Soon after the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned in October 1939, I was again arrested and sentenced to six months in prison, accused of illegally preaching God's kingdom. Initially, the time was spent in solitary confinement in Béthune jail, without anything to read."[713]

He stayed 6 months and 40 days and then to an internment camp in the near of Toulouse where he was one year and a half. In this camp he was together with other 50 Jehovah's Witnesses from France, Republicans of Spain and Jews.

"In February 1940, I was transferred from Béthune to the Le Vernet camp in the south of France where supposedly "dangerous" aliens were interned by the French authorities. In the spring of 1941, a German commission came to the camp and requested me. They sent me back to my hometown in the occupied zone of northern France, there to work as a coal miner. Naturally, I used my newfound freedom to preach the good news of God's kingdom. But when a new Witness was arrested and unwisely told the French police that I had supplied her with Bible literature, I was again arrested and sentenced to 40 days' imprisonment in Béthune jail."[714]

In December 1942 he was arrested by the Germans because he refused to work for the German army.

"After my release, I resumed witnessing. While doing so in the little mining town of Calonne-Ricouart, I was arrested for the fourth time and sent back to Béthune jail. There the Germans came to arrest me because I had refused to work extra hours and Sundays in the coal mine to support the Nazi war effort."[715]

Once he was in the hands of the NS Regime

"The Germans transferred me to the Loos Penitentiary, near Lille, and a few weeks later to Saint-Gilles prison, in Brussels, Belgium. After that, I was imprisoned in the Huy Citadel, near Liège, Belgium, before finally being sent to the S'Hertogenbosch or Vught concentration camp, in the Netherlands. There I became a cipher—7045—and was given a camp uniform with the purple triangle that identified me as a Bibelforscher, or a witness of Jehovah. I was assigned to Block 17-A. It was indeed difficult for me to get used to marching barefoot in Dutch clogs. My feet were raw with broken blisters. At the slightest stumble, I risked being kicked in the ankles by an SS guard. Soon the skin on my feet

[713] Ibidem, p. 5, 6

[714] Ibidem, p. 6

[715] Ibidem

thickened and I could march as quickly as the rest. There were 15 other Witnesses in that camp. We were offered immediate release, provided that we sign a paper abjuring our faith. None of us gave in."[716]

From Vught he was sent to Sachsenhausen.[717]

Over the years we find divisions among the Jehovah's Witnesses population of the different concentration camps. A Jehovah's Witness who was in Ravensbrück described the situation in this camp as follow:

"The devil wanted to sow discord among us (…). It looked as though God's people on this island, Ravensbrück, would split into four divisions. (…) One group: very extreme! Since they felt they were the only true representatives of the Most High (…), they believed they didn't have to submit to simplest regulations of the island (…). A second group went so far as to consider everything war work, and many of them refused to feed the angora rabbits because their fur would presumably be used in pilots' uniforms. (…) The third division considered the main battle to be over already. (…) The fourth division passed through all of these proceedings alert and sober in spirit, firm in the conviction that Jehovah would not abandon His people."[718]

Detlef Garbe described one of most important conflict among them: the group of Willi Töllner in Buchenwald against the group of Erich Frost in Sachsenhausen.

"It might even be said that this was "a dispute about the truth" between the "radical" viewpoints of the Buchenwald Bible Student group under the leadership of Willi Töllner, on one hand, and the predominantly "moderate" position of the Sachsenhausen Bible Student group under leadership of Erich Frost and the Neuengamme Bible Student group under leadership of Ernst Wauer, on the other hand. The Buchenwald Bible Students were of the opinion that the "moderate" groups had abandoned their fearless confession of complete reliance on Jehovah in favor of an inappropriate willingness to compromise. The moderate groups in the Sachsenhausen and Neuengamme camps, on the other hand, held the viewpoint that their fellow believers in Buchenwald had a stubborn attitude and tried to elevate themselves above the Watchtower. They had made Töllner into an "idol" and worshiped him "like a saint.""[719]

The first one was much more radical and strict in what they considered as collaboration with the war. Another central controversial point was the interpretation of biblical prophesies about the coming of Armageddon and the destruction of the NS Regime.[720] The leadership of Willi Töllner in

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[716] Ibidem

[717] Oral history interview with Louis Piéchota, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 September 7, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.46 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0046.

[718] Kassiber from the KZ Ravensbrück, 1943, Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany DOK 00/43 in SS Headquarters. Memorial's Main Exhibition: The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp. History and Memory."

[719] Garbe, 434, 435

[720] Ibidem.

Buchenwald was specially problematic. He was called “the wonder of Buchenwald.” He organized a group of around 400 people “based on the conception that Jehovah’s Witnesses had to form a united front against Satan’s world.” They were organized in a hierarchical structure which allowed them to had their secret meetings and produce underground literature. Töllner radicalism implied that many faith mates were disfellowshipped from the community because they did not fill up the requirements introduced by Töllner.[721]

Talking about Willi Töllner, Garbe stated:

“From the end of 1937 on, Wilhelm Töllner secretly delivered discourses and sermons in the concentration camp. For many Jehovah’s Witnesses he became an idol, “the wonder of Buchenwald.” Based on the conception that Jehovah’s Witnesses had to form a united front against Satan’s world, Töllner gave the Bible Student group a strictly hierarchical structure. (…) This group of almost 400 Jehovah’s Witnesses who supported Töllner strictly excluded the disfellowshipped minority from any of their activities. They were considered as “enemies of the Kingdom” who had to be avoided by the “faithful ones.” This small group of Jehovah’s Witnesses, which also included several IBSA functionaries, was completely excluded from the solidarity of the Bible Student group - and this action represented a serious test for them. (…) This division within the Bible Student group at the Buchenwald concentration camp lasted until the end of the war, and no other concentration camp was exposed to such an extreme situation.”[722]

The same Jehovah’s Witnesses analyzed the case of Töllner as follow:

From December of 1937 until 1940 he delivered a talk every evening, about a thousand in all, and many of these were taken down in shorthand so that they could be mimeographed. Though there were many older brothers in the camp who were capable of giving discourses, this brother was the only one who did so. Any who were not in full agreement with him were referred to as “enemies of the Kingdom” and “Achan’s family,” to be avoided by the “faithful ones.” Almost four hundred brothers more or less willingly went along with this arrangement.

Those thus labeled “enemies” were also brothers who had been willing to risk their lives to promote Kingdom interests to the best of their abilities. They, too, had been put into the camp because of determination to prove their integrity, even to death. Some of them were not fully applying Bible principles, it is true. Yet when they sought to establish contact with the responsible ones so that they too could benefit from what spiritual food became available in Buchenwald, these viewed it as “beneath their dignity” to discuss matters.

Wilhelm Bathen from Dinslaken, who is still serving Jehovah, relates how he personally was affected: “When I realized that I too had been disfellowshipped I was so spiritually shaken and depressed that I asked myself how such a thing was possible. . . . I often got down on my knees and prayed to Jehovah that he should give me a sign. I asked myself if I were to blame for the situation and whether he too had disfellowshipped me. I had a Bible and I would read in it in the dim light and I found a great deal of comfort in the thought that this was coming upon me as a test, otherwise I already would have been destroyed, for this being cut off from the brothers was a tremendous pain.”

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[721] Ibidem, 419,420.

[722] Ibidem.

Thus human imperfections and an exaggerated view of one's own importance, led to divisions among God's people, resulting in severe tests for some.[723]

The assaults of the SS to the father-child relationship between Jehovah's Witnesses and their God had different forms. One of them was institutionalized at the end of 1938, it was a statement that declare the abdication of their faith. The signature of this document meant freedom. Those who did it were able to leave the camp.[724] Just a few of them signed up this document, the majority took it as "proof of loyalty" to their "Father."[725]

Another controversial aspect was the signing of the document known as *Erklärung*. As we have seen in this chapter, for people like Ernst Wauer it was unthinkable to sign such kind of thing. Those who dared to sign it were traitors. In the case of Heinrich Dickmann, this document had also an important personal symbolic element: Signing this document was approving and subscribing to the death of his brother. However, when we consider the topic from an European perspective, some nuances come out.

Based on the Düsseldorf Gestapo records, Christl Wickert already found out that "more than half of the number of suspects and accused succumbed to the coercion and signed the statement of renouncing membership in their religions association."[726] If we take into consideration the experiences from the Netherlands, we see that an important number of Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses signed the *Erklärung*. Jeanne Kemna was released from Ravensbrück in May 1942 after signing the declaration renouncing her beliefs. In June 1942, the branch office of the Watch Tower Society of Netherlands sent a letter encouraging the Jehovah's Witnesses of this country "to treat mercifully" those coreligionists who signed this declaration and were sent free. Some of them made it in order to continue with the preaching work. In the case of Jeanne Kemna, she was assigned to the north part of the country as a full time minister.[727]

This is just one example that shows the relevance of including the experiences of the non German European Jehovah's Witnesses in the analysis. Such experiences bring important nuances

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[723] *Yearbook 1974*, 174,175.

[724] *ibidem*.. 289,290.

[725] *Garbe*. 293.

[726] Wickert, Christl. Frauen im Hintergrund - das Beispiel von Kommunistinnen und Bibelfoscherinnen" in Das "andere Deutschland" im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Beiträge zur politischen Überwindung der nationalsozialistichen Diktatur im Exil und im Deutschen Reich, editey by Helga Grebing and Christl Wickert, 199-224, Essen, 1994., quoted in Garbe 650, n:327

[727] Tineke Piersma, Getrouw aan hun geloof, 68, 69.

to the research which have to be considered if we want to have an extensive description of the *Eigen-Sinn* of Jehovah's Witnesses.

12. Survival through Working (1942-1945)

In a letter written to Oswald Pohl and Heinrich Müller on January 6, 1943, Heinrich Himmler expressed a change of mind regarding the Jehovah's Witnesses based on the case of the 10 persons who were working in the farm of Felix Kersten, Himmler's personal physical therapist, in Harzwalde. Kersten's wife remarked that she had never seen such willing, obedient, loyal and hard working people. People who always kept their word. In one occasion, one of them gave back a newspaper she received because it was not allow for prisoners of the camp to read newspapers. In another time, a Jehovah's Witnesses received 5 Marks as tip but gave the money direct to Miss Kersten because the rules of the camp did not allow the prisoners to have money. In summer they used to work 10, 11 and 12 hours. They also usually stood up 2 hours earlier than the rest. Himmler described them as follows: "They are willing persons, fanatics who are willing to make sacrifices. If we were able to inculcate such fanaticism in the German population, we would be greater and stronger. Unfortunately due to their refusal to participate in the war, they are not healthy for the German people. However it is interesting to take into consideration that they repudiate and fight against the Jews, the Pope and the Catholic Church."[728]

Himmler was also interested in the way they reacted in the concentration camps when they were punished. "Every punishment is considered as an asset in the afterworld." That was the reason why it was useless to penalize them. Every disciplinary action motivate them. "Each arrest, hunger or freeze is taken as a merit, each punishment and blow was an asset by Jehovah."[729] They were willing to put even the most profound human feelings, like love for wife and children, in a second place and pay the price of being punished or even executed.

Himmler had in mind to take advantage of the situation and use the positive qualities of these inmates in behalf of the regime. Following the suggestions of Mrs. Kersten, Himmler wanted to appoint them in the agriculture which had nothing to do with war so the Jehovah's Witnesses would not refuse to work. Another tasks that they may receive were as cooks, housemaids or personal of the *Lebensborn* homes.[730] In 1943, prisoners of Ravensbrück were selected and taken to families of SS leaders to serve as nursemaids or cleaning ladies. Among the SS who made use of

[728] Hans Hesse, Jürgen Harder, *Und wenn ich lebenslang in einem KZ*, 71, 72.

[729] Ibidem.

[730] Ibidem.

this personal were: Oswahl Pohl, the chief of the WVHA; SS-Obergruppenführer Dr. Hans Kammler, the leader of Department C (building department) at the WVHA; and SS-Stumbannführer (Storm Battalion Leader) Karl Mummenthey, the leader of Department WI (building materials) at the WVHA. In the last years of the war, Jehovah's Witnesses were also used in the self-administration of the prisoners.[731]

In March 1944 Dr. Robert Ritter, director of the Criminal Biology Institute of the Security Police, also showed interested in the Jehovah's Witnesses. He presented a request to research the behavior of the female Jehovah's Witnesses who were in Ravensbrück in order to analyze the genetical origins of this group and determine the racial quality of the group.[732]

Margarete Niklasch was among those who worked at the farm of Dr. Kersten. She recalled that they were looking for young and stable inmates. Felix Kersten used to talk with her saying that she had overweight. When the United States entered in the war in 1942, it was no more possible to get the *Watchtowers* from Switzerland. One of the only alternative way was Sweden. So the Swedish version of the *Watchtower* started to come to the continent. In Bern, Alice Berner started to study Swedish in order to translate the Swedish version into German.[733] The same Kersten used to smuggle *Watchtowers* from Sweden to his Jehovah's Witnesses in Harzwalde. He also helped them to get good cloths and even allowed Margarete to visit her parents. Kersten even laughing disclosed to Margarete that if Germany win the war Himmler had the plan of sending all Jehovah's Witnesses to Siberia so they can work hard there. Between April and May 1945 they were freed by the Russians. She recalled that some Jehovah's Witnesses were raped by the Russians.[734]

The plan of sending the Jehovah's Witnesses to Eastern in also found in another sources like a letter written by Himmler to Kaltenbrunner on July 21, 1944

"Any idea of introducing some kind of National Socialism would be insane. However, people need a religion or an ideology. To support and restore the Orthodox Church would be unwise since it would again be an organization of national assembly. It would be just as unwise to give the Catholic Church would a chance to establish itself. Nothing more needs to be said in this regards… We need to support forms of religion and sectarian groups that have a pacifying effect. For all turk-peoples, this would be the Buddhist religion. For all other people, it is the Bible Student teachings.

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[731] Garbe 446.

[732] BArch, R73/14005 quoted by Hans Hesse, "Von Anfang an ein "besonderes Hassobjekt"Zeugen Jehovas in den frühen Konzentrationslagern" in Jörg Osterloh, Kim Wünschmann (Hg.), *„der schrankenlosesten Willkür ausgeliefert" Häftlinge der frühen Konzentrationslager 1933-1936/37*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 2017, p. 289.

[733] Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 1987, 163,164.

[734] Oral history interview with Josef Niklasch and Margarette Niklasch, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.45 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0045.

As you are probably aware, the Bible Students have the following characteristics, incredibly favorable for us: Despite the fact that they refuse military service and any work in support of the war, a work which they consider to be "destructive," they are strongly opposed to the Jews as well as the Catholic Church and the pope. They are also remarkably realistic, do not drink and smoke, are very diligent and honest, and always keep their promises. Furthermore, they are excellent livestock breeders and farm workers. They do not pursue riches and possessions. It destroys their outlook on everlasting life. All of these are ideal characteristics, as can be generally stated that these truly convinced, idealistic Bible Students, like the Mennonites, have greatly desirable characteristics… Therefore, I request that a committee be formed to examine all Bible Students in the concentration camps who are known to be genuine so that we can separate them from those who joined the Bible Students during their imprisonment or shortly before being arrested for their own advantage. In this way, we can also avoid that the Bible Student groups are exploited for Communist purposes. We also avoid that people pretend to be Bible Students who, in reality, lack the characteristic of diligence and are lazy, as I have observed at some places, such as Fridolfing/Upper Bavaria. This [examination] will also afford us the opportunity to use, in the concentration camps, the real Bible Students in positions of trust that involve the danger of embezzling money or other material assets. These Bible Students have to be treated particularly well. This, in turn, will lay the foundation for using these German Bible Students in the future in Russia. As a result, we have the missionaries by means of whom we will be able to please the Russian people with the teachings of the Bible Students."[735]

Himmler's idea of using Jehovah's Witnesses in the Soviet Union had a first evaluation period in the concentration camp at Ravensbrück. Ravensbrück was also chosen to carry out sterilization experiments. It was also the camp where girls were chosen for the brothels that in the summer of 1943 Himmler ordered to established in the concentration camps under the designation of "special buildings." Ravensbrück was also the destination of those women prisoners who were pregnant. "Whenever women prisoners in outside labor details showed signs of pregnancy, they were shipped to Auschwitz if they were Jewish, otherwise to Ravensbrück. They were told that only these camps had suitable maternity wards and nursery schools."[736]

Among his conclusions, Himmler also realized what the reports of the specialists in sects of the Security Office were saying since years ago. The senselessness of the mistreatment and torture against this people.

"Nothing is accomplished by punishing them, since they only talk about it afterward with enthusiasm… Each punishment serves as a merit for the other world. That is why every true Bible Student will let himself be executed without hesitation… Every confinement in the dungeon, every pang of hunger, every period of freezing, every punishment, every blow is a merit with Jehovah."[737]

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[735] Quoted in Garbe, *op. cit.* 453.

[736] Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, 130, 224.

[737] Ibidem., 448.

used "on many occasions… the fanatical faith of Jehovah's Witnesses as an example" for his troops: "SS men must have the same fanatical and unshakable faith in the National Socialist ideal and in Adolf Hitler that the Witnesses had in Jehovah. Only when all SS men believed as fanatically in their own philosophy would Adolf Hitler's state be permanently secure. A *Weltanschauung* could only be established and permanently maintained by fanatics utterly prepared to sacrifice their egos for their ideas"".[738]

This change in the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses came along with a structural change of the whole concentration camps system. Stefan Hördler remarked that

"A major administrative turning point came in March 1942 when the IKL was reorganized as Amtsgruppe D in the newly established SS-WVHA (SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt, SS Economic Administration Main Office). The first year of the SS-WVHA's control of the camp was the most comprehensive effort on the part of the SS to improve conditions and to reduce prisoner mortality rates in order to increase the supply of prisoner labor for the armaments industry."[739]

Robert Steegmannchange has mentioned that there was an intern conflict related to the way how the concentration camps had to function. Between 1933 and 1937 the main function of the camp was repressive. It was the time shaped by the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA). In 1937/38 a second phase started when the camps started to had an economic function. A function that would impose in 1942 when the SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt (SS-WVHA) won the intern to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt. Beyond the repressive function, the whole system responded now to the economic interests of the nations. The most important names by Himmler were: Oswald Pohl and Albert Speer.[740]

A couple of months after the letter of Himmler about the Jehovah's Witnesses, Oswald Pohl had to deal with a problem related to this group. Detlef Garbe noticed:

"In September 1943, after several attempts by the Gestapo, the chief of the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration (WVHA), SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl, reprimanded the concentration camp administrations that they had allowed the good work performance of Jehovah's Witnesses to neglect their primary responsibility of keeping Jehovah's Witnesses under surveillance. On September 10, 1943, the WVHA issued a central interoffice decree regarding the "anti-state propaganda of the Bible Students in the concentration camps and at their places of work." In

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[738] Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom,* 452.

[739] Hördler, *Beyond the Racial State*, 484.

[740] Robert Steegmann, *Das Konzentrationslager Natzweiler-Struthof und seine Außenkommandosan Rhein und Neckar 1941-1945*, La Nuée Bleue, Straßburg, 2005, p.17.

this decree, Pohl summarized the current state of affairs as follows: “Therefore, I give instructions, as an experiment, to change this impossible situation by immediately separating the Bible Student prisoners at the concentration camps from one another. This separation should be performed in the way that two or three Bible Student prisoners are put into every block of other prisoners. By means of appropriate surveillance (police informers, etc.), it should be determined whether the Bible Student prisoners try to talk to other prisoners about their teachings or whether they try to continue their IBSA activities in any other ways. The first results in this regard should be submitted on October 15, 1943. Thereafter, reports should be made every three months.”[741]

Charlotte Müller recalled that the conditions of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the concentration camps became better in 1942. In May 1939 she was transferred from Lichtenburg to Ravensbrück where she was assigned to the laundry.

“Shortly after the outbreak of war, we were supposed to collect the swastika flag, which we refused to do. As a result, two of us, Mielchen Ernst and I, were put in the penal block. That was one of the most severe forms of punishment and meant that we had to perform hard work every day, even on Sunday, whatever the weather. Normally, the maximum sentence was three months, but we remained there for a year. Without Jehovah’s help, I would never have survived.”[742]

In 1942 she was taken from the punishment block to the home of one of the SS officer. All officers received at that time a housemaid. This officer was a complete other person there at home than the one he was at the camp. When the family escaped due to the allies, she was taken with. They were in the convoy of the SS covered with the red cross symbols. They were arrested by the Americans, the SS officer told her to stay with his family, wife and three children, but she did not have to. The woman of the officer said to the Americans that Charlotte was a prisoner so she was freed.[743] She recalled

“When in 1945 the allied troops moved closer, the family for whom I worked fled, and I had to accompany them. Together with other SS families, they formed a large convoy traveling westward. The last few days of the war were chaotic and fraught with danger. Finally, we met some American soldiers who allowed me to register at the next town as a free person. Whom did I meet there? Josef Rehwald and Gottfried Mehlhorn. They had learned that all the Witnesses from the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen had reached Schwerin following a perilous death march. So the three of us set out for that town, which was about 50 miles [75 km] away. What a joy it was in Schwerin to meet all those faithful brothers, survivors of the concentration camps, including Konrad Franke.”[744]

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[741] Garbe 435,436.

[742] Charlotte Müller “God is my refuge and strength” in Watchtower 1997 May 1st, pp. 26, 27

[743] Oral history interview with Charlotte Müller, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 June 20, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.44 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0044.

[744] Charlotte Müller “God is my refuge and strength” in Watchtower 1997 May 1st, p, 27

Jopie de Jong was born April 16, 1897. He was arrested 1942 by Dutch police. he was taken to several prisons. In The Haghe he was six weeks and became just three sandwich and had much hunger. He was beaten until being unconscious a time that a German came and asked him to sign the refusal of his faith. NSB officers were more cruel than the German in the camps. He was in Amersfoort camp. There was no food so they went to the forests to pick up nuts which were for the pigs. The extra food was shared with other Jehovah's Witnesses. He was taken to Vught then to Buchenwald. He saw everyday ten to twenty people died. He recalled: "One get use to such scenes." He was also in Henkel airplane factory.[745]

In September 1942, Willem Ketterlarij was assigned by Arthur Winkel as circuit overseer in Limbourg, Brabant and Zeeland. A region with an important presence of the Catholic Church. As circuit overseer he was the contact between the central office in Amsterdam and the local overseers. He had to visit 21 different places. They had a particular code to show that the place was safe, this code was a flower that had to placed in a particular place or the curtain had to be arranged in certain way. During this time 82 persons became Jehovah's Witnesses as result of his underground activities. At that time, the Germans called up Dutch males who were between 20 and 40 years old to work in the antiaircraft service. Those who refused were condemned by a judge to three weeks in prison. Willem was seven times arrested for this cause. Once the judge told him: "you are crazy. Why do you have to spend week in prison when you can only make two hours service?" Willem responded: "I would rather eat bread and water for half a years than sitting for two hours at the devil's table." Willem perceived the whole situation as a war. He recalled that, quoiting Ephesians, in a *Watchtower* of 1939 clearly stated that Jehovah's Witnesses were fighting a war, a spiritual war.[746]

He was also arrested in a train to Eindhoven by two Dutch policemen who told him that he was in the police journal as a person who was wanted for years. Among the things he was carrying on, there were food tickets for other Jehovah's Witnesses and in his socks he had many letters from the wives who wrote to their husbands who were underground. He also made falsifications of the food cards for his coreligionists. In his card stated that he was working on a ship so he can get food. In order to pass the border he also had a falsified passport. He recalled that at the police station, the

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[745] Oral history interview with Jopie de Jong, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 Sep 15, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.11 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0011

[746] Oral history interview with Willem Kettelarij, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.27 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0027

treatment was good, but slowly the Dutch policemen left the room and the commissar, who was member of the Dutch Nazi party tried to get information. He wanted to know where did he slept and ate. Willem responded that he was by other Jehovah's Witnesses but he would not betray them. The commissar told him that he bring him in a very difficult position. Then the commissar burned the letters and tickets and took the Bible. Willem asked him: "Would you burn a Bible?" The commissar replied: "No, I am a Catholic."

In 1944 Evert, Willem's brother, and three other Jehovah's Witnesses were taken to the house of a village mayor, who was a member of the NSB. There were also 2 American pilots there. They were all beaten, murdered and grabbed together. Evert saved his life because one of his brothers was among the NSB members who told the others not to kill Evert but to sent him to Germany as labor force in order to safe his life.[747]

Max Henning was active in Gouda together with more than 200 Jehovah's Witnesses. He was arrested and taken to the Rotterdam prison. He recalled:

I was thankful to have my Bible with me. I also had the book *Salvation*, portions of the book *Children*, and plenty of time to read all this literature. After six months I took seriously ill and had to go to a hospital. Before I left the prison, I hid the literature under my mattress. Later I learned that another Witness, Piet Broertjes, was transferred to my cell and discovered it. Thus the literature was being used to strengthen still others in the faith. When I recovered I was transferred to a prison in The Hague. While there I met Leo C. van der Tas, a law student who was in prison for resisting the Nazi occupation. He had never heard of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I had opportunity to witness to him. Sometimes he would wake me up in the middle of the night and ask questions. He could not hide his admiration for the Witnesses, especially after learning that we could be released if we would only sign a document renouncing our faith. After the war, Leo became a lawyer and fought dozens of legal cases for the Watch Tower Society that involved freedom of worship."[748]

In 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo and interrogated during 8 hours. They wanted to get the names of the other active Jehovah's Witnesses. Then he was sent to Vught, where there were 134 Jehovah's Witnesses under the leadership of Jona Hollof who was the "elder" there. From Vught he was then transferred to Buchenwald.[749]

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747 Oral history interview with Willem Kettelarij, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.27 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0027

748 "Jehovah Proved to Be With Me" by Max Henning in *Watchtower* 1996 June 1, p.22,23

749 Oral history interview with Max Henning, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 February 02, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.20 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0020.

Elizabeth Abt recalled that in Auschwitz the Kapos used to be chosen among the “asocials”, those who wore a black triangle. In 1944 during the last months she recalled that the crematoriums were not enough and the bodies started to be burnt outside which produced an unbearable smell.[7] “According to Rudolf Höß, the SS officers said female Jehovah’s Witnesses “were much in demand as servants in the homes of SS with large families.” In the households of SS families, Jehovah’s Witnesses not only performed cleaning jobs, which they were known to carry out with particular care, but they were also entrusted with meal preparation and childcare. With regard to the assignment of these highly esteemed housekeepers, the SS followed a strict hierarchical order of leadership. According to the “plan for the deployment of labor,” in the autumn of 1944, fifteen Bible Students from Auschwitz were assigned to households of SS officers, including the Auschwitz medical doctor, Dr. Eduard Wirths, as well as Josef Kramer, the commanding officer of Auschwitz II (Birkenau). These SS officers, as well as nine other SS leaders, each had “only” one housekeeper. Concentration camp commanding officer Rudolf Höß and SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr. Joachim Caesar, the leader of the agricultural estates of the Auschwitz concentration camp (who had the same rank as Höß), each had two Bible Students as housekeepers.”[751]

At the end of years, they had to leave Auschwitz and walk all the way to Gross-Rosen. She went also to Dora-Nordhausen and the British liberated her when she was on the way to Neuengamme. In Auschwitz she had worked for Dr. Eduard Wirths. Elizabeth Abt recalled that leaving Auschwitz Dr. Wirths was standing asking for the female Jehovah’s Witnesses and telling the personal of other camps, like Dora-Nordhausen, that they were special inmates who had to be treated different. She was liberated on April 11, 1945, and met his husband in Buchenwald, where he was imprisoned, after years of being separated.[752]

Thinking in those days, Elizabeth Abt recalled

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[750] Oral history interview with Elizabeth Abt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 August 01, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.89 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0089.

[751] Garbe 445,446.

[752] Oral history interview with Elizabeth Abt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 August 01, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.89 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0089.

"One get used to the circumstances. You do not think about freedom at all. We thought that Jehovah will remove Hitler and we will be freed. The year text for 1945 was: "Go make disciples." When the brothers in the camp heard about that they said that the year text was sign that they will be set free."[753]

She also recalled her attitude and the behavior of her coreligionists in the camp

"I never showed the SS my tears. I didn't show anything. When I walked to my sister, I was always upright, head up high as if the whole camp belonged to me." It was easy to recognize the Jehovah's Witnesses in the camp. The mother-in-law of one of the official for whom I worked told me one time: "you all, your eyes are different."[754]

When the Russians were coming closer Feliks Borys had to leave Stuffhof. The SS wanted to use the Jehovah's Witnesses to make trenches for the army. They refused to do this kind of job. Because Feliks was able to speak Polish and German, the SS came to him and said: "You stupid dog! I will shoot you. Why do you say that the others will not got to the trenches?" He replied: "Because I can speak German and Polish and they not. So I translate the faith they had." The SS beat them all who refused and then came to Feliks, beat him too, and said: "Because you are so smart, I will show that your God Jehovah is nothing. I am the boss here and I will put you in the bunker full with water." Feliks replied: "My God is much stronger than you, and all the people will see that you won't even take me to the bunker." Then the SS went mad and said: "You will bring all the dirt here and make mountains. Then I will shoot you so you will fall to the dirt with your dirty mouth and your God Jehovah would not help you." He said: "The people will see that my God is much stronger than you." Feliks recalled that at that time he heard a kind of voice in his mind that told him not to be afraid. The SS took his time, his voice and face changed. He said then: "I can see that your faith in your God is very strong. Go to the barrack and we will tell you later what you should do."[755]

A group of female Jehovah's Witnesses used to bring some food to those places in Poland where they knew there were coreligionists imprisoned. Four of them brought a package to the place where Feliks Borys was. The SS tried to use this chance to force the Jehovah's Witnesses to change their attitudes. The SS said: "Four of your sister brought this package with food. You cannot have

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753 Oral history interview with Elizabeth Abt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 August 01, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.89 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0089.

754 Ibidem.

755 Oral history interview with Feliks Borys, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1994 April 13, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.74 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0074.

the food today. Tomorrow you go and build the trenches and then you get the food." The Jehovah's Witnesses, however, remain in their attitude.[756]

In another occasion, a SS asked him if he knows the regulations of the camp and then asked him: Have not you read in the Bible? Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar? You should obey." Feliks replied: "Only in this case, you know it goes against Jehovah's God." The SS replied: If I give you an order. Will you obey or not?" He said: "No, if it goes against God's law, I will never obey you." "Nobody has killed you? I will kill you. I will shoot you," the SS stated. Three days later, they met again. The SS told him: "Tell me the true, do you pray lately more?" Feliks said: "I pray all the time." The SS said: "No, no. Tell me if you lately pray more or not." He said: "Yes." The SS then replied: "This is why my conscience bother me all the time. I have no peace. I will make peace with you. I am the doctor. Your God Jehovah sent me here to safe you and your brothers in this camp. What I eat, you and your brothers will also eat." Then he ordered to his housemaid to cook for all Jehovah's Witnesses.[757] As the Russians came closer, this doctor together with a girlfriend of the SS shoot themselves in the woods.

Ernst Wauer, who at this time was in the concentration camp of Neuegamme, recalled that the political prisoners were irritated with the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses. They had books, *Watchtowers* and diary texts. They were divided in 7 groups and each group had a Bible. Their main job, preaching to other prisoners. He described the situation as follows:

"When I arrived, there was a group of some 20 Witnesses, with no Bible or other publications. I prayed to Jehovah that he might help me use the things I had learned in Sachsenhausen to strengthen the brothers in Neuengamme. As a first step, I recalled scriptures and selected them as daily texts. Then provisions were made for meetings in which I could explain thoughts from *Watchtower* articles I had read in Sachsenhausen. When new brothers arrived, they reported the things they had learned from recent *Watchtowers*.

By 1943 the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Neuengamme had risen to 70. Jehovah's Witnesses came to be preferred to do work outside the camp, such as cleaning up after air raids. As a result, we were able to bring Bibles, copies of *The Watchtower*, and some of the Society's books and brochures secretly into the camp. We also received parcels by mail, containing additional literature as well as red wine and unleavened bread for the annual Memorial. Jehovah evidently blinded those who checked the parcels.

Scattered as we were among different barracks, we formed seven *Watchtower* Study groups, each with a conductor and a substitute. Copies of *The Watchtower* were secretly made in the camp commandant's office, where I worked temporarily. Therefore, each study group received at least one complete issue for the weekly study. Not one meeting was canceled. In addition, each morning on the parade ground, the groups got a copy of the daily text, including a comment taken from *The Watchtower*.

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[756] Oral history interview with Feliks Borys, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1994 April 13, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.74 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0074.

[757] Ibidem.

Once the SS had a holiday, so we were able to hold a half-day convention and to discuss how to preach in the camp. We divided the camp into territories and tried systematically to reach the prisoners with the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) Since the prisoners came from various countries, we made multilingual testimony cards that explained our work and the Kingdom. We preached so zealously that political prisoners complained: "Wherever you go, all you hear is talk about Jehovah!" A field service report of our activity even reached the branch office in Bern, Switzerland."[758]

He recalled that In 1944 the Gestapo made an investigation of all concentration camps

Our literature depot in Neuengamme was not detected, but a few things were found with Karl Schwarzer and me. For three days we were interrogated and beaten. When the ordeal ended, both of us were covered with bruises."[759]

From Neuengamme, Ernst Wauer was transferred to Schandelager in the near of Braunschweig.[760]

Max Liebster was also among the prisoners in Neuengamme. He was transferred from Sachsenhausen to Neuengamme, which was a working camp. He recalled that the Jehovah's Witnesses had hidden Bibles in the cloth or in the straw. The Jehovah's Witnesses had special jobs in this camp not like him who had to work with Jewish people. As an outsider he described the barracks of the Jehovah's Witnesses as tidy and clean. One evening, he had a conversation with one of the Jehovah's Witnesses. He explained him what was the meaning of the promise that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob received that all nations will be blessed throughout their offspring. He also explained 352 prophecies related to the Messiah and how he will save the world. Max Liebster was convinced then that these people "were doing God's will." He was a person who was always looking at the sky in order to have a connection with God so he could receive peace in his heart and mind. The conditions of Neuengamme were better than in Sachsenhausen. He worked in the dock boats.

In 1943 all Jews were taken to Auschwitz for extermination. Young prisoners like Max Liebster were sent to one of the 30 working camps in Auschwitz. The camps were dedicated to make bricks for the construction. The day started with a slice of bread, margarine, some cheese and artificial coffee. It was counted twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. When someone was missing, the whole camp had to wait outside until the missing prisoner was founded and than hanged in front of everyone. In Auschwitz he found a SS who came from the near of Mannheim and

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[758] Ernst Wauer, "What a joy to sit at Jehovah's table!" in *Watchtower* 1991, August 1, pp. 28,29

[759] Ibidem.

[760] Oral history interview with Ernst Wauer, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1988 October 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.68 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0068.

recognized the accent of Max and helped him. Later on he sent Max to Buchenwald in order to save his life. He put him in the cafeteria where he get better food and recover his strength. The SS was crying like a boy one time telling that he had to continue killing people because otherwise he will be killed. At this time in the cafeteria some people came to repair the electricity and other things and he recognized that they were Jehovah's Witnesses because they had a purple triangle. There were two Jehovah's Witnesses there and Max used to put extra food by them taking in advantage his place in the cafeteria. In January 1945 the Russians were coming closer. They walked 45 km from Buna (Monowitz) to Clauwitz. Max was then transferred to Buchenwald.

Buchenwald was at that time overloaded. Many prisoners suffered typhus. He saw some Jehovah who were working at the kitchen and they helped him to get out of this place infected with typhus, a so called little camp. The Jehovah's Witnesses asked the supervisor of the barrack to place him somewhere else. In Buchenwald there were 400 barracks and each barrack had two Jehovah's Witnesses. The responsible of the barrack where he was sent came from his own town. This *Kapo* gave him also extra food. Another Jew was in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses and also talked about the Bible. He and Max were finally baptized in the Falknerhaus of Buchenwald, where Léon Blum lived. One of the servant of Léon Blum was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. This villa was the first place where all Jehovah's Witnesses came together. Max recalled that

"once that all Jews were taken to other camps before the Americans arrived, they remained hiding in order to discuss the revelations of the Bible while the train left. It was announced then that all Jehovah's Witnesses, over 100, had to go to the barrack number one. Willi Töllner gave a public talk while the Americans were outside fighting against the Nazis. The talk took 2 hours."[761]

Claude Blanvin, born on November 26, 1925, lived in a French village of 700 habitants. On June 15, 1940, the Germans entered in his village. All men were obligated to force labor. Claude's brother refused and went underground joying the Resistance. Claude continued with his working life and helping in the network of the Resistance. He had to prepare the weapons for use. On August 17, 1944, he and his brother were caught by the Germans and taken to the prison in Compiègne. From there he was transferred to Royal Lieu and finally he was in the last convoy to Buchenwald. There was no barrack for them in Buchenwald so they were sent to the small camp. They had to

[761] Oral history interview with Max Liebster, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1991 February 05, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.34 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0034.

sleep outside. After the Canadians bombed Buchenwald on August 24, 1944,[762] they were transferred to the barrack 47, where they have to sleep at the floor in the pus. They all thought that there was no go home, it was a death penalty. After the bombing they have to fill the holes and there was a person in the middle, this person said that they were at the end of times and that God will destroy this world. Claude wanted to hear what his said. He questioned himself: Who are these men? Someone told us that they were the persons who refuse to serve Hitler. He realized that they were Jehovah's Witnesses because they were different, because they tried to help the other prisoners. Claude was then taken to Bochum and Dortmund.[763] In 1953 he finally became a Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Jehovah's Witnesses played also an important role in of the most particular projects of Heinrich Himmler: the Wewelsburg castle. In May 1940 Max Hollweg was transferred from Buchenwald to Niederhagen, in order to work in Wewelburg. The first working commando arrived at Wewelsburg one year before, in May 1939. The organization of the commando was in charge of the personal in Sachsenhausen. Due to the different attempts of escaping and the effect it had in the local population, Himmler decided in February 1940 to replace those prisoners who were there, "criminals" ones, for Jehovah's Witnesses. A total of 200 Jehovah's Witnesses were taken there from Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald and were putted in an extra barrack which was constructed in the "small camp."[764] Max Hollweg came to the Arbeitskommando in Wewelsburg with the prisoner number 13573. He made all kind of work. He worked there for 5 years. He remarked that until 1943 the situation was hard. 73 pro cent of the prisoners died during this time. Among them 21 Jehovah's Witnesses passed away. At the beginning of 1942, there were more than 500 prisoners in Wewelsburg. On March 28, 1942, a transport of Sachsenhausen arrived with 300 prisoners so the total number of prisoners in the camp ascended to more than 800 prisoners. In the coming months, the number of prisoners reduced drastically due to the high level of mortality. Around 200 prisoners died.[765] On April 23, 1943, the SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Haas, commandant of the camp, sent a letter to the police station in Düsseldorf saying that no more prisoners had to be sent to the camp. In the next weeks, the prisoners of Niederhagen were relocated in Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and

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[762] https://www.buchenwald.de/en/462/

[763] Oral history interview with Claude Blanvin, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1992 April 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.6 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0006.

[764] Kirsten John-Stucke, (2009), „Die Zeugen Jehovas im KZ in Wewelsburg" in Jan Erik Schulte (ed.) *Die SS, Himmler und die Wewelsburg*, Ferdinand Schöningh, 338.

[765] Ibidem, 339.

Dachau. On April 30, 1943, the camp was officially closed.[766] Only 42 prisoners, 40 Jehovah's Witnesses and 2 political prisoners, remained in the camp. This remnant commando was now under the supervision of Buchenwald and remained until the end of 1943 under the direction of SS-Unterscharführer Otto Jacob, in 1944 SS-Sturmmann Schiering and later SS-Rottenführer Skuppi.[767]

The role of Jehovah's Witnesses in the prisoners population was central. Between February and September 1940 they were the only group of prisoners. They were very present in the administration of the camp as *Lagerältester*, *Lagerschreiber*, *Blockälteste* and *Kapos*. The first *Lagerältester* was Georg Klohe, succeed by Otto Martens until end of 1943. Lately Willi Wilke was *Lagerältester* and Wettin Müller *Lagerschreiber*.[768] In May 1940 there were 220 Jehovah's Witnesses in the camp, 306 in 1941. The majority of them were workers and handcrafts. This point can be explained by the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses had an important presence in such kind of works and also Himmler was looking for labor force from Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen with the clear objective of building Wewelsburg. Of 306 known cases, 19 Jehovah's Witnesses died in Niederhagen.[769] One of SS was a known person of Max Hollweg and helped him to sustain and help other Jehovah's Witnesses.[770]

After the labor camp was closed in April 1943, the prisoners stole a typewriter and secretly started to produce publications for the underground activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses.[771] Since December 1942 the elder of the camp, Otto Martens was able to smuggle regularly literature in the camp. The contact to the outside underground network was made through a friend of Heinrich Schürmann, named Paula. She visited Heinrich in Wewelsburg and in the four weeks she spent in the town near the camp, they met secretly in the forest and at the train station. He asked for „spiritual food" and they arranged a big stone in the wall of the market garden which had to function as secret mailbox. Paula was not a Jehovah's Witnesses, but she got in contact with Anna Schulz in Bad Salzuflen, 60 kilometers north of Wewelsburg. Accidentally, Anna Schulz met Sophie Horstmeier, who was spending her vacations at Bad Salzuflen. Sophie Horstmeier was the courier

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766 Ibidem, 341.

767 Ibidem, 342.

768 Ibidem, 342, 343.

769 Ibidem, 344, 345.

770 Oral history interview with Max Hollweg, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 April 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.22 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0022.

771 Ibidem.

of the underground organization in Eastern Westfalen. Since the beginning of 1941, Julius Engelhard and Auguste Hettkamp organized the illegal printing of the *Watchtower* in Sterkrade, Oberhausen. Sophie Horstmeier was in charge of distributing 60 *Watchtowers* in her region. The courier who took the copies to Wewelsburg were Sandor Bayer from Hereford and Martha Tünker. Every four weeks, they went to Welwelsburg to leave the post in the secret mailbox and at the same time take the correspondence from the inmates which were sent later to the relatives. The prisoners Hermann Struthoff and Heinrich Schürmann collected the post and introduced it in the camp. So functioned the circulation until the beginning of 1943, when the printing in Oberhausen was interrupted. On April 3, 1943, Julius Engelhard and August Hettkamp were arrested together with more than 80 people. One year later, on June 1, 1944, Sophie Horstmeier was also arrested. Sophie Horstmeiner was judged together with other 83 Jehovah's Witnesses by the Higher Regional Court of Hamm in summer 1944. She was sentenced to a long time in a penitentiary. Julius Engelhard, Auguste Hettkamp, Klara Stoffels and Wilhelm Bischoff did not have the same luck and were judged by a People's court under the charge of *Wehrkraftzersetzung* (demoralization of the armed forces) and sentenced to death. The execution took place at Plötzensee in August 1944.[772] After the close of the printing in Oberhausen, the JW of Wewelsburg undertook the copying of illegal literature. Erich Polster found a way to print literature.[773]

Julius Engelhard and Narciso Riet were two central figures in the reorganization of the underground activities after the beginning of war, not only in Germany but also in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Detlef Garbe stated

"In a way similar to the efforts of Cyranek and Engelhard, Narciso Riet, Wilhelm Schumann, and Franz Fritsche directed the underground activities of their groups. Born in Mühlheim (Ruhr), Germany, Riet had Italian parents; he was also called Franzl and tried, in close cooperation with the Oberhausen group, to reestablish the underground activities in Austria that had not been resumed since the wave of arrests in June 1940. The considerable number of arrests had seriously weakened the Austrian IBSA branch so that these efforts were not very successful. But at the beginning of 1942, Narciso Riet was able to resume the IBSA activities in Czechoslovakia, which had also been, for the most part, discontinued in 1940. Together with Marie Teubel, a thirty-year-old Bible Student from Prague, he reorganized the Bible Student groups in Prague, Pilsen, and several other locations. (…) Narciso Riet traveled between the various parts of the German Reich and was even able to reactivate the IBSA groups in the southern and western parts of Germany. He also organized and coordinated the increasingly growing network of smuggling publications to the Bible Student prisoners in the various concentration camps. (…) Riet's efforts of reorganizing the IBSA groups in the southern parts of Germany, as well as Engelhard's activities in the western parts of Germany, served as motivation for other Jehovah's Witnesses. In December 1941 Georg Halder from Augsburg was released after almost six years of imprisonment in

772 Kirsten John-Stucke, *Op. cit.*, 349.

773 Ibidem, 352.

various penal institutions and concentration camps. Encouraged through these and other examples, he made arrangements for a reorganization of the Augsburg IBSA group. (…) From Ausburg, Georg Halder extended his area of activity throughout Swabia and the western parts of Württemberg. However, at the beginning of 1943 Halder was arrested with approximately fifteen other Jehovah's Witnesses from Ausburg. At the end of January/beginning of February 1943, a large number of Jehovah's Witnesses were also arrested in Munich and other locations in southern Germany."[774]

On April 2, 1945, Max Hollweg was finally freed by the Americans after surviving several attempts of the SS to kill him and the whole Kommando of Jehovah's Witnesses.[775] After the war, the group of Jehovah's Witnesses in Buchenwald denounced that the leader of the Wewelsburg's group had mistreated some Jehovah's Witnesses who were transferred to Buchenwald. In April 1943, 50 Jehovah's Witnesses were taken from Wewelsburg to Buchenwald, where they were received by the group of Wilhelm Töllner who, after the liberation, reported that Otto Martens had mistreatment these 50 members. Max Hollweg however defended Otto Martens in his autobiography.[776]

Another central actor in the underground activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses during the last years of the war was Franz Fritsche. Detlef Garbe described what happened in those years as follow.

"The Bible Students at that time had been part of a large Berlin IBSA group under the leadership of Franz Fritsche. After the IBSA groups that Engelhard had coordinated in the western parts of Germany were destroyed in the spring of 1943, the Spree River Bible Students were responsible for producing the prohibited Bible Student publications. Between June and August 1943 they printed nearly one thousand copies of each issue of the Watchtower in Berlin, in a garden shed. These Watchtowers were distributed to various groups and individuals throughout the entire territory of the German Reich. From August 1943 on, the Berlin IBSA group also organized the distribution of the publications that Wilhelm and Gerhard Schumann printed in Magdeburg. During the previous years, Wilhelm Schumann, a forty-three-year-old chiropractor from Magdeburg, had used his office as a center for the underground activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, and between 1924 and 1933, Schumann had supervised the printing department at the German branch office. The group around Franz Fritsche maintained close contact with their fellow believers at the Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen concentration camps. Over a period of about eighteen months, they regularly provided these fellow believers with the latest *Watchtowers* and other publications by way of prisoners who worked in outside labor details and other places outside of the concentration camps. (…) During January and February 1944 the Gestapo discovered the IBSA groups under leadership of Fritsche and Schumann. In November 1944 the chief public prosecutor at the Berlin Court of Justice levied charges on the grounds of "involvement in an antimilitary association" and "demoralization of the armed forces" against seventy-six Bible Students who had distributed and received publications. (the list of the

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[774] Garbe, 336, 337

[775] The history of Wewelsburg have to be included here https://www.wewelsburg.de/de/gedenkstaette-1933-1945/75-Jahre-Befreiung-des-Konzentrationslagers-in-Wewelsburg/Themen-75-Jahre-Befreiung/7-Die-letzten-Tage-der-SS-Burgmannschaft-in-Wewelsburg.php

[776] Kirsten John-Stucke, *op. cit.*, 343.

persons judged is in Zipfel documents) (…) In October 1944 the People's Court instituted proceedings against "the main offenders, the writers of the recent publications, the functionaries and their collaborators," including Franz Fritsche and Wihelm Schumann. Fritsche, Schumann, and Johannes Schindler, a forty-three-year-old factory inspector who had performed courier services for the IBSA, were sentenced to death. The sentences were not carried out. (Note 84, p. 664: "Johannes Schindler spent an extended period of time in the death cell at the Brandenburg-Görden penitentiary. He was later transferred to the prison in Halle from which American soldiers liberated him in April 1945.) During 1944/45 the Bible Students were no longer able to organize their activities in an effective way throughout Germany. There is no evidence of Bible Student activities during the final years of the war."[777]

Hermine Schmidt was in connection with the group of Berlin. She was born in 1925 in Danzig. The parents came in contact with JW 1919, her mother was always very interested in the Bible. She searched for answers to biblical questions. Her time at school was not good because of the peer pressure, for example the Hitler salute was made by everyone. Her parents explained that *Heil* or salvation comes from God not from Hitler. The convinced Nazi teachers were with the time better to her as the bystander teachers. All the good people she knew were imprisoned, taken away and murdered. To hear about what happened to them made her stronger in her conviction to defend her faith. Even when she had the best notes, she can not go to a better school. They became the literature from Berlin, and she worked with a "young brother" printing and distributing literature. The fear she had was if she can remain loyal under pressure. "But then you realize that the force come not from yourself." Together with her mother and father she was imprisoned in 1943. Seven men came to the house and they were taken to an old tower, where the Gestapo had a headquarter. In the car, the mother said: "the time is short, but the eternity is long and it is ours." They were all placed in a tower, where they were in small cell with no place. Her man was hard beaten in the night he arrived to this tower. She was sent to Stutthof. The ambiance of this camp was very hard, it was grey and desolated. The only thing that Stuttfof had was the love and the source of energy of the brotherhood. She was there only one year. Every curse was transformed in a blessing. She became punishment work. There were some Polish Jehovah's Witnesses. When the Russians came, they were evacuated to the north. In Denmark there were 14 survivors. The worst experience in Lager was to see the Jews from the baltic states who were transferred with children to Stutthof. They were separated from the parents and after some time, there were no more children. Some of the prostitutes were interested in the message of Jehovah's Witnesses because they were among the other prisoners. There were just 20 Jehovah's Witnesses in Stutthof. In 1943 they were judged by a tribunal and then were imprisoned in individual cells for 6 months. They were 7 in a cell for one

[777] Garbe, 339,340.

person. After the pre-trial custody, they were judged in Danzig. Due to his notes and some other factors, the tribunal applied all the norms for youths and she was sent free. But at the moment she was freed, the Gestapo waited for her, and put it one more time in the tower and then to Stutthof. The mother used to resume a *Watchtower* in a poem to transform in order to retain the information. She wrote also in a poem the history of mankind. When someone came to the shop and said *Heil Hitler*, she used to say *Guten Tag*. The Gestapo traced the way from Berlin to Danzig and so they were caught up. About the question if she signs the declaration of refusal of the faith, she said that there is things in life where we ask no question, they are so. "I was happy with my conscious and I felt myself free because of no signing it", she recalled. "There were people free outside who were prisoners and I was imprisoned but free". She added: "I was intern free. One time, a SS officer tried to have something with her and she beat him and went. He said: "you are stupid, we do not do that with a SS officer" and he said something about Jehovah. She responded: "now that you use the name of my God, you are going to see who is my God." Sometime later, he made an error and he was also a prisoner. The song "The way to paradise goes through Golgotha" was among those things which encouraged Hermine to continue. She wrote all these songs during she worked as secretary in bureau. [778]

The "young brother" who worked with Hermine printing and distributing literature was Horst Schmidt. He went underground in 1940 and was "on the most-wanted in the list of the police." He was hidden in the house of his foster mother Emmi Zehden in Berlin Gatow and in the greenhouse of Otto and Jasmine Muß in Berlin Staaken. Together with Gerhard Liebold, Horst Schmidt worked for the Berlin group of Jehovah's Witnesses duplicating the *Watchtower* and other publications. In December 1942, Werner Gaßner, who deserted the Wehrmacht, joined this small cell. On December 28, 1942, Wener Gaßner, Gerhard Liebold, Horst Schmidt, Otto and Jasmine Muß together with other five Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested. The Reich Military Court sentenced Werner Gaßner and Gerhard Liebold to death. The executions took place in Brandenburg-Görden. Gaßner was executed on April, 9, 1943 and Liebold on May, 6, 1943. Horst Schmidt was also sentenced to death but by the People's Court.[779]

The foster mother of Horst Schmidt, Emmi Zehden, was also executed. Garbe described how the execution of Emmi Zehden took place

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[778] Oral history interview with Hermine Schmidt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 July 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.87 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0087

[779] Garbe 338, 664 note 80.

"On November 19, 1943, the Berlin newspaper deliverer Emmi Zehden had to appear before the judges of the People's Court. She was accused of "treasonable favoritism toward the enemy and evasion of compulsory military service." Between 1940 and 1942, "Zehden had provided in Berlin a hiding place and food for three people of her association eligible for military service and thus helped them to evade compulsory military service." The court sentenced the forty-three-year-old woman to death and "permanent loss of civil rights." (…) After more than six months, Dr. Herbert Klemm, who in the meantime had been promoted to the position of secretary of state at the RJM, ordered her execution, "with the authorization of the Führer." (…) On Friday, June 9, 1944, Emmi Zehden was transferred to the Plötzensee prison. At one o'clock in the afternoon, ninety minutes after she had been officially informed of her execution, she was taken away."[780]

Horst Schmidt was taken from the penitentiary of Tegel to Brandenburg where he was placed in a cell together with a French and a Polish prisoner. He recalled that the communication with the French mate was easier because of the hate that the Polish prisoner had against Germans. There were around 120 prisoners in Brandenburg. On April 20, 1945, the birthday of Hitler, the prisoners were asked if they were wearing glasses and if so they had to leave the glasses. Then Horst Schmidt knew that executions would take place because that was the signal. The French and Polish together with other 26 prisoners were on that day executed. The watchman read the name of other two prisoners and then look at his paper and close the door. Schmidt remembered: "What kind of feeling did I have? I do not know. Was it a relief? Was it a signal that I can continue alive one more week ? I do not know." The cell was quiet without the other two prisoners then a new worker at the prison asked him if he wanted to have fellow believers. Together with the new inmates in the cell, they had the goal of just surviving seven days more waiting that in this time the Russians came. The day of the liberation, Horst Schmidt was outside of the prison and after seeing the view outside decided to went back to his cell until a Soviet soldier came to him and told him to go out. He recalled that :

There were other inmates who were the whole time talking about what they wanted to do outside. We, Jehovah's Witnesses, had a complete different attitude. We knew why we were there. We had taken the decision of being there because of our faith. This attitude helped us to see our reality from a complete different perspective.[781]

Another Jehovah's Witnesses who ended up in Brandenburg was Joseph Niklasch, who was finally transferred from a concentration camp to a reformatory in Brandenburg in 1943/44. They replaced prisoners who were sent to Mauthausen and died on the way there. He recalled that in Brandenburg

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[780] Garbe 346, 347.

[781] Oral history interview with Horst Schmidt, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1995 July 25, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.88 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0088.

there were Socialists, Communists, criminals and two Jehovah's Witnesses. Six weeks before the end of the war, officials of the Wehrmacht and SS came and offered the prisoners to be part of the Waffen SS. Everyone but the Jehovah's Witnesses accepted the offer. Later on an airport in the near of the reformatory was bombed and everyone who were enlisted in the Waffen SS died. Joseph had to stay in Berlin Spandau during three months in order to recover and then he was sent free. [782]

After spending some time in Vught, Louis Piechota was sent to Sachsenhausen in a three days trip without eating and drinking.

Herded like cattle into small freight cars, 80 in each, we were forced to stand for three days and nights without food, water or any means of relieving ourselves. Finally the train reached Oranienburg, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Berlin. We then had to march on the double for 10 kilometers (6 miles) to the Heinkel aircraft factories, with SS dogs biting our heels if we slowed down. We Witnesses managed to keep together. Shortly afterward we were all transferred to the nearby Sachsenhausen concentration camp. There, my purple triangle was accompanied by a new number: 98827."[783]

In Sachsenhausen, he was put in the barrack and then assigned to an Außrekmomando but he had the chance to be sent to a bakery. He make the bread for the camp. He was in Sachsenhausen between 1944 and 1945. The worst things in the camp were the hunger and cold. At his arrival in Sachsenhausen he was welcomed by the German Jehovah's Witnesses who were there. They provided him cloth and at 6 pm they gave him something to eat. Every evening they discussed the Bible text of the day. He was assigned to work in the bakery which allow him to help the other Jehovah's Witnesses providing them with food. Comparing his situation with other prisoners, Louis recalled that the Russians were all put in a barrack without anything to eat so when someone died the other prisoners ate up the body. Food started to be the main problem the last months of the war.
In April 1945 the so called death march started

"From Sachsenhausen, we were due to march some 250 kilometers (155 miles) to Lübeck. Departure was scheduled for the night of April 20-21, 1945. The prisoners were first to be assembled by nationality. How thankful to Jehovah we were, therefore, when all Jehovah'sWitnesses were ordered to assemble in the tailor shop! There were 230 of us, from six different countries. The Witnesses who were sick in the infirmary, occupants of which were to be killed before the evacuation, were saved by brothers at the risk of their lives and were carried to the tailor shop. (…) The various nationalities left in groups of 600 prisoners—first the Czechs, then the Poles, and so forth—some 26,000 in all. The group of Jehovah's Witnesses was the last to leave. The SS had given us a cart to haul. I learned later that it contained

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[782] Oral history interview with Josef Niklasch and Margarette Niklasch, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 May 26, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.45 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0045.

[783] Louis Piéchota, "I survived the "Death March" in *Watchtower* 1980 August 15, p. 6,7

some of the loot the SS had plundered from among the prisoners. They knew Jehovah's Witnesses would take none of it. That cart turned out to be a blessing, because sick and elderly ones were able to sit on top and rest for a while during the march. When one got his strength back, he would get down and walk and another Witness, too weak to follow, would take his place, and so on throughout the two weeks that the "death march" lasted."[784]

The way to Lübeck was not easy

"The first 50 kilometers (30 miles) were a nightmare. The Russians were so near that we could hear the guns. Our SS taskmasters were scared of falling into the hands of the Soviets. So that first lap, Sachsenhausen to Neuruppin, turned out to be a forced march that lasted 36 hours. (…) All this time, the Russians were advancing on one side and the Americans on the other. By April 25, the situation was so confused that our SS guards no longer knew where the Soviets or the U.S. troops were. So they ordered the whole column of prisoners to camp in a wooded area for four days. While there, we ate nettles, roots and tree bark. This delay proved to be providential, for had they kept us marching, we would have reached Lübeck before the German army collapsed and would have ended up at the bottom of Lübeck Bay."[785]

Louis described the last night they were in the hands of the SS as follows

"On April 29, the SS decided to move the prisoners on toward Lübeck. They hoped to get us there before the Russian and American forces joined up. The march continued for several days, and by that time we were approaching Schwerin, a city located some 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Lübeck. Once again, the SS ordered us to hide in the woods. It turned out to be our last night of captivity. But what a night! The Russians and the Americans were closing in on the remnants of the German forces and shells were whistling over our heads from both sides. An SS officer advised us to walk on unguarded to the American lines, about six kilometers (4 miles) away. But we were suspicious of this and, after having prayed to Jehovah for guidance, we finally decided to spend the night in the woods. We later learned that those prisoners who had accepted this officer's proposal and had tried to get through to the American lines had been shot down by the SS. About 1,000 of them died that night. How thankful we were for Jehovah's protection! However, that last night in Crivitz Wood was anything but peaceful. As the fighting grew nearer, our SS guards got panicky. Some of them slipped away into the night, while others hid their weapons and uniforms, donning the striped garb taken from dead prisoners. Those that were recognized were shot by prisoners who had found the weapons left behind. The confusion was indescribable! Men were running hither and thither and bullets and shells were flying everywhere. But we Witnesses kept together and weathered the storm under Jehovah's protecting hand until the next morning. We expressed our gratitude to Jehovah in a Resolution adopted on May 3, 1945. We had marched some 200 kilometers (124 miles) in 12 days. Of the 26,000 prisoners who left the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on that "death march," barely more than 15,000 survived. Yet every last one of the 230 Witnesses who had left the camp came through that ordeal alive. What a wonderful deliverance!"[786]

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[784] Ibidem, p. 6,7,8

[785] Ibidem, p. 8,9

[786] Ibidem, p. 10

Klaas de Vries was also in the death march from Sachsenhausen. In 1940 he was in Groeningen when he had to go underground because the police started to arrest all Jehovah's Witnesses. He was arrested but his wife, Maria was able to escape. He was transported to Sachsenhausen with Jews and got in touch with a Jewish professor in the travel. When they came to Sachsenhausen, the other Jehovah's Witnesses were watching to the newcomers and identify him as a brother. One of them embraced him even when they did not know each other. He was put on a brick factory whose name was Klinger. The conditions were very bad, many died there and he could not make it anymore so he prayed to Jehovah that he wanted to die. The brothers were praying everyday because they knew he was the only Jehovah's Witnesses in this outer camp and then when he came with a charge of smell bodies to the camp, they recognized him and asked the doctor if he can stay in the camp with the rest of brothers. When there was a check up, Klaas explained to an SS man what had happened and the man was very surprised. Klaas thought he would be shot but this was the only way. The SS man said that as soon as he recovered he would go back to Klinger. But when he recovered, the Jehovah's Witnesses who supervised the hospital told him he was going to be a butler for a German officer who had been badly wounded, and he was not sent to Klinger. Klaas had biblical discussions with the officer every Sunday at 11:00 A.M. At one point, the officer said that when the war ended he would become a Witness. Talking about the death march, Klaas recalled that when the march started, one of the SS officers brought six girls who had worked in the households dressed in men's clothing to the Jehovah's Witnesses, so they could be protected and return to Holland. The marchers were surrounded by SS officers on motorcycles. Arthur Winkler was carried on a cart. Not one Witness died on the march. They walked 400 kilometers in 14 days. At night they wrapped themselves in blankets under trees. The plan was to bring the Witnesses to a lake where there boats laced with ammunition, so they would be exploded together with the boats. But then, the Americans and the Canadians liberated them. Along the way they got food from the villagers. The Witnesses held on to each other so they wouldn't fall down because if you fell down, they were shotted. At the end of two weeks, the commanding officer told them they were free and gave them three loaves of bread and three sausages. This was cut into tiny pieces, as small as dice, and distributed. Each was allowed three pieces a day but it was distributed one at a time. After they ate, they sang and thanked Jehovah. Then they rested. When they were liberated by the Americans and Canadians, they were washed and housed in big stables and well taken care of. Only then were the six girls discovered. The Witnesses went out to the villages and preached, and the people gave them chocolates and food.

Maria, Klaas' wife, was transported to Ravensbrück. The first day, they were beaten and kicked by SS men. There were many female Witnesses from Germany and Holland. They were

given zebra uniforms. At the beginning Maria was separated from her coreligionists but later she was brought together with them. Maria had to do a lot of cleaning, carrying buckets of water, also brick laying in the streets. She also had to crush the remains from the ovens with hammers. The work day started at 3:00 in the morning and ended at 6:00 at night, and only then they were allowed to eat. A soup which was mostly water with bits of cabbage. After a while, some of the Jehovah's Witnesses who were working in the laboratory discovered that sometimes there were pieces of meat in the soup; it was from human flesh. They told each other not to eat it. It helped Maria to talk to the other Witnesses about the Bible and Jehovah. She was very outspoken and said what she thought and she received many beatings because of it. The Jews and the Witnesses received the worst treatment but everyone was treated badly. The German Witnesses were a great encouragement. They had spent a lot of time in the camp and were used to it. They said: "We survived all this time up until now, so if we did, you should too." They were always looking forward to see new Witnesses because they had the latest information. There were 150 women in a barrack, two or three people to one bed. It was very dirty because some of the prisoners urinated in the bed. Male and female SS were always in charge. It got worse in 1945 near the end of the war because the Nazis couldn't stand that they were going to lose. They took revenge on the prisoners. Maria doesn't remember who liberated them but when they were, they danced and cried. The Red Cross was there and they treated them very well.[787]

Writing about the Jehovah's Witnesses in Austria Gerti Malle formulated a sociological explanation of their social behavior based on the term Sense of Coherence, coined by the sociologist Aaron Antonovsky. The sense of coherence consists of three domains: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. About comprehensibility Malle pointed out that the persecution in Austria was something waited by Jehovah's Witnesses because they knew what was happening in Germany. Moreover, it was written in the Bible that the true followers of Christ had to face persecution. It was then no surprise and it was even understandable or comprehensive why the state decided to ban them. Speaking about manageability, the author mentions the different resources that they had in places like concentration camps. For example, it is to mention the solidarity of coreligionists in actions like smuggling literature. About the meaningfulness, the author mentioned the perspective the individuals had of being free, of winning the battle, of reaching a better relationship with God.

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[787] Oral history interview with Maria and Klaas de Vries, interviewer Buckley, Robert, interview made on 1990 September 3, Holocaust Museum Washington D.C. Oral History | Accession Number: 1992.A.0124.13 | RG Number: RG-50.028.0013.

Malle's study is one of the latest attempts to find a scientific explanation to the social behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses. At this point, we have to recall the statement made by Detlef Garbe in the introduction to his research:

"In resistance historiography there is no category for the non-conformist, resistance-oriented, nonsubversive but also radical attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses, who indeed resisted the NS Regime with conscientious determination, even in the face of death, and yet were not active "resistance fighters."[788]

Malle's explanation basic on sociological categories tried to explain the behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses according to conceptualizations that do not belong to the own way of thinking of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Eigen-Sinn is not the starting point of the explanation, but concepts conceived in the theoretical formulation of sociologists.

On the contrary, these chapters have tried to described the symbolical framework behind, quoting Garbe, "the non-conformist, resistance-oriented, nonsubversive but also radical attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses." A description "based on a close examination of the role played by core religious concepts, individual motivations, and group identity. While scholarly literature may mention IBSA/JW doctrine, rare is the study that offers a thorough discussion of specific tenets as held by individuals in an actual setting."[789]

Until Rutherford's death in 1942, what we know as the Second World War was for most of Jehovah's Witnesses Armageddon, of the gateway to Armageddon, the final battle between the divine forces and the human rule. It was Nathan Knorr who after 1942 formulated the "new understanding" that this war had not such an eschatological meaning. For most of those who were facing the Nazi regime in Europe, every single mistreatment had an irrelevant meaning compared to what they were about to see: the realization of God's kingdom on earth. Every single experience had a complete different signification. They were living in their own reality. A reality to which the regime, as Himmler and the SS recognized, had no access or influence. It was beyond their control.

[788] Garbe, 6.

[789] Chu, "No creed but the Bible," 116.

13. Conclusion

Using Ludtke's *Eigen-Sinn* as central conceptual element at of the moment of looking for an explanation to the social behavior of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina showed how social anthropology is indispensable when we want to reconstruct and describe the *Eigen-Sinn* of a particular social group. It is impossible to understand the Jehovah's Witnesses without anthropology. *Eigen-Sinn* implies an interest on "real, existing individuals and their perspectives."[790] As we have seen in the conceptual considerations, the use *Eigen-Sinn* as analytical term "brings to mind a limitation and cognitive barrier"[791] of the observer. The term forces the historian to assume his limitations at the moment of understanding what he is observing. From an anthropological perspective of history, Lüdtke used this term in order to analyze the experiences of the working class in Germany during the last decades of XIX and the first half of the XX century. This concept helped to recover the agency, their experiences and the subjectivity, recovering which is a key in order to make the social behavior of a German working class comprehensive. Using Marxian concepts, Lüdtke differentiated between the needs and the interests of the working class. While the consciousness of proletarian interests constituted a requisite in the constitution of a revolutionary working class able to be a serious menace to the status quo, the needs are more volatile, contradictory and usually considered as unimportant. Taking a familiar approach to the one of E.P.Thompson and his conception of experience, Lüdtke's work helps us to see that these needs, how the labors were with themselves and with others were not mere a "false consciousness" of the real material world determined by class interests. Both authors, Lüdtke and Thompson, were able to show how "objectivizing subjectives states" is possible.

According to Lévi-Strauss, this "objectivizing subjectives states" means just "formulating inexpressible feelings and (…) integrating inarticulated experiences into a system."[792]

"divergent interpretations come from individual consciousness not as the result of objective analysis but rather as complementary ideas resulting from hazy and unelaborated attitudes which have an experimental character for each of

[790] Lindenberger, Thomas, op. cit.

[791] Ibidem.

[792] Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 171, 172.

us. These experiences, however, remain intellectually diffuse and emotionally intolerable unless they incorporate one or another of the patterns present in the group's culture."[793]

Christian Ingrao has already pointed out the important of using concepts of the anthropology at the moment of studying the Nazism. For example, Cornelia Essner and Édouard Conte, *La Quête de la race. Une anthropologie du nazisme* (1995), Françoise Héritier, *De la violence* (1996, 1999), Noëlie Vialles, *Le Sang et la Chair. Les abattoirs des pays de l'Adour* (1987), Élisabeth Claverie, *Les Guerres de la Vierge. Une anthropologie des apparitions* (2003), Catherine Rémy *La Fin de bêtes. Une ethnographie de la mise à mort des animaux* (2009) and Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerries de Dieu. La violence au temps des troubles de religion* (1990).[794] At the moment of analyzing the *Eigen-Sinn* of Jehovah's Witnesses in general and specially in extreme situations like the concentration camps in Europe, anthropological approaches like the one made by Ester Hermitte in Chiapas, Mexico, were a great source of inspiration.

In *Poder sobrenatural y control social*, Ester Hermitte studied how two kind of sanctions functioned at the same time in the Maya population of Pinola. One kind of them related to the local administration and the other kind of sanctions related to the supernatural world. The research explains how the native society continued to have control over the community even when they were displaced of their positions by the mestizos. The control overtaken by the mestizos was limited to the material world, while the native leaders kept the control over the supernatural sphere having the administration of the *nahuales*, spirits whose effects were manifested in illnesses and diseases. Those who did not respected the supernatural order had the risk of being sick, while those had the expected behavior were rewarded with a good health and lately received an ascension in their social status which was translated in the control of the *nahuales*.

This double reality of the Mayas from Pinola may help us to understand the double reality of Jehovah's Witnesses in the concentration camps. In several reports which were exposed in this dissertation, we find this double reality. While the SS had the administration of the concentration camps, they did not have any influence in the social control of the supernatural world. As a matter of fact, we have shown that Heinrich Himmler and other SS officials around 1942 were aware of this fact. Every single measure of social control in the SS repertoire was useless against the Jehovah's Witnesses.

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[793] Ibidem.

[794] Ingrao, *Croire et Détruire*, 13, 14.

In their balance about the contributions that the Latin American studies may make to global history, Gabriela de Lima Grecco and Sven Schuster suggested that the global turn may gain new approaches and sharper analysis by "latinizing" the methodology. There are several concepts and categories generated in the Latin American studies like hybridization, mimicry or fusion whose value is not limited to Latin America but can be used to analyses phenomenons from other continents. This "latinization" of the methodology is, according to these authors, a chance to overcome the limits of the eurocentrism and the national-states perspectives whose manifestation is the hegemony of analytical concepts like development, progress, modernization, civilization or the periodization of the global history in base of the European history.[795]

By analyzing the *Eigen-Sinn* of Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe from a comparative perspective with the Argentinean case, we may see that a central characteristic of the Nazi regime, which we do not find in the Argentinean repression, was the importance of work. Franz Neumann emphasized this point long time ago. He conceptualized the Nazi regime as follow:

"The new ideology must be democratic, at least in appearance. The rulers and the ruled must be represented as pursuing identical interests; the internal social antagonisms must be utilized and transformed into external aggression. The new National Socialist doctrine of a racial proletarian imperialism is the culmination of this method. The doctrine fuses two basic elements: hatred of England and hatred of Marx. The essence of the theory is extremely simple. Germany and Italy are proletarian races, surrounded by a world of hostile plutocratic-capitalistic-Jewish democracies. The war is thus a war of proletarianism against capitalism. (…) Racial proletarianism is the genuine theory of National Socialism and its most dangerous expression. It is its most fallacious and yet most attractive doctrine. Its fallaciousness is obvious. If gold constitutes wealth, then Germany is indeed poor. But National Socialism insists that gold is not wealth, that all wealth derives from the productivity of man. (…) National Socialism offers the worker everything offered by Marxism, without a class struggle."[796]

This definition given by Franz Neumann in *Behemoth*, which considered Nazism as a "racial proletarian imperialism" seems to be the most proper term at the moment of understanding the historical development of the regime. There are two elements in this definition which are particular relevant: the proletarian character and the significance of productivity. Sven Reichardt pointed out the importance of avoiding a theoretical or philosophical search for an essence (Walter Laqueur)[7]

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795 Gabriela de Lima Grecco; Sven Schuster, "Hacia una historia global descolonizada: una perspectiva latinoamericana," 488, 490.

796 Neumann, *Behemoth*, 187-189.

797 Laqueur, Walter, (1997), *Fachismus. Gestern-Heute-Morgen*, Berlin.

or nature (Roger Griffin)[798] of fascism, and focus the attention on the self perception of the perpetrators. At the moment of conceptualization fascism, Sven Reichardt made use of Mussolini's words in October 1919: "We fascists have no doctrine, our doctrine is the act."[799] Based on this perspective, Reichardt, following Norbert Elias, "saw in the core of fascism a perception of a complete lost of values and sense in the society. The only hope of a meaningful life was the destruction of society."[800]

As "racial proletarian imperialism" the regime remarked the image of Germany as the country of the working people. A working people which had been exploited by other countries that were focused on profits and not productivity. The Jews were seen then as an expression of this exploitation of the working Germans. Nazism offered then to the working class the same vindications offered by the Communists without class struggle. According to Neumann, the power of Nazi ideology relied on this aspect of the ideology.

Michael Wildt has also remarked the relevance of work. The *Volksgemeinschaft* had to be an efficiency community. The productivity of the society had to be used completely for the production and reproduction of the society. Those who were not able to contribute had to be expelled of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Those who refused to work were sent to workhouses, social work camps or concentration camps with the objective of being educated throughout work. Those who were not able to be reeducated had to remain in the concentration camps.[801] When the concentration camp in Dachau was opened in 1933, the reports of the press announcing the opening of the new institution were shaped by this conception of work as an educational resource. As a matter of fact, the productive capacity was a central element at the moment of defining the purity and biological health of the members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[802] While work was considered an instinct that humans and animals had in common, the humans developed a secondary level based on pure egoism. This second stadium was also surpassed by the conception of work as a moral obligatory activity that was no related to the individual willingness but for the benefit of the fellow men. In contrast to this positive approach to work, Hitler used to quote the first chapters of the Genesis and the expulsion of

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[798] Griffin, Roger, (1993), *The Nature of Fascism*, Psychology Press.

[799] Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde. Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrismus und in der deutschen SA*, 25.

[800] Ibidem, 657.

[801] Michael Wildt, Introduction to Arbeit, XVIII

[802] Op. Cit. XXXV

Adam and Eve from the Eden garden, being work a curse: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." For the Jews work was not something positive, it was a divine punishment.[803]

Jürgen Kocka had also underlined the critique to capitalism made by the National Socialism. He stated that the critique to money, market, egoistic greed, and the exploitation of work based just on profit were not strange to the National Socialists. These elements were part of the populistic rhetoric and the social political program of the regime which allow them to gain the favor of an important part of the population.[804] This conception of work placed the National Socialists in a long tradition that went back to the classics of the Enlightenment like Diderot, Adam Smith and Kant. Work was the source of richness and productivity and a central element of the human being.[805]

As we have seen along the pages of this text, the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Nazism was close related with this central idea of the regime. Moringen is a good example. The origins of this camp can be traced to the Prussian regime of the XIX century. The place functioned as formative or reformative center. A formation that was provided throughout work. As later the Nazis reaffirmed, working had a positive formative effect. After 1933, Moringen experienced in this sense no radical change. It continued to functioned as it had been functioning until then. The women who were sent there, Communists and Jehovah's Witnesses, had to be reeducated throughout work. It might be argued that the particularities of Moringen responded to the civil director of the institution. However when we follow the experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moringen and other camps, the emphasis that in general they put to hard working was not indifferent for the Nazis. We can just mention the commentaries made by Heinrich Himmler about it.

Moringen is also an interesting place because it shows the relevant role played by the female Jehovah's Witnesses. Something that we can not find in Argentina. We can recall the words of Detlef Garbe

"From mid 1936 on, an increasing number of women occupied positions of leadership as, for example, group or cell leaders. There women performed their responsibilities with great determination, and in this regard, they certainly did not lack the courage and fearlessness of the men. On the contrary, they administered their assignments even more radically because of their strong conviction."[806]

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803 Michael Wildt, 3,4.

804 Kocka, 25, 26.

805 Ibidem 27.

806 Garbe, 244.

As we have seen in this dissertation, the active role played by the female Jehovah's Witnesses can only be compared with the Communist female. Until the opening of Ravensbrück in 1938/9 the female Jehovah's Witnesses represented an unexpected problem for the Nazi regime that needed some years in order to find a solution to this problematic.

In this comparison between Argentina and Europe, it was also highlighted the political connotation of Anti Semitism which can be resumed in Jacobo Timmerman's words: "my Jewishness is political." In Argentina, the debate about political element of the repression started with the *Nunca Más*. The documentary had a general positive reception "with the exception of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, who objected to the film "for keeping silent on the name of the perpetrators" and on the victims' condition "of political opponents of the dictatorship."[807] Crenzel pointed out the importance of the result of this research by saying that

"CONADEP's investigation had highly significant political and legal effects: it produced a new knowledge of the actual scope of the disappearances in Argentina; created an unprecedented body of evidence to use in the prosecution of the perpetrators; and put an end to Alfonsín's strategy of having the military juntas prosecuted by their peers, while at the same time ushering in the jurisdiction of civilian courts. Its report, *Nunca Más*, would expose a new public truth about the disappearances, and would become the new interpretative and narrative approach for judging, thinking about, and evoking the then immediate past."[808]

The report registered 8,960 disappearances and the quantity of 340 Clandestine Detention Centers. The victims were described basically as "human beings whose rights had been grossly violated." Anybody could be a victim. The target group was characterized by its heterogeneity

"From people seeking to change society through a revolution to sensitive adolescents who went out to shantytowns to help the less fortunate. Anyone could become a victim: trade union leaders fighting for better wages; youngsters who were members of student unions; journalists who did not enthusiastically support the regime; psychologists and sociologists, simply because they belonged to suspicious professions; young pacifists; nuns and priests who had taken the teachings of Christ to underprivileged neighborhoods. And the friends of any of these people, and the friends of their friends, plus others who were turned in purely out of personal revenge, or whose names had been given under torture by other victims. The majority of them were innocent of terrorist acts or even of belonging to guerrilla combat units, as guerrilla members tended to put up a fight, so that they either died in shootouts or committed suicide before they could be captured, with few of them still alive by the time they were in the hands of the repressive forces."[809]

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[807] ibidem, 64.

[808] ibidem, 75.

[809] quoted in Crenzel, 79, 80.

Understanding the construction of the victims made by the *Nunca Más* is central at the time of analyzing the interpretations of the dictatorship.

"In this way, CONADEP confronts the crime of disappearance, restoring the *humanity* of the disappeared by presenting their names, ages, gender, and occupational activities. This restitution takes on the shape of an *abstract humanization* that presents their generic lives, blurring their condition as concrete historical beings and their political lives, which are precisely features that evoke the confrontations that tore Argentine society apart. Thus the report performs simultaneously two operations: by presenting the disappeared as subjects of law it gives a *new political significance* to their identity that contrasts the perspective of the dictatorship; and, at the same time, it renders them *apolitical* by positing them as innocent victims and excluding their activism. In doing so, it also restricts the definition of subject of law by proposing the absence of any connections to politics and violence as a precondition for being a subject of law. Stripped of any factional attributes and of the savagery of the political animal–so foreign and threatening to post-dictatorial common sense–the disappeared are presented in a domesticated and familiar light, which makes it easier for rears to relate to the victims based on a series of shared values."[810]

Regarding the racial side of the dictatorship, the judge Baltasar Garzón stated that, "racist thinking is essentially political in nature. "Racial groups" are imaginary constructions that always refer in fact to "political groups." he started proceeding for crimes of "terrorist and genocide" against ninety-eight Argentine military members. It was only possible to judge Lieutenant Commander Adolfo Scilingo, who went voluntary to Spain in order to testify. In the sentence, to 640 years, the Madrid's Central Criminal Court declared that he was convicted for "crimes against humanity" and not for genocide.[811]

An interesting point in Feierstein's ideal type of genocide is that the process is not concluded with the physical extermination of the victims. He introduces the symbolic level of the extermination in his analysis.

"On the other hand, the victims of genocidal social practices are deliberately and repeatedly homogenized as "innocent." The dominant discourse at he moment when genocide is implemented tends to depict victims as culpable in innumerable ways, transforming them into agents of the devil responsible for the majority of social evils. Paradoxically, however, once the genocide has been accomplished, and to the extent that the social consensus on which the perpetrators depended has been eroded, the hegemonic gaze may move toward an emphasis on the "innocence" of the victims, proceeding hand-in-hand with the demonization of the perpetrators and their relegation to the realm of "Irrationalität." In some societies, this process is accelerated by military defeat (as with the Nazis in Germany or the

[810] ibidem, 82.

[811] ibidem, 19.

Hutu extremists in Rwanda), or by political defeat (as with the military dictatorships in Latin America). In other cases, the process occurs more slowly, as with Turkey or Indochina. And in still other cases, when a consensus remains as to the legitimacy of the genocide in the society in which it occurred, the process of "constructing innocence" may take Generation or even centuries–as with the annihilation of the indigenous populations of the modern states of the Americas. However it occurs, this mode of constructing "innocent" victims ends up being even more effective than blaming them for their own destruction. It dilutes genocide as much as it appears to condemn it. It meshes easily with the image of mad, perverse, pathological, and evil murderers that emerges from the ways the perpetrators themselves legitimize genocide." [812]

The "constructing of innocence" is then the last stage of the genocide social practices. It is its symbolic realization. We have already seem that Emilio Crenzel has pointed out this treatment made by CONADEP dealing with the victims as "human beings whose rights had been grossly violated" giving so to the victims a "new political significance to their identity." This new political significance based on their innocence is where Feierstein sees the symbolic objectification of genocide. It is the moment when the genocidal social practice reaches reformulation of the social practices. The victims, treated as innocent victims, are dispossessed of their identity, of their social and symbolic significance. Feierstein takes the example of the Jewish collectivities in Central and Eastern Europe in the XIX and early XX centuries.

"A powerful symbol of this is the massive Jewish participation in numerous oppositional and contestatory movements (whether revolutionary or reformist), from the Spartacists to the communists, anarchists, Bundists (the Jewish Workers Party), and socialists, in Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. These include such specific cases as the "Jewish Soviet" in Hungary under the Béla Kun government, the Jewish socialist prime minister León Blum in France, and the vital Jewish participation at the leadership level of various Russian and Polish revolutionary movements. The most important dimension, however, is not the Jews' numerically large participation in such contestatory movements, but their link with a deeper, more global element, linked to the scant support that Jewish nationalism (Zionism) and non-Jewish European nationalisms aroused among Jewish populations, until the Nazis appeared on the scene. Because of the persecutions suffered by Jews in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania, and because of their marginalization in Germany and France, Jewish communities continued to view themselves as "diasporic" in nature, founded on multiple identities, capable of transcending their Jewish cultural component; their assimilation within the national territories the inhabited, whether German, Polish, Russian, or French; their greater or lesser religious convictions (many Jewish groups were atheists, other were reformists, others Orthodox, but all considered themselves Jewish beyond their specific religious or nonreligious identification); and their political identity (which was highly varied, though in general forsaking a nationalist tendency for a diverse range of internationalist and diasporic currents of thought)."[813]

[812] ibidem, 122.

[813] ibidem, 124.

It was in this "readiness to embrace multiple identities, in their recognition of the multiplicity, complexity, and dynamism of identity formation" where Feierstein finds the reason why the Jews were a risk to the Nazis.

"This was problematic and "subversive" for a model of identity, such as the Nazis, which sought to subordinate all such identifications to those of the organic *Volk* of a well-defined national territory. In a philosophical sense, Jewish identity was constructed "in time," while modern European identities were constructed "in space." [814]

As Timothy Mason sustained, the political intensity of the Weimar Republic responded to a fundamental structure weakness. The class conflicts were manifested in a political form due to the mass unemployment. The response to this problematic was an agreement between the bourgeois parties, the social democracy and the trade union in 1924. The increasing power of the KPD (Communist Party) was a reflection of an important radicalization of the working class during those years, but not the only one. There was a diversity of radical embodiments of the working class radicalism, a diversity that it is hard to be defined or restrained to the term Communism. On the other hand, if we take Jewishness as an ideological concept, this term seems to be much more inclusive than Communist. This inclusion responded to a conceptual vagueness and superficiality, elements that can be seen as an apparent weakness. However, this superficiality was its stronghold because such a superficial definition allowed to include the diverse manifestations that embodied the radicalization of the working class. A Communist could be as Jew as a Zionist, as Jew as a Jehovah's Witness.[815]

The last sentences of the seventh thesis *On the Concept of History* recites: "A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain." With these words Walter Benjamin made an allusion to the need of writing a history of the defeated. Benjamin himself was part of a defeated generation of dreamers and utopians. A generation of intellectuals born in the middle of the XIX century in Central Europe, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose sources of inspiration were the German Romanticism and a Messianic Judaism. A generation "that aspired to a completely other world, to the Kingdom of God on earth, to a Kingdom of the spirit, to a Kingdom of liberty, to a Kingdom of peace. Their ideals were the egalitarian community, the social anarchism, the anti-authoritarian

[814] ibidem, 124.

[815] Mason, "The primacy of politics," 56.

revolt, the permanent revolution of the spirit."[816] Michael Löwy included in these generation the names of Kafka, Gershom Scholem, Lukács, Walter Benjamin and Gustav Landauer.

Tikkoun was one of the central concepts which functioned as a core of this Jewishness. This term meant "at the same time: redemption, restitution, reparation, reform, reestablishment of the lost harmony." It was an expression originated in the Kabbalah "that described the re-establishment of the great harmony disrupted by the shattering of the vessels and later by the sin of Adam." Gershom Scholem stated that the *Tikkoun* "was the path that takes to the end of the things and it was also the path that takes to the beginning." It implied a "restoration of the ideal order," the "restitution, the reintegration of all original." "The coming of the Messiah was the accomplishment of the *Tikkoun*, the redemption where all the things return to their original contact with God."[8] Gustav Landauer, thought, for example, that the Jews had a particular roll in history: to help in the transformation of society and in the gestation of a new mankind. "The redemption of the Jews have to take place at the same time of mankind's redemption. Both of them are the same. Wait for the Messiah in the exile and diaspora and being the Messiah of the people. There were two great prophecies in history: Rome, the domination of the world and Israel, the redemption of the world. The Jewish tradition never forgot the promise that God made to Abraham about the redemption of the Jews together with the redemption of the nations. It is the manifestation of a conception, of a faith and of a messianic will."[818] The ideological elements of this Jewishness referred to a generation, to a "threat" that was beyond the dictatorship of the proletariat proposed by the Soviet model in Russia.

First of all, we have to take into consideration that the genesis of NSDAP movement was part of a reaction against the German Revolution of 1918-19, more specifically, a reaction against the Soviet Republic of Munich. These upheavals were part of a revolutionary atmosphere where the Bolsheviks in Russia played a leading role showing that it was logical, objective and historical possible a world revolution. Georg Lukács thought at that time that the proletariat "was the force capable to destroy the capitalist reality, the abolition of reification, the realization of authentic values and the foundation of a new culture […] The proletariat was the messianic class of history that through revolution will accomplish world redemption."[819] Paul Honigsheim had pointed out that the idea of a Collective Messiah was shared by several protagonists of the Soviet Republic of

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[816] Löwy, *Rédemption et Utopie*, 7,8.

[817] ibidem, 8, 25.

[818] ibidem, 173.

[819] Löwy, *Pour une sociologie des intellectuels révolutionnaires*, 168, 169.

Munich like Kurt Eisner, Eugen Leviné, Ernst Toller, Erich Mühsam and Gustav Landauer.[820] This last one was born in South-west Germany in Abril 1870 in a bourgeois Jewish family. He was defined as a romantic revolutionary, an anarchist who considered himself as an heir of Proudhon, Kropotkin, Bakunin and Tolstoï. His conception of the revolution was related to the messianic idea of the *Jetztzeit* formulated later by Walter Benjamin. It was an irruption, an abrupt instant, an instantly experience.[821] In January of 1919 he reprinted his book *The Socialist* where he stated: "The chaos is here…the spirits wake up… revolution lead us to religion, a religion of the action, of life, of love, that make us happy, that bring us the redemption and that overcome everything." One of his characteristic was using part of the Ancient Testament to justify his ideas. For example, he saw in the Mosaic law of Jubilee a model for the establishment of constitution distinguished by a permanent revolution

"The uprising as constitution, transformation and upheavals as the planed rule forever… that is the spectacular and holy part of the mosaic social order. We have a new need: new rules and an upheaval of spirit that do not freeze the things and the order in a definitive way but it define itself as something permanent. Revolution has to be part of our social order, it has to be the fundamental rule of our constitution."[822]

For Landauer, the Jews were the ones who should occupy a particular place in the transformation of society. In the XX century the redeeming role of Jews had the secular form of Socialism. They were the most capable people to introduce mankind into a socialist society due to the fact that they were a people, a community but not a State which was for Landauer, as a good anarchist, the "true Antichrist." Landauer was chosen *Commissioner of Enlightenment and Public Instruction* for the Soviet Republic of Bavaria on 7 April 1919. One month later he would be arrested and murdered.

Dietrich Eckart, who is considered by Saul Friedländer as a central figure in transferring the redemptive Anti-Semitism from the Bayreuth circle to Adolf Hitler, was described as a "writer, newspaper editor, pamphleteer, drug addict and alcoholic" whose influence was decisive as one of the first members of the German Workers' Party. The same Hitler said about him: "He shine in our eyes like a polar star (…) At the time, I was intellectually a child at the bottle."[823] Eckart was the publisher of the magazine *Auf Gut Deutsch*, a *völkisch* publication where writers like Theodor Fritsch, Alfred Rosenberg, Ellegaard Ellerbek and Ernst Wachler made their intellectual

[820] Löwy, *Redemption et utopie*, 23.

[821] ibidem, 166.

[822] ibidem, 172, 175.

[823] Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, 97.

contributions. Eckart dedicated himself full time to distribute and collect money for this magazine. Due to the fact that it was almost his main income in life, he even distributed it personally on the trains of Munich.[824] In an essay published posthumously entitled *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin,* he identified the Bolshevism as "the destructive action of the Jew throughout the ages." The Russian revolution of 1917 was then more than just a political or social uprising, it was another manifestation of Jewish force of evil in the long tradition of mankind history. Bolshevism was not a political novelty of the XX century but the later edition of a problem which was suffered by the mankind through the history starting with the Egyptians who had to deal with Moses and his people. The struggle against this force, the Jews, had arrived to a decisive point in 1920s in Germany. The Bavarian Soviet Republic of 1919 was the signal that a last battle was necessary in order to save mankind. It was then clear the apocalyptic dimension of the times in Germany due to the Jewish threat. In the very end of the text he stated: "One can understand the Jew only when one know toward what he aims for in the end. Beyond the domination of the world, toward the destruction of the world."[825] In his remarks about christians, Eckart saw in the Catholic Church a positive attitude in the majority of popes who fought against the "corruptive equality of the Jews." On the contrary, the humanism displayed in the Reform by characters like Ulrich von Hutten or Johann Reuchlin was condemnable because it made the reform institutions Jewish friendly as it could clearly be seen in their fruits: the Puritans, Anabaptists and Bible Students (Jehovah's Witnesses). These examples were the "juiciest where the Jewish worm is seated."[826] This last group, the Bible Students or Jehovah's Witnesses, were considered by Eckart an oversight rich organization that was in the Jewish shipping channel to the Soviets.[827]

Detlef Garbe has pointed out that speaking in the Weimar Republic of the "establishment of a Kingdom that bring peace on earth without any class and race distinctions," and "destruction of the power of this world," was a discourse, propagated by Jehovah's Witnesses, quite similar to those employed in "the Russian Revolution and its resulting upheavals."[828] The *Neue Pfalzische Landeszeitung* in March 12, 1925, stated:

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[824] Mosse, *op. cit.*, 296, 297.

[825] Friedländer, *op. cit.*, 97,98.

[826] Nolte, *Der Faschismus in Seiner Epoche,* 406,407.

[827] Garbe, "Sendboten des jüdischen Bolschewismus," 151.

[828] ibidem., 49.

"As absurd as it may sound, it is the truth! It is a known fact that Bolshevism has unmistakable characteristics of apocalyptic chialism, albeit misinterpreted in a physical, earthly way… Therefore, it is not surprising that Germany, in particular, the last stronghold of European culture against Oriental barbarism, has been literally flooded with the pioneers of Bolshevism, namely the Bible Students (Jehovah's Witnesses)."[829]

Even Alfred Rosenberg related the activities of the Bible Students to Communist activism when in 1923 he stated that: "What democracy and Marxism accomplished in the political arena, the Bible Students do in the field of church and religion."[830]

The discussion about the political connotation of the victims in Germany seems to be related to the historiography of the German Democratic Republic where the focus was the political ideas of those who suffered as part of the resistance to the regime. Since the reunification of Germany it seems to be an hegemony of the victim figure, of those who were murdered for what they were and not for what they did or thought. Daniela Dahn has pointed out that after the reunification it was possible to recover the civil courage discourse of the antifascism tradition that was part of the public politics in the German Democratic Republic. However, there was no interest in the new German Federal Republic on this kind of subjects which was dangerous on the other side to the interests on privatization and capitalist logics that shaped the 1990s in Germany.[831]

Questioning the comparison between the last military dictatorship in Argentina and the Nazism as part of a native category of the Argentinian scholars had been more than just an academic and intellectual process. It was also a personal process that demanded a long time of reflection in order to be alienated oneself of the categories and concepts which were part of my common sense. Experiencing the negative reaction of most of the German scholars that I faced when I explained my comparative research was a fundamental factor that lead to this long reflexive process. In recent years, this alignment of the German scholars against the comparison of the Nazism with other cases has been strong criticized by authors like Dirk Mosses, who accused the historians of Nazism of being the high priests of a "German Catechism." Priests whose academic work respond to the interests of legitimizing the geopolitical role of the German Republic in harmony with American, British and Israeli elites. According to this catechism, comparing the

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[829] ibidem., 49, 50.

[830] Roseberg, "Protokolle der Weisen von Zion und die jüdische Weltpolitk (1923)," in *Schriften und Reden*, vol. 2, *Schriften aus den Jahren 1921-1923*, Munich, 1943, 409, quoted in Garbe, 52.

[831] Daniela Dahn, Abwicklung des Erinners, in Böckmann, Gockel, Kößler, Melber, *Jenseits von Mbembe*, 277.

Holocaust is "considered a heresy, an apostasy from the right faith." For Moses, however, the time has come to abandon this catechism.[832]

One of the main "priests" of this "catechism," Michael Wildt, made an interesting remark after leaving his professorship at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Explaining why he is now interested in studying the history of Indonesia, he stated that his interest is not related to a kind of exoticism but to pragmatical, political reasons. In a globalized world, Europe has to fight against its provincialism and at the moment of discussing global problems, like global warming, the Europeans must be prepared to discuss with global actors on an equal footing. For this reason it is fundamental to acknowledge and to know the history of the "otherness." It is impossible to establish a dialogue without knowing the history of China, Indonesia or other parts of the global souths. Comparing the history of countries from the Global South like Argentina with the history of Germany is than one possibility to generate a dialogue which contribute to the overcoming of the European provincialism. The contribution of this dissertation in this debate may be that comparison may function as tool to globalize the European history.

A change of perspective will not only be productive for European scholars in an international level but also in the internal one. Sebastian Conrad pointed out that already before the summer of 2015 there was one quarter of the German population which had a migration background. Something that incremented with the migration wave starting that year. This fact means that the national history is no more the self-evident point of reference.[833] Jürgen Habermas pointed out the political consequence of this new population landscape. He considers the inclusion of the colonial heritage as a chance to increase the political cultural of the country. It is true that those who incorporate to the German citizenship had to accept the political cultural and historical heritage of the guess country. However the migrants gain also the vote of a citizen, which counts for the public opinion and change and expand the political culture of the country.[834] After years of living, working and finally having a family in Germany, I have also became part of this new German citizenship shaped by a migration background described by Habermas. If this text is a contribution to the historiography of the Nazism, it is something to be judged by the readers. What we do find in this text is the writing record of one of the thousand cultural integration processes that took place in recent years in Germany und it is maybe there, where its value relies.

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832 Ibidem

833 Sebastian Conrad, 52.

834 Jürgen Habermas, Introduction to Ein Verbrechen ohne Namen, 12, 13

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Annemarie Kusserow

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Berta Wenzel (born 1904)

Gerda Steinfurth (born 1920)

Johanna Waldmann (born 1922)

Charlotte Müller (born 1912)

Barbara Wohlfahrt (born 1897)

Ida Luckinger (born 1923)

Anna Stucke (born 1927)

Hermina Liska

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