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**Staging Work in the Corporatist State  
Visual Propaganda in Fascist Italy and  
Peronist Argentina (1922-1955)**



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# Staging Work in the Corporatist State Visual Propaganda in Fascist Italy and Peronist Argentina (1922-1955)

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**Abstract.** – Starting in 1922, Benito Mussolini (1922-1943) reformed Italian labour relations by adopting corporatism. As such, he served as a model for many other heads of state in search of ways out of economic crisis. When the corporatist model spread throughout Latin America in the 1930s and 1940s, the Argentine president Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955) drew significantly on the Italian precedent. Adhering to an aestheticised concept of politics and making use of modern mass media, both regimes advertised corporatism in their respective visual propaganda, in which the worker came to play a prominent role. The article analyses parallels and differences in the formation of political identities in fascist and Peronist visual media that under both corporatist regimes centred around work. Comparing different role models as they were designed for different members of society, I argue that – apart from gender roles where Peronism resorted to similarly traditional images – Peronist propaganda messages were more future-oriented and inclusive. Racist exclusions of parts of the population from the central worker identity that increasingly characterised fascist propaganda over the course of the 1930s were not adopted in Argentina after 1945. Instead, in state visual media the category of work in its inclusionary dimension served as a promise of belonging to the Peronist community.

**Keywords:** Corporatism, Identity Formation, Italian Fascism, Peronism, Visual Media, Worker.

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**Resumen.** – A partir de 1922 Benito Mussolini (1922-1943) reformó las relaciones laborales en Italia, aplicando una serie de medidas corporativas. Sus reformas terminaron por convertirse en un modelo a seguir para la búsqueda de soluciones de crisis económicas por parte de jefes de Estado en otros lugares del mundo. Cuando el modelo corporativo se difundió en América Latina en los años 30 y 40, el presidente argentino Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955) se inspiró considerablemente en dicho precedente italiano. Adhiriéndose a un concepto de política estetizado y utilizando los medios de comunicación de masa, ambos regímenes anunciaron el corporativismo en su respectiva propaganda visual, en la que la figura del trabajador jugaba un papel prominente. El artículo analiza paralelos y diferencias en la formación de identidades políticas en medios visuales en la Italia fascista y en la Argentina peronista, los cuales bajo ambos regímenes corporativos se centraron en el trabajo. Comparando los diversos modelos diseñados para varios miembros de la sociedad, se sostiene que —aparte de roles de género, un ámbito en el cual el peronismo perpetuó imágenes similarmente tradicionales— los mensajes propagandísticos peronistas fueron más orientados al futuro e inclusivos. Exclusiones racistas de partes de la población de la central identidad trabajadora que caracterizaron cada vez más la propaganda fascista a lo largo de los años 30, no se adoptaron en Argentina después de 1945. En cambio, en medios visuales estatales la categoría trabajo en su dimensión incluyente sirvió como promesa de pertenencia a la comunidad peronista.

Palabras clave: Corporativismo, formación de identidad, fascismo italiano, Peronismo, medios visuales, trabajador.

In the interwar period, a wide range of regimes made increasing use of visual media to promote their actions. To this end, they established new ministries and state agencies. Among authoritarian regimes, from 1922 onwards, Fascist Italy was one of the pioneers.<sup>2</sup> Research has long established that the ‘Fascist Revolution’ according to the regime was also, and maybe most importantly, to be expressed through innovative

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<sup>2</sup> Philipp Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso. Fascismo e mass media*, Rome: Laterza, 1975, p. 77; Gabriele Turi, “Faschismus und Kultur“: Wolfgang Schieder / Jens Petersen (eds.), *Faschismus und Gesellschaft in Italien. Staat – Wirtschaft – Kultur*, Cologne: SH-Verlag, 1998, pp. 91–108, 95.

aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> What scholars have not yet examined is the fact that the numerous and widely distributed propagandistic images centred around the topic of work and that the 'Fascist new man' took on the form of the worker — corporatism, the new economic and social order that fascism introduced, being one of the core elements of the *Rivoluzione Fascista*. Yet propaganda not only presented role models for male workers but also for other parts of society, all of which related to the importance of work.

By no means only relevant to Italian domestic policy, corporatism was propagated abroad as a 'Third Way' between liberal capitalism and socialist collectivism. Especially after the world economic crisis in 1929, many heads of state worldwide perceived fascist corporatism as a potential way out of recession.<sup>4</sup> That it had not lost its attractiveness even after the fall of the fascist regime and the end of World War II is illustrated by the case of Argentina.<sup>5</sup> In this classic destination of Italian emigration since the late nineteenth century, Juan Domingo Perón introduced corporatist reforms in his role as state secretary of labour from 1943 to 1945 and later as president starting in 1946.<sup>6</sup> As in Italy twenty years earlier, the government presented these reforms as an attempt at integrating a society that also found itself on the threshold from an agrarian to an industrial economy, including great internal migration flows. While some scholars have celebrated these social and

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<sup>3</sup> Marla Stone, *The Patron State. Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998; George Mosse, "Fascist Aesthetics and Society. Some Considerations": *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31: 2 (1996), pp. 245-252, p. 247; Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Nützenadel, "Korporativismus und Landwirtschaft im faschistischen Italien": Aldo Mazzacane et al. (eds.), *Korporativismus in den südeuropäischen Diktaturen*, Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 2005, pp. 345-364, 345.

<sup>5</sup> Howard Wiarda, "Los orígenes corporativos de los sistemas ibéricos y latinoamericanos de relaciones laborales": *Estudios Sociales*, 3: 21 (1979), pp. 11-44, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Chen, "Corporatism under Attack? Authoritarianism, Democracy, and Labor in Contemporary Argentina": Howard Wiarda (ed.), *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America – Revisited*, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004, pp. 197-217, 200.

economic measures as the birth of the Argentine welfare state,<sup>7</sup> others have hinted at the authoritarian framework and the control the regime exerted over organised labour.<sup>8</sup> In order to foster a new political identity for the corporatist state, the Peronism made wide use of visual propaganda emphasising work that was also to reach the illiterate parts of the population.<sup>9</sup>

Literature on the adoption of fascist-inspired corporatist reforms under Latin American authoritarian regimes in the 1930s and 1940s<sup>10</sup> has highlighted Fascist Italy's role as a model for the relatively late introduction of corporatist reforms in Argentina at a time when most other corporatist regimes had disappeared at the end of the war.<sup>11</sup> However, comparatively little has been published on the vast corpora of visual propaganda of the two regimes that precisely centred around the topic of corporatism, work and labour relations.

While comparisons between Peronism and Italian Fascism are well established in academic research, beginning with Gino Germani's works from the 1950s to 1970s,<sup>12</sup> in the 1980s debate on generic post World War II fascism, cultural policy and propaganda were considered the areas in which Italian Fascism and Peronism most resembled each other.<sup>13</sup> Yet, until recently there have hardly been comprehensive

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Berrotarán et al. (eds.), *Sueños de bienestar en la nueva Argentina. Estado y políticas públicas durante el peronismo, 1946-1955*, Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Chen, "Corporatism under Attack?", p. 202.

<sup>9</sup> Mariano Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón. A cultural History of Perón's Argentina*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003, p. 14; Lidia Rodríguez, "El adulto como sujeto pedagógico y la construcción de nuevos sentidos": Adriana Puiggrós / Sandra Carli (eds.), *Discursos pedagógicos e imaginario social en el peronismo, 1945-1955*, Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1995, pp. 259-284, 267-268: Although the illiteracy rate in Argentina amounted to 13.6% in 1947, in rural regions like the provinces Santiago del Estero, Jujuy and Corrientes, it still was 30-35%.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. one of the most recent publications: António Costa Pinto, *Latin American Dictatorships in the Era of Fascism. The Corporatist Wave*, London, New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor and Francis, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Chen, "Corporatism under Attack?", p. 200.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Gino Germani, *Autoritarismo, fascismo y populismo nacional*, Buenos Aires: Temas Grupo Editorial, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Alberto Ciria, *Política y cultura popular. La Argentina peronista 1946-1955*, Buenos Aires: De la Flor, 1983, p. 45; Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón*, p. 21; Robert

studies on fascist or Peronist visual propaganda, let alone a comparison of the two.<sup>14</sup> In the case of Fascist Italy, the existing literature on propaganda focuses on topics other than work, like the Italo-Abyssinian or World War II.<sup>15</sup> Another interest of a visual history of Italian Fascism has been commercial advertisements of the period.<sup>16</sup> The to date limited (art) historical research on Peronist propaganda either misses out on an extensive comparison with Fascist Italy<sup>17</sup> or, as mainly Natalia Milanesio has done, takes into account commercial posters and campaigns.<sup>18</sup> So far, studies on the transnational dimension of Italian Fascism and corporatism have focused on Europe,<sup>19</sup> fascist foreign policy,<sup>20</sup> and different fascist organisations, such as the *Fasci Italiani*

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Paxton, *Anatomie des Faschismus*, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2006, p. 285.

<sup>14</sup> Katharina Schembs, *Der Arbeiter als Zukunftsträger der Nation. Bildpropaganda im faschistischen Italien und im peronistischen Argentinien in transnationaler Perspektive*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Adolfo Mignemi, *Immagine coordinata per un impero. Etiopia, 1935-1936*, Turin: Forma, 1984; Attilio Brilli et al. (eds.), *Immagini e retorica di regime. Bozzetti originali di propaganda fascista, 1935-1942*, Milan: F. Motta, 2001; Walter Marossi, *Credere, obbedire, convincere. Propaganda e comunicazione 1943/1945*, Milan: M & B, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Bianca Gaudenzi, "Press Advertising and Fascist Dictates. Showcasing the Female Consumer in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany": *Journalism Studies*, 14: 5 (2013), pp. 663-680.

<sup>17</sup> Marcela Gené does not base her findings about Fascist Italy's propaganda on archival research but only relies on material that was published in secondary literature (Marcela Gené, *Un mundo feliz. Imágenes de los trabajadores en el primer peronismo, 1946-1955*, Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Natalia Milanesio, *Workers Go Shopping in Argentina. The Rise of Popular Consumer Culture*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Benedetta Garzarelli, *Parleremo al mondo intero. La propaganda del fascismo all'estero*, Alessandria: Dell'Orso, 2004; Matteo Pasetti, *L'Europa corporativa. Una storia transnazionale tra le due guerre mondiali*, Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Marco Mugnaini, *L'America Latina e Mussolini. Brasile e Argentina nella politica estera dell'Italia, 1919-1943*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008; Laura Fotia, *La crociera della nave "Italia" e le origini della diplomazia culturale del fascismo in America Latina*, Canterano: Aracne, 2017.

all'Estero, and their activities and publications in Latin America.<sup>21</sup> If the regime's visual propaganda has been compared transnationally, then mostly with other totalitarian political systems, like Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union,<sup>22</sup> sometimes also with the democratic USA under Roosevelt.<sup>23</sup> Works on transfers from Italy to Argentina mainly consider Italian emigrants,<sup>24</sup> but hardly ever pay special attention to visual propaganda.

Thus, starting from a visual history approach,<sup>25</sup> the question remains of whether or not the Peronists adopted parts of the iconography of fascist propaganda along with the corporatist reform programme. In what way did the propaganda of the Peronist regime differ from the Italian precursor, especially when fascism had internationally fallen into discredit after the outcome of World War II? In short, what were similarities and differences in the formation of political identities through visual media under both regimes?

Since the interwar period the iconography of state media in a whole range of political systems – from the socialist Soviet Union to the

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<sup>21</sup> María Victoria Grillo, "Creer en Mussolini. La proyección exterior del fascismo italiano (Argentina 1930-1939)": *Ayer*, 62: 2 (2006), pp. 231-256; Emilio Franzina / Matteo Sanfilippo (eds.), *Il fascismo e gli emigrati. La parabola dei Fasci italiani all'estero (1920-1943)*, Rome: Laterza, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Igor Golomshtok, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China*, New York: Icon Ed., 1990; Wendy Kaplan (ed.), *Designing Modernity. The Arts of Reform and Persuasion, 1885-1945. Selections from the Wolfsonian*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995; Jan Tabor (ed.), *Kunst und Diktatur. Architektur, Bildhauerei, Malerei in Österreich, Deutschland, Italien und der Sowjetunion, 1922-1956*, Baden: Grasi, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard F. Reilly, "Emblems of Production. Workers in German, Italian, and American Art during the 1930s": Kaplan, *Designing modernity*, pp. 286-313; Gian Piero Brunetta / Maurizio Vaudagna (eds.), *L'estetica della politica. Europe e America negli anni Trenta*, Rome: Laterza, 1989.

<sup>24</sup> David Aliano, *Mussolini's National Project in Argentina*, Lanham: Fairleigh Dickinson, 2012; Vanni Blengino / Eugenia Scarzanella (eds.), *Fascisti in Sud America*, Florence: Le lettere, 2005; Matteo Pretelli, "Mussolini's Mobilities. Transnational Movements between Fascist Italy and Italian Communities Abroad": *Journal of Migration History*, 1: 1 (2015), pp. 100-120.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, London: Reaktion, 2001; W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Pictorial Turn": *ArtForum*, 5 (1992), pp. 89-94; Gottfried Boehm, "Die Wiederkehr der Bilder": Gottfried Boehm (ed.) *Was ist ein Bild?*, Munich: Fink, 1994, pp. 11-38.

democratic USA under Roosevelt – centred on the working population. However, the fact that Perón explicitly named Fascist Italy as one of his models (at least prior to 1945) along with the multiple personal entanglements of functionaries on different levels call for a detailed diachronic comparison of the two cases. Based on the analysis of around 1,500 propaganda pieces from both countries – posters, postcards and illustrations in magazines and schoolbooks<sup>26</sup> – I argue that the Peronist regime designed a political identity that greatly diverged from that of Italian Fascism. The Peronist identity as it was devised primarily in visual media took a more inclusive shape, as far as different parts of the population were concerned, and was more future-oriented in terms of the economic branches it supported. After looking at contacts between the two countries and the transfer of propagandistic material from Italy to Argentina from the 1920s onwards, I will briefly explain how the propaganda machineries worked under the two regimes. Then I will analyse the main role models that the visual propaganda provided for different target groups: male workers, the heads of state, women, children, and lastly, also negative role models of supposed enemies. In the corporatist societies to be built, all of these role models revolved around work.

When comparing the visual propaganda of Fascist Italy and Peronist Argentina one should bear in mind that both countries were highly entangled through their populations. Because of the high percentage of the Argentines of Italian origin, in the eyes of Italian Fascists the country represented a prime target for their propaganda abroad.<sup>27</sup> The regime attempted to win over so-called “Italians abroad”<sup>28</sup> (*Italiani all'estero*) and spread the fascist ideology in Argentina, and from there preferably in the whole of Latin America. From the late 1920s until the early 1940s,

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<sup>26</sup> As schoolbooks were deliberately enriched with ideological contents by both regimes (in Italy following the *Riforma Gentile* of 1923, in Argentina mainly under Minister of Education Armando Méndez San Martín, 1950-55), they can be subsumed into the category of propaganda media. In both cases propaganda graphic artists often also illustrated textbooks.

<sup>27</sup> Emilio Gentile, “Emigración e italianidad en Argentina, en los mitos de potencia del nacionalismo y del fascismo (1900–1930)”: *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, 1: 2 (1986), pp. 143–180, 169.

<sup>28</sup> Ornella Bianchi, “Fascismo e emigrazione”: Vanni Blengino (ed.), *La riscoperta delle Americhe. Lavoratori e sindacato nell'emigrazione italiana in America Latina 1870–1970*, Milan: Teti, 1994, pp. 96–114, 102.



propaganda material from Fascist Italy reached Argentina – visual and illustrated pieces being deemed most effective in conveying the purported social reality under Mussolini.<sup>29</sup> In spite of these proselytising efforts, the majority of the Italo-Argentines remained indifferent to the fascist cause or even engaged in antifascist organisations.<sup>30</sup> Only among Argentine nationalists, an ideologically heterogeneous group, the propagandistic messages from Italy found some approval and they discussed how to apply fascist corporatism to the Argentine economy.<sup>31</sup> To these nationalist circles belonged the young lieutenant colonel Juan Domingo Perón, as large parts of the Argentine military. In 1939 he was sent to Italy as an emissary to report on the pending war in Europe. There, for the most part, he served as the secretary to the military attaché of the Argentine embassy in Rome before returning to Argentina in 1941 a self-declared admirer of Mussolini.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from Perón himself, traditionally close contacts also existed between Italian and Argentine artists – who the fascist regime in Italy and later the Peronist regime attempted to recruit to design their respective propaganda.<sup>33</sup> Important Argentine artists were of Italian origin, had received some of their education in Italy, or travelled back and forth between the two countries.<sup>34</sup> Argentine cultural magazines on the one hand followed Italian cultural life meticulously. The fascist regime on the other hand regarded exhibitions of Italian art abroad as

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from Italian Embassy in Buenos Aires to Ministry of Popular Culture in Rome, 11 Jan. 1938: “[...] allo scopo di mantenere il contatto visivo tra gli italiani all'estero e la Madre Patria”, Busta propaganda fascista in Argentina, Archivio dello Stato (ACS), Rome.

<sup>30</sup> Bianchi, “Fascismo e emigrazione”, p. 104.

<sup>31</sup> Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism. Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, p. 98.

<sup>32</sup> Ronald Dolkart, “La derecha durante la Década Infame, 1930-1943”: Rock (ed.), *La derecha argentina*, pp. 151-199, p. 154; Norberto Galasso, *Perón*, Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2005, p. 121.

<sup>33</sup> Diana Wechsler, “Da una estetica del silenzio a una silenziosa declamazione. Incontri e appropriazioni di una tradizione nelle metropoli del Rio de la Plata”: Tadeu Chiarelli (ed.), *Novecento sudamericano. Relazioni artistiche tra Italia e Argentina, Brasile, Uruguay*, Milan: Skira, 2003, pp. 27-36, 34; Fabio Benzi, *Arte in Italia tra le due guerre*, Turin: Boringhieri, 2013, pp. 230-231.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. Jorge López Anaya, *Historia del arte argentino*, Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997.

an effective means of its cross-border propaganda culturale – another way in which visual material produced by more or less co-opted Italian artists reached Argentina.<sup>35</sup>

As to the production of the propaganda, the fascist regime had taken care of creating specialised state agencies early on by gradually expanding the Duce's press office. The resulting Ministry of Popular Culture (Ministero della Cultura Popolare) finally united the responsibilities for cultural policy and propaganda in 1937.<sup>36</sup> However, graphic and photographic propaganda, for the most part, continued to be produced outside the ministry by commercial advertising agencies, individual graphic artists<sup>37</sup> and the Istituto LUCE (initially a private institution that was nationalised in 1925 and henceforth responsible for propaganda, press photography and film).<sup>38</sup> In Argentina the Peronist regime inherited a so-called Understate Secretariat for Press and Propaganda (Subsecretaría de Informaciones y Prensa) from the preceding administration, which it continuously expanded. As opposed to Italy, graphic and photographic propaganda in Peronist Argentina was elaborated in a more centralised manner in the different departments of the Understate Secretariat.<sup>39</sup>

The two regimes differed considerably in their success in winning over artists to produce their respective visual propaganda. While the fascist regime with its patronage policy was able to co-opt a great number of cultural workers well into the 1930s, the majority of Argentine artists and intellectuals turned their backs on the Peronist

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<sup>35</sup> Report by the Italian Ambassador in Argentina to Italian Foreign Minister Gian Galeazzo Ciano, January 19, 1938, Bsta 8, Ministero della Cultura Popolare, Direzione Generale Servizi Propaganda, ACS Rome.

<sup>36</sup> Turi, "Faschismus und Kultur", p. 95.

<sup>37</sup> One of these graphic artists and painters was Mario Sironi. As he is more known for abstract depictions of corporatism, he is not considered in this article that focuses on the analysis of personified representations.

<sup>38</sup> Ernesto Laura, *Le stagioni dell'aquila. Storia dell'Istituto LUCE*, Rome: Ente dello spettacolo, 2000, pp. 27, 33; Adolfo Mignemi, "La costruzione degli strumenti di propaganda": Adolfo Mignemi (ed.), *Propaganda politica e mezzi di comunicazione tra fascismo e democrazia*, Turin: Gruppo Abele, 1995, pp. 11–51, 30; for the relationship between intellectuals and the regime in general see e.g.: Mario Isnenghi, *Intellettuuali militanti e intellettuuali funzionari. Appunti sulla cultura fascista*, Turin: Einaudi, 1979.

<sup>39</sup> Gené, *Un mundo feliz*, pp. 30–33, 37–38.

regime, calling Perón a “Mussolini from the pampas”.<sup>40</sup> This forced the Perón administration to commission either marginal or foreign artists, in some cases Italians, like the sculptor Leone Tommasi.<sup>41</sup>

### **“Avant-garde” and “Hope of the Future Fatherland”: The Worker in the Visual Propaganda of Fascism and Peronism**

With the introduction of corporatism, a vertical social order, defined by Mussolini as “one of the cornerstones of fascism”,<sup>42</sup> the fascist state reacted to a series of immediate post-World War I crises: Unrest among rural and industrial workers, many of whom the labour market had been unable to absorb after the end of the war, and subsequent riots between leftist groups and the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, fighting fronts of nascent Italian Fascism that were founded in 1919.<sup>43</sup> Corporations run and controlled by the state that united employers and employees of different economic sectors were supposed to pacify these class conflicts. To this end, in 1926 the Ministry of Corporations (Ministero delle Corporazioni) was founded to mediate labour relations, granting the fascist state union a monopoly. The following year the regime laid out the new corporatist order in a Labour Charter (Carta del Lavoro). While the National Council of Corporations (Consiglio Nazionale delle Corporazioni) followed in 1930, the majority of the corporations themselves came into being only in 1934.<sup>44</sup> Partly because of this slow institutionalisation the long-term consensus in research on fascist corporatism used to be that it constituted a mere

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<sup>40</sup> Raanan Rein, *Peronismo, populismo y política. Argentina, 1943-1955*, Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1998, pp. 19-20.

<sup>41</sup> Benzi, *Arte in Italia*, p. 232; Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política. Arte argentino en los años sesenta*, Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001, pp. 52, 64; Giovanni Bovecchi et al. (eds.), *Leone Tommasi, Pietrasanta: Pettratedizioni*, 2007, pp. 84-95.

<sup>42</sup> Giovanni Bottai, *Le Corporazioni*, Milan: Mondadori, 1935, p. 289.

<sup>43</sup> Patrizia Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli Italiani. Una storia sociale*, Milan: Utet, 2008, pp. 4, 18, 23.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfgang Schieder, *Faschistische Diktaturen. Studien zu Italien und Deutschland*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008, p. 152; Nützenadel, "Korporativismus und Landwirtschaft", p. 346; Alessio Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista*, Rome: Laterza, 2010, p. VII.

“propagandistic bluff”.<sup>45</sup> Yet more recent publications have shown its relevance, especially for the regulation of labour relations, a context in which a series of social measures were first adopted.<sup>46</sup>

Many of the social tensions Perón faced when becoming state secretary of labour in 1943 had originated in Argentina’s rapid industrial growth since the 1930s that had attracted a great number of internal migrants. However, at their new workplaces in the metropolitan area these faced largely unregulated working conditions. Until then labour and social legislation had been rather scarce and only sporadically enforced. During Perón’s presidency from June 1946, he built on the social reforms adopted from 1943 to 1945. Furthermore, as had been the case in fascist corporatism, he promoted the integration of workers into unions, henceforth controlled by the Peronist state.<sup>47</sup>

The corporatist model of society, which both regimes tried to establish, centred on the figure of the worker, whom they declared a hero and an exemplary citizen. By explicitly revaluing the working population in the medium of state propaganda, Italian and Argentine workers experienced symbolic recognition by a national government for the first time. Both the fascist and the Peronist regime elevated the figure of the worker to a synonym of the respective national identity. In numerous speeches Mussolini addressed his audience as “popolo italiano lavoratore”.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Perón called the Argentine population “pueblo trabajador” or “descamisados” (shirtless ones), a neologism that symbolised the Peronist regime’s identification with the poorer sectors of society.<sup>49</sup> Propaganda images featuring muscular manual workers enforced these statements. In the case of an Italian postcard from 1938, a topless blacksmith hammers on a piece of glowing metal

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<sup>45</sup> E.g. Gianpasquale Santomassimo, *La terza via fascista. Il mito del corporativismo*, Rome: Carocci, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Nützenadel, “Korporativismus und Landwirtschaft”, pp. 346, 356; Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista*, p. VIII.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration. Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1973*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 8–10.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. Edoardo Susmel / Duilio Susmel (eds.), *Benito Mussolini. Opera Omnia XXIII*, Florence: La Fenice, 1957, p. 141.

<sup>49</sup> Santiago Ganduglia, *La legislación social de Perón*, Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Prensa y Difusión, 1955, p. 8; Cecilia Pittelli / Miguel Somoza Rodríguez, “Peronismo. Notas acerca de la producción y el control de símbolos. La historia y sus usos”: Puiggrós / Carli (eds.), *Discursos pedagógicos*, pp. 205–257, 209–210.

(Fig. 1). While the palm trees and a black figure in the background point to the colonial context in Ethiopia after 1935, the subtitle, a quote by Mussolini, refers to the willingness of the Italian people, represented by the heroic worker, to work as a “guarantee of their future”. On the cover of an Argentine textbook for the third grade from 1953, a muscular shirtless worker in overalls bows over a globe and works on the geographic outlines of Argentina with a hammer and a chisel (Fig. 2). The title explains his activity: “He is forging the fatherland”. Despite the future not being explicitly connected to the worker’s output as in the Italian case, the continuous form of the Spanish verb *forjar* (*forjando*), meaning to shape, stresses that the task is still in process. Furthermore, according to other propaganda messages, the future of the nation depended on the working population’s effort. In that sense Mussolini called the workers “the avant-garde in a renewed fatherland”.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Perón’s wife Eva, who never held a government post but was still politically influential, called the working population “the hope of the future fatherland”.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Edoardo Susmel / Diulio Susmel (eds.), Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia XXI*, Florence: La Fenice, 1956, p. 133.

<sup>51</sup> Eva Perón, “Los obreros, esperanza de la Patria Futura”: *Del Peronismo*, 4: 33 (1950), p. 15.

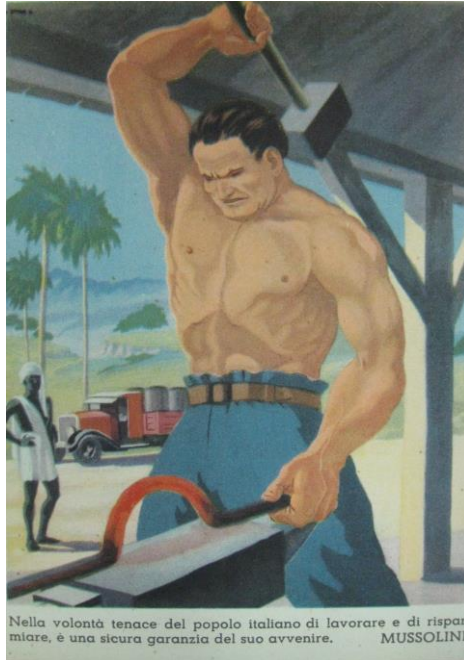


Figure 1: “Nella volontà tenace del Popolo italiano di lavorare”, postcard, Italy, 1938. Courtesy of: Museo del Risorgimento, Comune di Milano, Palazzo Moroggia.

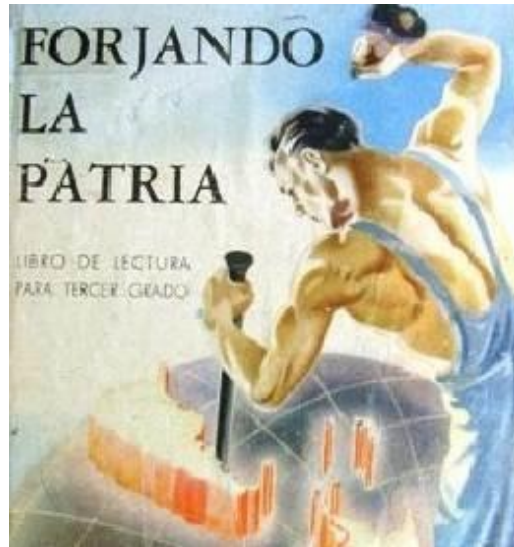


Figure 2: "Forjando la patria", primary school textbook cover, Argentina, 1953. Courtesy of: Biblioteca Nacional de Maestros, Buenos Aires.

Newly created holidays and traditional ones appropriated by the regimes offered important occasions on which the new attention the state paid to the working population became clear. While the fascist regime shifted Labour Day from 1 May to 21 April, the day of the mythical foundation of Rome, in order to distance itself from the socialist tradition and emphasise its ties to ancient Rome instead,<sup>52</sup> the Peronist regime maintained 1 May. It also added 17 October to the political festive calendar, the day protesting workers had liberated Perón from imprisonment in 1945 before he was elected president the following February.<sup>53</sup> In comparison to Fascist Italy, propaganda posters on the occasion of Labour Day were far more frequent in Peronist Argentina. Workers are featured in the foreground as incarnations of the social change the regime proclaimed, as in a poster by Besares Sorraire (Fig. 3).

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<sup>52</sup> Alceo Riosa, "Alcuni appunti per una storia della Festa del lavoro durante il regime fascista": Alceo Riosa (ed.), *Le metamorfosi del 1° maggio. La festa del lavoro in Europa tra le due guerre*, Venice: Marsilio, 1990, pp. 73–89, 74.

<sup>53</sup> Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón*, pp. 39, 52–55.



Figure 3: Besares Sorraire, “Obrero, ayer oprimido, hoy dignificado”, poster, Argentina, undated. Courtesy of: Instituto Nacional “Juan D. Perón” de Investigaciones Históricas, Sociales y Políticas, Buenos Aires.

While the protagonist’s white shirt already indicates his material progress in the present, a second monochrome ghost-like male portrait behind the main character introduces a second time level. His suffering facial expression hints at the situation of workers before Peronism. As the image suggests, workers used to be anonymous, faceless and neglected by the state. Under Perón, however, the time level represented by the juvenile, healthy-looking worker in the foreground, the government is looking after workers’ every need. The headline in black and red supports this message, also confronting past and present: “Worker, yesterday oppressed, today dignified, 1 May.”

According to both the fascist and the Peronist propaganda, the dignification of the worker constituted an important goal that was to be achieved mainly through social policy. A 1924 Italian postcard by



Giorgio Muggiani depicts a male figure wearing the apron of a metalworker. The smoking factory chimneys in the background further characterise him as an industrial worker. In the subtitle the metalworker declares: "The fascist government has returned to me my dignity as a worker and as an Italian". Not only do the attributes "Italian" and "worker" appear to be interchangeable, but the restitution of said dignity is explicitly ascribed to the fascist regime, represented by the Fascio Littorio, the fasces next to the worker's head. Despite the propaganda's claims, however, concrete improvements in the field of labour legislation in Fascist Italy were rather limited. By the end of the 1920s, the regime had actually cut back many social measures, like pensions and unemployment schemes the liberal government under Giovanni Giolitti had introduced prior to 1920.<sup>54</sup> Probably for that reason state social policy faded into the background as a topic of the visual propaganda. Instead, state visual media emphasised the working population's supposed duties over their rights, as the Carta del Lavoro of 1927, the fundamental document of fascist corporatism had done by declaring work a social duty.<sup>55</sup> Like propaganda publications titled "From citizen to producer" suggested, these duties mainly consisted of increased productivity.<sup>56</sup>

While in Fascist Italy only a small fraction of the government promoted a social reform programme, the Peronist regime made its state social policy its key issue.<sup>57</sup> On the whole, during Peronism, there was a considerable increase in the number of recipients of public social securities, like pensions and family allowances, which had already been instituted prior to 1946. The redistribution of national income benefitted the working class, whose share rose to fifty-five percent by 1955.<sup>58</sup> According to the Peronists, these reforms had dignified the

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<sup>54</sup> Maria Sophia Quine, *Italy's Social Revolution. Charity and Welfare from Liberalism to Fascism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave 2002, p. 112.

<sup>55</sup> Giovanni Bottai, *La carta del lavoro*, Rome: Diritto del lavoro, 1927.

<sup>56</sup> "Dal cittadino al produttore": *Critica fascista*, 5: 8 (1927), pp. 148-149.

<sup>57</sup> Pierangelo Schiera, "Korporativismus im Faschismus. Nur Element der Systemsteuerung oder notwendige pluralistische Komponente des italienischen Totalitarismus?": Gerd Bender et al. (eds.), *Das Europa der Diktatur. Steuerung, Wirtschaft, Recht*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2002, pp. 53-75, 59; Peter Ross, "Justicia social. Una evaluación de los logros del Peronismo clásico": *Anuario del IEHS*, 8 (1993), pp. 105-124, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Ross, "Justicia social", pp. 109, 112.

working population, as the poster on the occasion of 1 May denotes (Fig. 2). Calls for higher productivity levels did, however, become more frequent in Peronist propaganda as well, especially during a recession at the beginning of the 1950s.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the propaganda continued to focus on the social rights the regime had provided the working population with.

Regarding the question of which economic sector required the workers' productivity most, the propaganda of each regime had a different answer. While the focus of state media in Italy lay on peasants and rural workers in bucolic idylls, the main protagonists of Peronist propaganda were industrial workers.<sup>60</sup> Fascist propaganda illustrations did not only evoke a pre-industrial state where ploughs are drawn by oxen, but even went back to Antiquity for iconographic inspiration. The poster "L'Agricoltore d'Italia" by the National Fascist Farmers' Confederation (Confederazione Nazionale Fascista degli Agricoltori) from 1928 depicts a muscular, male nude in a striding position (Fig. 4).

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<sup>59</sup> Santiago Senén González / Fabián Bosoer, *Breve historia del sindicalismo argentino*, Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 2009, pp. 101-102.

<sup>60</sup> Reilly, "Emblems of Production", pp. 286-313, 295.



Figure 4: Mario Vucetich, “L’agricoltore d’Italia”, poster, Italy, 1928. Courtesy of: Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli, Castello Sforzesco, Milan.

Bearing stylistic similarities to ancient statues, he raises the right arm in the fascist salute while holding a rudimentary plough in the other. Besides this tool and the title “L’Agricoltore d’Italia”, a quote by Mussolini refers to the agrarian world: “Italian agriculture will enter an era of great splendour”. Together with the references to Antiquity, that in the course of a return-to-order-movement became more abundant in the 1930s,<sup>61</sup> the poster claims the continuity of the fascist regime with Italy’s glorious past. In the same way, on the occasion of other important episodes of fascist agricultural policy, like the so-called Grain Battles (Battaglie del Grano), which aimed to stimulate the domestic grain production starting in 1925, anachronistic representations of agricultural work prevail. Modernisations in the agricultural sector, like the mechanisation of procedures that the fascist regime itself had introduced, are virtually absent from fascist visual propaganda.

<sup>61</sup> Benzi, *Arte in Italia*, pp. 243-244.

In Peronist Argentina against the backdrop of a decided industrialisation policy, urban industrial workers constitute the principal characters in propaganda images. The protagonist on the poster on the occasion of Labour Day is positioned in front of an industrial plant (Fig. 3). Industrial workers were also shown putting into practice the notorious Peronist five-year-plans. Apart from smoking chimneys, the industry is frequently represented by oversized gearwheels that the worker figures in overalls forcefully set in motion. However, the agricultural sector was not altogether neglected in Peronist propaganda. Yet, rather than sceneries of traditional rural life as in Fascist Italy, Peronist media actually often presented modern agricultural production sites next to the industrial and the tertiary sector as integral parts of the Argentine economy.

### **Mussolini Lavoratore and Perón as Primer Trabajador: The Heads of State as Workers**

Not only the common man, but also the heads of government appeared as workers in the visual propaganda of both regimes. Mussolini and Perón were at the centre of media interest in the two extremely personalist political systems and orchestrated a cult of personality that set them apart from all previous, far less mediatised presidents.<sup>62</sup> As founders of the two political movements, the doctrines and ideological contents of which had been elaborated for the most part *ex post* only after coming into power, Mussolini's and Perón's figures initially served as the only undisputed symbols of the respective propaganda.<sup>63</sup> In accordance with their self-images as revolutionaries, both heads of government staged themselves as new types of politicians, or even anti-politicians and tried to convince people that they, unlike politicians

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<sup>62</sup> Angelo Ventrone, *Il nemico interno. Immagini, parole e simboli della lotta politica nell'Italia del Novecento*, Rome: Donzelli, 2005, p. 60; Marcela Gené, "Los rostros del General Perón. Del retrato protocolar a la caricatura": *Prohistoria*, 9: 9 (2005), pp. 83–108, 85.

<sup>63</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, p. 132; Gené, "Los rostros del General Perón", p. 85.

before them, turned “words into action”.<sup>64</sup> To convey that message, the visual propaganda presented them as very active and energetic heads of state who basically worked around the clock. In order to suggest that Mussolini hardly slept, the light in his office in the Palazzo Venezia was always kept on.<sup>65</sup> While the idea that these efforts were mainly directed at social matters was already present in fascist propaganda, it became one of the main topics in Peronist propaganda. Different publications meticulously portrayed Perón’s long workday, an important part of which consisted of receiving families in need in his official residence.<sup>66</sup> In comparison with Mussolini, whose office visitors could only access following a complicated selection process and protocol, this made Perón a far more approachable head of state.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the role of the industrious politician, Mussolini and Perón adopted a multitude of other roles, many of which emphasised physical characteristics. They were shown as military men, sportsmen, private citizens, husbands and handymen. The sheer number of these roles further reinforced the impression of their extreme activity. More importantly, they also displayed their skills as manual workers – a propaganda topic that set them apart from the iconography of previous politicians and that was meant to ultimately reevaluate work. That way, “Mussolini Lavoratore”<sup>68</sup> (Mussolini worker) and Perón as the “Primer Trabajador”<sup>69</sup> (first worker) acted as popular and approachable political leaders that identified with the working class – a trait that

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<sup>64</sup> Luigi Lojaco, “La politica sociale del fascismo”: *Gerarchia*, 15: 1 (1935), pp. 18-27, 25-26; Juan Domingo Perón, *Obras completas IX*, Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1998, p. 258.

<sup>65</sup> Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, “Mussolini’s Self-Staging”: Hans-Jörg Czech / Nikola Doll (eds.), *Kunst und Propaganda. Im Streit der Nationen 1930–1945*, Dresden: Sandstein, 2007, pp. 88–95, 92.

<sup>66</sup> Subsecretaría de Informaciones, *Argentina en marcha*, Buenos Aires: Subsecretaría de Informaciones, 1950, p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> Wolfgang Schieder, “Audienz bei Mussolini. Zur symbolischen Politik faschistischer Diktaturherrschaft 1923–1943”: Petra Terhoeven (ed.), *Italien, Blicke. Neue Perspektiven der italienischen Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010, pp. 107–132, 115–116.

<sup>68</sup> Il Doganiere, “Mussolini lavoratore”: *Critica fascista*, 12: 15 (1934), p. 291.

<sup>69</sup> Perón, *Obras completas IX*, p. 29.

speaks to their populist leaderships.<sup>70</sup> According to the differing importance of the agrarian and the industrial sector in fascist and Peronist propaganda, Mussolini staged himself as an agricultural worker. Declaring that he felt “profoundly rural” and that he loved agriculture,<sup>71</sup> he appeared on numerous postcards, for example, as a harvest hand in the context of the fascist Battaglia del Grano (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: “Agricoltori iscritti”: *L’Italia Fascista* in Cammino, Italy, 1932, p. 9. Courtesy of: Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

<sup>70</sup> Karin Priester, “Definitionen und Typologien des Populismus”: *Soziale Welt*, 62 (2011), pp. 185-198, 189.

<sup>71</sup> Edoardo Susmel / Diulio Susmel (eds.), *Benito Mussolini, Opera omnia XXII*, Florence: La Fenice, 1957, p. 292.

The propagandistic mise-en-scène in LUCE photos, like the one from the illustrated volume “L’Italia Fascista in Cammino” that was published in 1932 on the occasion of the regime’s tenth anniversary, is evidenced by the Duce’s suit and hat, completely inappropriate clothing for a harvest. While the caption elaborates on the achievements of the corporatist system in the agricultural sector, the tool used by Mussolini, the sickle, negates any mechanisation of procedures, in analogy to other anachronistic representations of rural labour. In the light of the industrialising project promoted by the Peronist regime, Perón put on the overalls of industrial workers, as on the occasion of the 1 May on the cover of the magazine *Ahora* (Fig. 6).

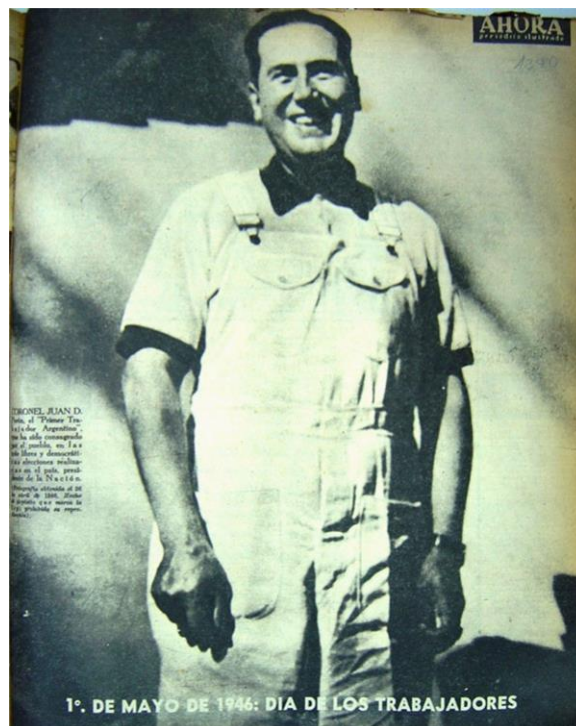


Figure 6: “1 de mayo de 1946: Día de los trabajadores”: *Ahora*, 2 (1946), cover. Courtesy of: Natalia Milanesio, “A Man Like You. Juan Domingo Perón and the Politics of Attraction in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina”: *Gender & History*, 26: 1 (2014), pp. 84-104.

The title "1 May, Labour Day" further supports his characterisation as a common man. In Peronist discourse the overalls advanced to a symbol for industriousness. Giving a speech in front of teachers of industrial vocational training, a system the regime had instituted, the president declared: "We want factory technicians who put on their overalls and get to work together with their workers [...], not charlatans who aren't any good at washing or sweeping".<sup>72</sup> Thus, along with their different foci on either the agricultural or the industrial sector, the iconography of the leaders confirms the more future-oriented character of Peronist propaganda.

Another aspect that made Peronist Argentina more progressive was that propagandistic representations – in stark contrast to misogynous Fascist Italy – prominently featured the president's wife, Eva Perón.<sup>73</sup> In spite of never holding an official government post, she exerted considerable political influence. With her mere appearance in public, she questioned the traditional perception of politics as a purely male sphere<sup>74</sup> and in an international perspective was maybe only preceded by Eleanor Roosevelt in the 1930s and 1940s. However, Eva Perón's concrete activities, for example, as head of a welfare organisation, that the visual propaganda meticulously took note of, adhered to traditional role models of male and female labour. As the ultimate mother of the nation, she was responsible for the people's emotional concerns, while Perón dedicated himself to supposedly rational politics.<sup>75</sup> In contrast to her husband, she did not appear as a proficient manual or industrial worker. Instead, social welfare, traditionally regarded as a female sphere, was presented as 'Evita's' fields of expertise. Similarly, in relation to the working class, the propaganda stressed her purportedly female qualities as the people's advocate vis-à-vis her husband.<sup>76</sup> These

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<sup>72</sup> Quoted from Inés Dussel and Pablo Pineau, "De cuando la clase obrera entró al paraíso. La educación técnica estatal en el primer peronismo": Puiggrós / Carli (eds), *Discursos pedagógicos*, pp. 107–176, 51–152.

<sup>73</sup> Gené, "Los rostros del General Perón", pp. 90–91.

<sup>74</sup> Sandra Carreras, "Eva Perón": Nikolaus Werz (ed.), *Populisten, Revolutionäre, Staatsmänner. Politiker in Lateinamerika*, Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2010, pp. 196–215, 201.

<sup>75</sup> Susana Rosano, "Imaginario femenino en el populismo argentino. Género y nación en *La razón de mi vida*, de Eva Perón": *Iberoamericana*, 5: 19 (2005), pp. 51–63, 57.

<sup>76</sup> Eva Perón, *La razón de mi vida*, Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1951, p. 66.



attributes fuelled a sacral cult after she died of cancer at the age of thirty-three in 1952. During the two weeks she was laid in state in the Ministry of Labour – a telling choice of place exemplifying the close relationship between the workers and Evita – thousands of Argentines paid their last respect, with the queue winding around the building.<sup>77</sup>

A poster from the state-controlled union Confederación General del Trabajo that was printed a few months after her death conveys this sacral character by the nimbus Eva Perón's portrait appears in (Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Arístides Rechaín, “Evita, Mártir del Trabajo”, poster, Argentina, 1952. Courtesy of: Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires.

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<sup>77</sup> Carreras, "Eva Perón", pp. 212-213.

Below her, workers in overalls, a schoolboy, an old man with a girl on his lap and a woman praying to Eva represent the disadvantaged parts of society – workers, children, women and the elderly – that Eva had spoken up for during her lifetime. To ease their suffering, which the workers' bowing exhaustedly over their tools indicates, Eva died the death of a "Martyr of Work", as the title of the poster suggests. The disappearance of Eva's body after Perón's fall in 1955, which was retrieved from a cemetery in Milan only in the early 1970s, further reinforced the myth of 'Santa Evita'.

### **Of Mothers, Nurses and Women Voters: Visual Representations of Female Labour**

As the roles ascribed to Eva Perón in the visual propaganda indicate, the conception of workers as avant-garde or future of the nation was exclusively male under both regimes. In the eyes of the political leaders, in the corporatist state women were destined for other tasks.<sup>78</sup> In this sense 'Evita' was meant to serve as a model for Argentine women, also concerning female labour. Despite not having offspring herself, the first lady recommended motherhood to all other women that was conceptualised as unpaid work.<sup>79</sup> Already in Fascist Italy propaganda had advised women to bear as many children as possible in order to strengthen the nation in the context of, for example, so-called "demographic battles".<sup>80</sup> The Peronist regime neither resorted to such militaristic rhetoric in the realm of family policy nor did it adopt misogynous labour legislation forcing women out of paid jobs, as had been the case in Italy after WWI.<sup>81</sup> Still, in Peronist propaganda the iconography of women generally consisted of presenting them in the

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<sup>78</sup> Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli Italiani*, p. 118; Barbara Potthast, *Madres, obreras, amantes. Protagonismo femenino en la historia de América Latina*, Madrid: Vervuert, 2010, pp. 270-271.

<sup>79</sup> Eva Perón, *Discursos completos 1, 1946–1948*, Buenos Aires: Megafón, 1985, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup> Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli Italiani*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>81</sup> Karin Grammatico, "Populist Continuities in 'Revolutionary' Peronism? A Comparative Analysis of Gender Discourses of First Peronism (1946–1955) and the Montoneros": Karen Kampwirth (ed.), *Gender and Populism in Latin America. Passionate Politics*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010, pp. 122–139, 128; Potthast, *Madres, obreras, amantes*, p. 283.

family circle. In Fascist Italy one of the many newly founded welfare organisations, the National Project for the Protection of Mothers and Children (Opera Nazionale per la Protezione della Maternità e dell'Infanzia) took care of single mothers, illegitimate children and orphans. However, in its copious visual propaganda the institution idealised the traditional family, as in the case of a poster by Marcello Dudovich showing a nuclear family from the back, looking into a promising future (Fig. 8).<sup>82</sup>



Figure 8: Marcello Dudovich, “Giornata della Madre e del Fanciullo”, poster, Italy: 1936. Courtesy of: Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli, Castello Sforzesco, Milan.

In Argentina in the late 1940s and early 1950s, despite progressive reforms, like the introduction of a divorce law and the legal emancipation of illegitimate children, state media perpetuated this

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<sup>82</sup> Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women. Italy, 1922–1945*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992, p. 59.

traditional family model:<sup>83</sup> Women are shown serving food to their happy-looking family, as in the illustration of “The Right to Wellbeing” (“El Derecho al Bienestar”) in the volume “Argentina en Marcha” (Fig. 9). The caption clearly identifies the father as the only breadwinner responsible for his family’s material needs.



Figure 9: “Derecho al bienestar”: Argentina en Marcha, Argentina, 1950, p. 44. Courtesy of: Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación, Colecciones Especiales, Buenos Aires.

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<sup>83</sup> Isabella Cosse, “El orden familiar en tiempos de cambio político. Familia y filiación ilegítima durante el primer peronismo (1946–1955)”: Karina Ramacciotti et al. (eds.), *Generando el peronismo. Estudios de cultura, política y género, 1946–1955*, Buenos Aires: Proyecto, 2003, pp. 169–195, 173.

The few jobs both fascist and Peronist visual propaganda conceded to women were extensions of their roles as mothers: Because of their supposedly typically female predisposition and maternal instincts, teaching and nursing professions seemed like ideal fields of work. In Italy, the massive engagement of women in the Italian Red Cross (Croce Rossa Italiana) during the Libyan war in 1911 and during WWI had fostered the association of nursing as female labour in the public sphere.<sup>84</sup> During fascism, women appeared as nurses in the propaganda, for example, in the context of campaigns against tuberculosis, the fight against which the regime had declared one of its health political priorities (Fig. 10). Two female figures, one clad in dark colours, the other in a nurse's uniform with a veil, hold an infant between them. The identification of female health workers with maternal qualities is supported by the title "The two Mothers", the biological one on the right and the nurse on the left.

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<sup>84</sup> Stefania Bartoloni, "Da una guerra all'altra. Le infermiere della Croce Rossa fra il 1911 e il 1945": Luigi Goglia et al. (eds.), *Guerra e pace nell'Italia del Novecento. Politica estera, cultura politica e correnti dell'opinione pubblica*, Bologna: Il mulino, 2006, pp. 149–174, 149, 151, 153.



Figure 10: Marcello Dudovich, “Campagna antitubercolare”, poster, Italy, approx. 1935. Courtesy of: Archivio Fondazione Massimo e Sonia Cirulli, Bologna.

In Argentina until well into the 1920s, nursing had been a typically male profession, only from then on following European models it became increasingly exercised by women.<sup>85</sup> While the job had lacked particular scientific or social prestige before the advent of Peronism, the Peronist reforms of vocational training that included the field of nursing turned it into a more attractive profession.<sup>86</sup> This also made female nursing students a popular propaganda topic.

Furthermore, both regimes promoted housework, like sewing, that allowed women to combine their duties as mothers with earning a small

<sup>85</sup> Catalina Wainerman / Georgina Binstock, “El nacimiento de una ocupación femenina. La enfermería en Buenos Aires”: *Desarrollo Económico*, 32:126 (1992), pp. 271–284, 277–278, 283.

<sup>86</sup> María Esther Folco, “La Enfermera. Síntesis de feminidad, género y salud en la Pampa durante los gobiernos peronistas (1946–1955)”: *La Aljaba*, 5 (2000), pp. 122–144, 126, 140.

wage.<sup>87</sup> However, women's advocated domestic role contrasted with the new and increasingly public functions they fulfilled in the fascist and Peronist women's organisations. The first fascist women's organisation, the *Fasci Femminili*, was founded in 1920 even before Mussolini came to power, to which the regime later added the *Massaie Rurali* and the *Sezione Operaie e Lavoranti a Domicilio* for rural and working-class women respectively.<sup>88</sup> With membership numbers of nearly five million in 1942, they were among fascism's most important mass organisations.<sup>89</sup> The Peronist regime did not miss out on mobilising the female population either and instituted the *Partido Peronista Femenino*, the female wing of the Peronist Party, under the leadership of Eva Perón in 1949. By 1952, membership had risen to half a million.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to other parties in Argentina like the socialists, that had accepted women in their ranks earlier, Peronism like Italian Fascism maintained the division of its members along gender lines.<sup>91</sup> Yet women's organisations' activities in both countries, well publicised in the state propaganda, were again situated in realms considered typically female, like nursing, childcare or public welfare. So, in Italian illustrated books like "*L'Italia Fascista in Cammino*", edited by the Istituto LUCE in 1932, members of fascist women's organisations are depicted as active in home economics, stitching, cooking or sewing. Women's public role in Italy peaked during WWII when propaganda portrayed them not only as mothers and wives having to bear losses, but also playing an active part in the war themselves. As members of the *Servizi Ausiliari Femminili*, a female auxiliary service instituted roughly a year before the end of the war, they appeared in uniforms, thereby adopting extremely masculine looks. Nevertheless, the concrete duties

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<sup>87</sup> De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, p. 168; Noemí Girbal-Blacha, "'El hogar o la fábrica'. De costureras y tejedoras en la Argentina Peronista (1946-1955)": *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 6 (1997), pp. 217-230, 224, 229.

<sup>88</sup> Perry Willson, "Italy": Kevin Passmore (ed.), *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*, New Brunswick: Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 11-32, 12-13, 15-16.

<sup>89</sup> Willson, "Italy", pp. 25-27.

<sup>90</sup> Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>91</sup> Grammatico, "Populist Continuities?", pp. 134-135.

they fulfilled were those of secretaries, telephone operators, stenographers and nurses – again, traditionally female activities.<sup>92</sup>

Members of the female wing of the Peronist Party or the Fundación Eva Perón (FEP), the charitable organisation named after and led by the Argentine first lady, also carried out social and health work in the public sphere.<sup>93</sup> In the illustrated propaganda book “Argentina en Marcha” from 1950, two women in uniform are driving an open jeep in a scenery that seems to be a street parade (Fig. 11).



Figure 11: “Las enfermeras de la Fundación Ayuda Social”: Argentina en Marcha, Argentina, 1950, p. 101. Courtesy of: Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación, Colecciones Especiales, Buenos Aires.

<sup>92</sup> Roberta Vescovi, "The Fascist Militarised Women of the RSI": Gigiola Gori et al. (eds.), *Gender, Body and Sport in Historical and Transnational Perspectives*, Hamburg: Kovač, 2008, pp. 35–56, 44.

<sup>93</sup> Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón*, p. 175.



A label below the windshield reveals that it belongs to the FEP, which operated its own nursing school. Apart from elaborating on the training of nurses, the caption clarifies that students also learned to drive the “most modern vehicles”, enabling them to travel not only around the Argentine capital, but also to the remotest parts of the country. Yet, as in Italy, this novel public role was only acceptable in occupations associated with female or maternal qualities. Interestingly, the far more progressive Peronist reforms benefiting women, like labour and divorce legislation, were not represented in the visual propaganda.<sup>94</sup> Most importantly, female suffrage that the Argentine government introduced in 1947 constituted a blank space in the propaganda images. The voting woman apparently was not considered worthy of being portrayed in the privileged medium of Peronist identity formation.

### **“Tomorrow’s Army” and “Little Workers”: Youth, Work and Vocational Training**

Among the members of society for whom fascist and Peronist propaganda created new role models, children and youth occupied a prominent spot. Yet while fascism initiated a well-known youth cult, with the anthem of the Fascist Party tellingly titled “Giovinezza” (Youth), Peronism appealed to youth as well as the elderly.<sup>95</sup> The latter had been practically absent from fascist propaganda. Hence, and partly due to the different political context after WWII, by depicting a generational cross-section of Argentine society Peronist propaganda was more inclusive.

Striving towards a totalitarian control of society, the fascist regime incorporated children and adolescents in its youth organisation Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), created in 1926. Encompassing children and teenagers from the age of six to eighteen in separate divisions for the sexes, the ONB organised sports events and camps and built schools all over Italy.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, in propaganda images children and youth

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<sup>94</sup> In Italy divorce laws were only introduced in 1970. The legal emancipation of legitimate and illegitimate children took place in 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Miguel Somoza, *Educación y política en Argentina (1946–1955)*, Madrid: Miño y Dávila, 2006, p. 334.

<sup>96</sup> Roberta Suzzi Valli, “Jugendfeiern im faschistischen Italien”: Sabine Behrenbeck / Alexander Nützenadel (eds.), *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats*.

mainly appeared as members of the different sections of the ONB, as the title of a poem in a primary school textbook from 1932 suggests: "Italy's children are all Balilla".<sup>97</sup> School textbooks in Italy were enriched with ideological contents following an educational reform in 1923.<sup>98</sup> Visual media supported the increasingly militaristic character that the activities in the fascist youth organisations assumed.<sup>99</sup> In illustrations in textbooks, children all wear the uniforms of the fascist youth organisation and salute the Italian flag, Mussolini or the Fascio Littorio. In a 1942 reader for the first grade, seven boys stand in rank and file, lacking any individual traits (Fig. 12).

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Politische Feiern in Italien und Deutschland seit 1860/71, Cologne: SH, 2000, pp. 113–126, 115.

<sup>97</sup> Dina Bucciarelli Belardinelli / Angelo della Torre, *Sillabario e piccole letture*, Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1932, p. 100.

<sup>98</sup> Jürgen Charnitzky, "Unterricht und Erziehung im faschistischen Italien. Von der Reform Gentile zur Carta della Scuola": Schieder / Petersen (eds.), *Faschismus und Gesellschaft*, pp. 109–132, 111, 113.

<sup>99</sup> Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli Italiani*, pp. 189–191.



Figure 12: Roberto Sgrilli, “Credere, Obbedire, Combattere”: Il libro della Prima Classe, Italy, 1942, p. 96. Courtesy of: Bibliothek Georg-Eckert-Institut, Braunschweig.

The text below contains the organisation’s motto: “Believe, Obey, Fight” (“Credere, Obbedire, Combattere”) and explicitly names schoolchildren “little soldiers” (“piccoli soldati”). That way the gradual militarisation of the Italian society reached primary school classrooms.

No such connection with military goals can be found in representations of Argentine children and youth in Peronist propaganda, as the regime did not pursue any expansionist goals. They did not appear as members of a state youth organisation, either: the regime instituted the Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios, an organisation for secondary school children, only rather late in 1953.<sup>100</sup> Instead of the role model of the soldier, Argentine schoolchildren were

<sup>100</sup> Omar Acha, *Los muchachos peronistas. Orígenes olvidados de la juventud peronista (1945-1955)*, Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2011, p. 71.

identified with “little workers” (“obreritos”).<sup>101</sup> The topic of work was of unprecedented importance in primary school textbooks, which the Peronist regime also reformed starting in 1949.<sup>102</sup> In some cases, propaganda graphic artists, like Héctor Alfonsín, illustrated these new educational media.<sup>103</sup> A reading passage in the textbook “Obreritos” from 1953 appeals to schoolchildren for work and discipline, familiarising them with their supposed duties:

“The bricklayer and the carpenter are workers. You are also a little worker. Be industrious, loyal [and] decent. Be good, sincere, orderly and clean. If you fulfil your duties, you will work for the happiness of the fatherland. You and your classmates are little workers [...] of the school, that is like a big workshop, where no one remains idle. Work, kid. The New Argentina expects much of you.”<sup>104</sup>

The corresponding illustrations depict a bricklayer building a wall and another one together with a carpenter and their respective tools, trowels and a saw (Fig. 13).

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<sup>101</sup> Luisa De García, *Obreritos*. Libro de lectura para segundo grado, Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1953.

<sup>102</sup> Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón*, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Pablo Colotta et al., “Textos y lecturas escolares durante el primer peronismo. Evita también fue palabra generadora”: Héctor Cucuzza / Roberto Spregelburd (eds), *Historia de la lectura en la Argentina. Del catecismo colonial a las netbooks estatales*, Buenos Aires: Del Calderón, 2012, pp. 329–370, 342.

<sup>104</sup> De García, *Obreritos*, pp. 1-2, translation by the author.

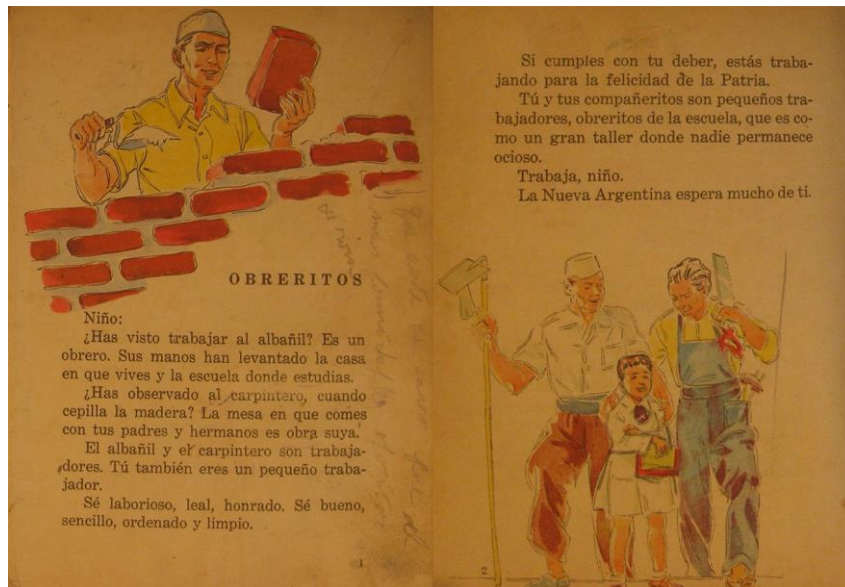


Fig. 13: "Obreritos": Obreritos, Argentina, 1954, pp. 1-2. Courtesy of: Biblioteca Nacional de Maestros, Buenos Aires.

Striding with their hands on the shoulders of a small schoolboy, they are actively leading him into his future as a worker. Due to the Peronist regime's efforts to symbolically reevaluate manual work, representatives of handicrafts are deliberately chosen as the protagonists. Following the gender-specific role models concerning work, girls in fascist and Peronist illustrated educational media are shown sewing at home or playing nurses.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to the focus on the topic of work in primary school textbooks, the Peronist regime reformed public vocational training, which in the context of a policy of import substitution was meant to serve the country's industrial progress. It instituted a three-staged system consisting of factory schools (*escuelas fábricas*), technical-industrial schools (*escuelas técnico-industriales*) and, at the top, a

<sup>105</sup> Vera Cottarelli Gaiba, *Il libro della prima classe*, Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942, p. 122; Luis Arena, *Tiempos nuevos. Lecturas para el cuarto grado*, Buenos Aires: Estrada, 1953, pp. 38-39; De García, *Obreritos*, p. 32-33.

workers' university (Universidad Obrera Nacional).<sup>106</sup> In the visual propaganda, this entailed the creation of the figure of the apprentice (aprendiz), with state-run publications, like the magazine *El Aprendizaje*, directed at this new target group. The covers show male apprentices, "the spring of the fatherland"<sup>107</sup> as they were called, engaging in different technical activities, operating drills or welding gear. Although vocational training schools for women did exist (Escuelas de Capacitación Profesional para Mujeres), they mainly offered courses in home economics and did not hand out verifications of qualifications.<sup>108</sup>

The revaluation of manual labour and the intention to thereby balance out class differences were also present in fascist propagandistic discourse.<sup>109</sup> Yet the systematisation of public vocational training never figured among the regime's priorities. Therefore, fascist propaganda did not offer an analogous role model to the Argentine aprendiz. Different from the focus on the training of skilled workers for the advancement of the national industry in Argentina, in Italy the emphasis of visual propaganda lay increasingly on the education of young soldiers for the pending war.

### **Work, National Identity and Enemy Images**

In the course of identity formation in fascist and Peronist visual propaganda, differentiating oneself from an 'other' assumed different degrees of importance: While in Italy images of enemies constituted a central topic, in Peronist Argentina they were virtually absent. Fascism explicitly excluded parts of the population, other nationalities, and 'races' from the category of work that was central to the corporatist identity. In the context of the Italo-Abyssinian war of 1935/36, state media denounced the Ethiopian population as uncivilised and incapable of carrying out productive work of their own accord. The necessity to

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<sup>106</sup> Verónica Oelsner, 'Produzenten statt Parasiten'. *Entwürfe und Wirklichkeiten beruflicher Ausbildung im modernen Argentinien*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012, p. 177.

<sup>107</sup> "Notas y comentarios": *Aprendizaje*, 2: 11 (1954), p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Oelsner, 'Produzenten statt Parasiten', pp. 177-178.

<sup>109</sup> Mario Rivoire, "I Littoriali del Lavoro": *Critica fascista*, 14: 11 (1936), pp. 165-167.

educate the colonial 'subjects' to work then constituted a central element of the fascist regime's "civilising mission".<sup>110</sup> In corresponding propaganda illustrations muscular manual workers like blacksmiths, representing the Italian people, contrast with idle black accessory figures of slight build, dressed in loin cloths and turbans, merely standing about, watching the industrious Italian (Fig. 1).

In addition to Africans and partly due to the ideological rapprochement between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in the second half of the 1930s, Jews were increasingly considered internal enemies in Italy, which led to the adoption of racial laws (*Leggi Razziali*) in 1938. They successively limited Italian Jews' status and rights, banning them from civil service, the army and the Fascist Party. Furthermore, mixed marriages were prohibited and Jewish children and teachers were excluded from public schools.<sup>111</sup> In this context, the regime supported numerous new publications with racist contents, the most important being "La Difesa della Razza". These stigmatised Jews as "parasites" that allegedly lived at the expense of the rest of the Italian population.<sup>112</sup> Illustrations centred on Jews' supposed physical deficits, thereby demarcating them from the 'true' Italians bursting with health and strength. This juxtaposition once again served the purpose of identifying productivity as the sole quality of Italians. The main cover of

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<sup>110</sup> Gian Luca Podestà, "Il lavoro in Africa Orientale Italiana (1935-1939)": Sergio Zaninelli / Mario Taccolini (eds.), *Il lavoro come fattore produttivo e come risorsa nella storia economica italiana*, Milan: Vita e pensiero, 2002, pp. 123-162, 127.

<sup>111</sup> Robert S. C. Gordon, "Race": Richard J. B. Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 296-316, 306-307; Dogliani, *Il fascismo degli Italiani*, pp. 313-314.

<sup>112</sup> Marco Giuman / Ciro Parodo, *Nigra subucula induti. Immagine, classicità e questione della razza nella propaganda dell'Italia fascista*, Padua: CLEUP, 2011, pp. 166-167, 171, 175-176.

“La Difesa della Razza” by Idalgo Palazzetti shows a photo montage of three overlapping profiles (Fig. 14).<sup>113</sup>



Figure 14: Idalgo Palazzetti, *La Difesa della Razza*, 1: 1 (1938), cover. Courtesy of: Biblioteca Marucelliana, Florence.

The one at the back belongs to a classic marble sculpture, Doryphoros by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos from the fifth century BC, and is being separated by a sword from a stereotypical portrait of a Jew and another one of an African woman. From the 1930s, the iconographic repertoire of Greek and Roman antiquity was frequently resorted to in order to characterise Italianità (Italianess). The “Caricature of a Jew” was taken from an Alexandrian terracotta from the third century AD, in possession

<sup>113</sup> Francesco Cassata, *La difesa della razza. Politica, ideologia e immagine del razzismo fascista*, Turin: Einaudi, 2008, p. 342.



of the Rheinische Landesmuseum in Treves, Germany. The photo of the African woman from the ethnic group Shilluk came from one of the editors' private archives.<sup>114</sup> The juxtaposition of the three heads serves the purpose of defining the Italian, represented by the antique sculpture, as superior. Apart from the scale, the classic profile being the biggest, the message of Italian superiority is supported by the value attached to the materials: a marble sculpture, traditionally considered more valuable, is contrasted with a terracotta and a photograph, the support medium of which is paper. Together with the title of the magazine, the anonymous hand reaching in from the left separating the Italian from the other heads with a weapon suggests the regime's willingness to defend the own 'race' with violent means.

Other pictures in the magazine demonstrate what other 'races' supposed lacking willingness or ability to work could entail, as in an illustrated article on Jews carrying out forced labour from June 1942 (Fig. 15).



Figure 15: "Indice cefalico degli ebrei": La Difesa della Razza, 5: 16 (1942), pp. 12-13. Courtesy of: Biblioteca Maruccelliana, Florence.

While the title and the text refer to the pseudo-scientific classification of shapes of skulls, the illustrations draw on the cliché of the formerly

<sup>114</sup> Giuman / Parodo, *Nigra subucula induti*, pp. 183-184.

“parasitic Jew”, now being compelled to work, in the form of a before and after representation. On the left side, the situation before, a round-bellied bald man with a hooked nose and bowlegs holds up an open book, that suggests that he only wants to have and does not give, underlining the stereotype of Jews being avaricious. The left side is titled: “Once upon a time there was a parasitic Jew (and he still exists).” On the right side it continues: “Now there is the Jew forced to work (and there are to be ever more).” The corresponding photo depicts a meagre bowed man, shovelling.

In Peronist Argentina work did not have racist implications, but was presented as a promise of belonging to the national community: Propaganda publications suggested that whoever worked could be part of it. Apart from the implicit racism in the visual propaganda, that consisted of the fact that almost only white protagonists appeared as ideal workers, Peronist identity formation, instead of race, revolved around class. Specifically the working class provided a common denominator, as the most important neologisms like *descamisado* indicate.<sup>115</sup> The term had originally been used by the mainly upper-class opposition to denounce Perón’s working class followers before Peronists turned it into a positive self-reference. As different scholars on race and identity in Peronist Argentina have convincingly shown, tellingly, other derogatory terms with racist implications like ‘*cabecita negra*’ (little blackhead) were not appropriated.<sup>116</sup> Like the own political identity, the internal enemy – the oligarchy – was also

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<sup>115</sup> Subsecretaría de Informaciones, *La Nación Argentina. Justa, libre y soberana*, Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1950, p. 802.

<sup>116</sup> Alejandro Grimson, “Racialidad, etnicidad y clase en los orígenes del peronismo, Argentina 1945”: *desiguALdades.net Working Paper Series*, 93 (2016), pp. 1–59, 32; Natalia Milanesio, “Peronists and Cabecitas. Stereotypes and Anxieties at the Peak of Social Change”: Matthew Karush / Oscar Chamosa (eds.), *The New Cultural History of Peronism*, London: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 53–84, 56. While there is a huge debate about anti-semitism and Peronism (see e.g. Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War. Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and after 1955 there were a lot of openly anti-semitic Peronist splinter groups, visual propaganda of “classic” Peronism of the years 1946–1955 did not resort to anti-semitic stereotypes.

conceptualised in class terms.<sup>117</sup> While Perón did attack the oligarchy in numerous speeches and in other verbal media for, in his opinion, having sold out the country until 1943, they were only very vaguely present in visual media. For example, graphic diagrams in the biweekly magazine *Mundo Peronista* contrasted the “oligarchy’s vices” of “selfishness, vanity, ambition, pride” with the “people’s virtues” of “generosity, honesty, altruism, modesty” only in a depersonalised manner.<sup>118</sup>

Peronist propaganda also targeted the political system in the period prior to 1943, a time during which the oligarchy had allegedly been in power. In numerous before and after representations, the ostensibly miserable conditions people had lived in before Peronism were illustrated, as on one of the first pages of “*La Nación Argentina. Justa, Libre y Soberana*” (1950) (Fig. 16).

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<sup>117</sup> Michael Goebel, *Argentina’s Partisan Past. Nationalism and the Politics of History*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011, p. 49.

<sup>118</sup> “Vicios de la oligarquía, virtudes del pueblo”: *Mundo Peronista* 2: 27 (1952), p. 41.

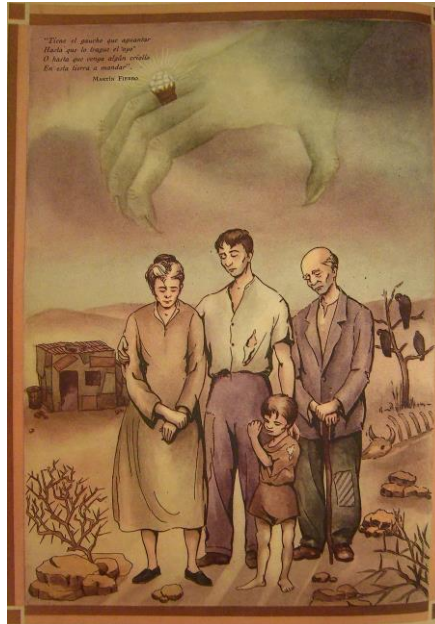


Figure 16: “Tiene el gaucho que aguantar”: La Nación Argentina. Justa, Libre y Soberana, Argentina, 1950, p. 34. Courtesy of: Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación, Colecciones Especiales, Buenos Aires.

Dressed in rags a family stands in front of a simple hut in a barren and inhospitable environment, with their heads bowed and resigned facial expressions. An animal skeleton and vultures on a tree in the background announce death. Yet who specifically is responsible for this misery can only be guessed, as the only element hinting at it is a claw-like greenish hand floating over the family. While the blinking ring on one of the fingers might indicate the oligarchy’s wealth, they are not accused in person. After going into detail on the Peronist corporatist, social and infrastructural reforms, the illustrated volume didactically shows the same family on the last page, now visibly far better-off: They are well-dressed and the child holds a toy in its hands. The surrounding landscape is blossoming, with modern agricultural and industrial production sites in the background. As the illustrations suggest, all this progress happened thanks to the Peronist regime. In stark contrast to

fascist visual media, Peronist propaganda after 1945 refrained from making use of dehumanising images to denote enemies.

Unlike other media channels, where the oligarchy, the opponent conceived of in class, not in race terms, was indeed criticised, Peronism in its visual propaganda stressed the purportedly existing social harmony.

In the course of the formation of new political identities, Italian Fascism and Peronism in the context of corporatist reforms both massively revalued the working population in their visual propaganda. Yet the two regimes differed in the type of worker and the economic sector they promoted. The fascist regime on the one hand adhered to an anachronistic image of rural idylls, free of any industrialisation. Peronism's more future-oriented visual media on the other hand championed the industrial worker. It was he who was supposed to contribute to the development of a domestic industry and thereby help the country eventually become independent from foreign imports. Whereas the fascist regime as a dictatorship, not dependant on elections, could dwell on the workers' duties vis-à-vis the state, namely productivity, Peronism, in the climate of emerging welfare states worldwide, stressed the working population's rights instead. The iconography of the political leaders as workers confirms the more forward-looking character of Peronist propaganda: In the name of the appreciation of the working class, Mussolini and Perón both appeared as workers, constituting ultimate role models for the male population. However, following the ruralist stance of Italian Fascism, the Duce was portrayed in the countryside and Perón on industrial production sites.

As to role models for working women, an important aspect was the inclusion of Eva Perón in the iconography of political leaders, a novelty in comparison to Mussolini's wife Rachele, who did not play a public role. Yet the distribution of tasks between the Argentine presidential couple was far from emancipated. Reflecting the traditionally female role of the care-giver, Eva was most prominently involved in the field of social welfare. That way the Peronist regime maintained a male-centred conception of wage labour. Like in Fascist Italy, women in Peronist Argentina were expected to be mothers and housewives first and foremost. Yet the discrepancy between representations of their domestic role and of the numerous new public functions they fulfilled in the women's organisations characterised the propaganda of both

regimes. Nevertheless, the nursing, teaching or welfare jobs they took on were mainly justified with maternal qualities.

Regarding the generations represented in fascist and Peronist propaganda, Peronism did not adopt fascism's one-sided youth cult, but also incorporated the elderly into its visual media. Through illustrations in schoolbooks, children's magazines or propagandistic material on vocational training, Argentine children were prepared for their future as industrial workers. A militaristic note, such as in the Italian case aiming at educating 'Tomorrow's Army', cannot be detected in Peronism. Lastly, the more inclusive character of Peronist propaganda becomes most palpable when looking at enemy images: While Italian Fascism denounced other 'races' and banned them from the central worker identity, Peronism in its images refrained from racist accusations. According to Argentine state visual media after 1945, there were no enemies. Instead they fully evoked "un mundo feliz" – "a happy world".<sup>119</sup>

In conclusion, concerning the debate about whether Perón was a fascist or not, which still regularly resurfaces in Argentina today, the findings about processes of political identity formation through visual media under corporatist regimes confirm the conclusions drawn in the context of discussions on generic fascism. As this article has shown, despite sharing corporatism as a common ground Peronist aesthetics present too many idiosyncrasies to be subsumed into the category of fascism.

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<sup>119</sup> Gené, *Un mundo feliz*.